

ACTION PLAN TO ASSIST SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

Introduction

As part of its strategic planning efforts, San Bernardino Superior Court identified several goals and strategies that relate to assisting self-represented litigants and providing greater access to court services. Those element of the Court’s Strategic Plan include Issue Areas: 1.3. Unrepresented Parties and 1.5 Public Access to the Courts.

With the assistance of the community-focused San Bernardino Superior Court Self-Represented Litigant Task Force (“Task Force”), the San Bernardino Superior Court has developed this Action Plan to guide its community efforts to address the needs of self-represented litigants. (See Appendix 1 for a roster of Task Force members.) This Action Plan represents many hours of work of members of the committee, community collaborators, and court staff and is submitted for purpose of identifying the types of actions the Court would like to take and the resources needed to provide an enhanced level of services to self-represented litigants.

1. Description of Need:

Available Court Information. San Bernardino Superior Court serves an increasing number of self-represented litigants annually. Despite challenges in obtaining self-represented litigant information from its current case management system, the court was able to identify recent caseload information in Table 1, below, that demonstrates self-represented litigants seek services from the Court. Most assistance is sought in family law, small claims, and unlawful detainer cases.

Table 1 – SRL Caseload by Case Type 2000-2001

<i>Case Type</i>	<i># of Cases 2000</i>	<i># of Cases 2001</i>
Limited Civil	881	819
Unlimited Civil	3340	3478
Unlawful Detainers	8373	8596
Family Law	14,830	14540
Probate	878	996
Small Claims	17835	17929
Totals	46,137	46,358

Of course, case filings alone do not represent the full impact of self-represented litigants on court operations. Much time and personnel resources are spent assisting court users who may not end up actually filing or defending a case.

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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Additional Data Gathering. To help the Task Force identify the nature of the services needed by self-represented litigants in San Bernardino County, the Court collaborated with California State University, San Bernardino, and lead by Profs. Mo Bahk and Fred E. Jandt, Department of Communication Studies, to conduct surveys of court users, court personnel, and legal service providers in the county. A complete copy of their *Self-Represented Litigant Questionnaire Data Analysis and Report* is submitted with the Action Plan. Some of the findings of note in the report provide a good description of the needs of self-represented litigants in San Bernardino County as follows:

Increasing Numbers of Self-Represented Litigants:

- 63.3% of responding judges perceive and increased SRL population over the last several years
- 55.2% of staff respondents perceive an increased SRL population over the last several years

Self-Represented Litigant Needs:

- Customer survey respondents represented six different languages in which they need assistance. Therefore, the need for a multilingual approach to serving self-represented litigants in San Bernardino County is evident.
- 48.2% of court users reported NOT receiving helpful service in the courthouse.
- Twice as many self-represented litigants would seek legal assistance from the Family Law Facilitator than from other listed sources.
- Staff reported a wide and deep lack of knowledge and understanding of court procedures on the part of self-represented litigant

Currently Available Resources:

- 42.9% of judges know about the Court's web site but not about other available services
- 60% of the people who responded to the questionnaire had access to the Internet
- 29.5% of staff indicated they had no knowledge of the court's services for self-represented litigants
- Most staff indicated that they receive information about available services on a "learn as they go" basis. Improvement of the breadth of skills and depth of knowledge of available services for both judges and staff will assist both court personnel and self-represented litigants in more effectively providing and using court services.

Expand Services for All Case Types

From a review of the Court's caseload data and the information developed through the survey process, it is clear that the Court needs to expanded the availability of services in all types of cases that come before the Court, including civil, small claims, unlawful detainers, and domestic violence matters. In addition to the general increasing need that cuts across all case types, the Task Force also identified the significant need for increase



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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in services related to Family Law cases. San Bernardino Superior Court's Family Law Facilitator and Small Claims Advisor assist many of individuals who seek assistance from the court, but due to statutory and other limitations, these staff are not able to assist all who seek help with the kinds of legal issues for which they need assistance. Therefore, the augmentation of Family Law Resources is an important element in the Court's Action Plan.

To assist the Court and the State in addressing the need for expanded Family Law Resources, the Court has drafted a proposed Rule of Court for an expanded role of the Family Law Facilitator. As part of its Action Plan, the Court urges the State to seek legislative and/or other authority to permit the expansion of the Family Law Facilitator's duties and to seek funding to support these expanded services (Please see the proposed rule of court regarding Family Law Facilitator Duties in Appendix 2.)

2. Program Areas: To best address the needs of Self-Represented Litigants in San Bernardino County, the Court with the assistance of its community based Action Planning Committee, has identified the following areas for action:

- 1. Community Outreach and Collaboration**
- 2. Family Law Resources**
- 3. Multi-Lingual Services**
- 4. Court User Information and Assistance**
- 5. Public Interface At The Courts**
- 6. Training**
- 7. Regional Self-Service Centers**
- 8. Publicity**

Each of these program areas is described in its own Program Action Plan in section 3, below. The tasks for each program Action Plan are also included on a Project Timeline that follows the program descriptions.

3. Program Action Plans:

3.a.1. Program Description: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION.

Reach out to other members of the community to assist the Court in providing services to self-represented litigants thereby cutting the cost and reaching the maximum number of people who need information on services provide by this project. Elements of this program area include (1) Collaborating with the Law Library in providing self-service resources; (2) working with the bar to develop ways to “unbundled” legal services to provide a greater degree of available assistance, and (3) recruiting more volunteers. It is envisioned that the State and local bar and bench members will form a sub-committee to determine legislation necessary to implement the “unbundling” of legal services and to market services to end users. Self-represented litigants will be able to obtain legal representation for the most complex issues of their case and represent themselves in the less complex areas.

Population / Group Served: All San Bernardino County litigants.

Types of Services Offered:

1. Information on unbundled legal services
2. Information and Referral Services
3. Kiosk/computer or other interactive device to complete forms for filing in Law Library
4. Collaborate with schools, service clubs, libraries, churches and community based organizations to recruit volunteers

Location of Service Delivery: Law libraries in selected locations throughout San Bernardino County.

3.b.1. Program Partners: Self represented Litigants Task Force sub-committee, local BAR and Bench, Law Library, and legal services agencies. The project will collaborate with other counties, law schools, neighborhood legal agencies, law libraries and chambers of commerce to educate the public on the availability of these services. Possible program partners include: Law Schools, Colleges, Adult Schools, Churches, County Bar Associations, Neighborhood Legal Service Corporation, Inland Counties Legal Services, Law Libraries, Chambers of Commerce



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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3.c.1. Program Plan: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Form a subcommittee of the Self-represented litigants task force and the local BAR association to draft legislation to implement the project in the county.	8/02	Task force members, CEO staff assigned to the project
Develop brochures to educate bar members and the public on the availability of the service.	10/02	Project staff
Form a speaker's bureau to inform and educate the public on the availability of the service.	10/02	Project staff in collaboration with Bar and Bench members
Identify organizations from which to recruit volunteers	10/ 02	Project staff assigned to project
Develop presentation materials consisting of flyers, brochures, public service announcements, obtain brochures on services offered	6/03	Project Coordinator and staff
Install brochure/pamphlet racks in Law Library and Clerks' Office	6/03	Program Coordinator, Court Staff
Install kiosk/computer interactive filing system in Law Library to allow on-site preparation of court documents.	12/03	Same as above

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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3.a.2. Program Description: FAMILY LAW RESOURCES. Enhance the availability of Family Law Facilitator resources to meet the full range of needs for self-represented litigants.

Population Served	Types of Services Offered	Location of Service Delivery
Self-Represented Litigants Family Law	Form selection, preparation assistance in Family Law.	Central San Bernardino Courthouse, Rancho Cucamonga Courthouse, Victorville Courthouse
Self-Represented Litigants Guardianships	Orientation, form preparation and procedural guidance and referral for further supportive services.	Same as above
Self-Represented Litigants Domestic Violence	Form preparation assistance, procedural guidance, supportive services	Same as above
Self-Represented Litigants	Orientation to Court Process and information on self-representation	Same as above

3.b.2. Program Partners: San Bernardino Superior Court, Self-Represented Litigant Task Force, Legal Aid Organizations, Community Based organizations, Domestic Violence Organizations

3.c.2. Program Plan: FAMILY LAW RESOURCES. Generate support for additional Family Law Facilitator FTE's.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Identify Grant Sources	1/03	Court Grant Writer
Write & Submit Grants	6/03	Court Grant Writer
Advocate for greater trial court funding	continuous	Superior Court
Broaden scope of services provided for family law and related matters	Dependent upon securing additional funding and amending Local Rules of Court (see attached proposed Local Rule)	Family Law Facilitator, Proposed Coordinator Position

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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3.a.3. Program Description: MULTI-LINGUAL SERVICES Provide court information needed languages in addition to English.

Population Served	Types of Services Offered	Location of Service Delivery
All San Bernardino County litigants.	Informational brochures and pamphlets in Spanish and Vietnamese languages	Throughout the County of San Bernardino in court facilities, legal service offices, libraries, malls, and markets

3.b.3. Program Partners: County Bar Association, Inland Counties Legal Services, Law Schools and local Universities.

3.c.3. Program Plan: MULTI-LINGUAL SERVICES - BROCHURES. Provide written language assistance to Self-Represented Litigant populations / groups / individuals as needed.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Form “working” groups with staff reps. from each dept. plus volunteers	8/ 02	Staff assigned to implement the self-represented litigants project.
Gather data about services provided by each department.	11/02	Same
Develop distribution lists	11/02	Same
Create a brochure for each service	11/02	Same
Translate brochures into Spanish and Vietnamese Print brochures	3/03	Same
Begin distribution to pre-determined list, develop brochures on other upcoming services	5/03	Same
Develop new venues for distribution	2004	Same

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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3.a.4. Program Description: COURT USER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Improve the quality and widen the distribution of information & assistance offered to court users and Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs). To do so the court will take action by creating countywide access to court information and forms by (1) developing forms and instructions packets, (2) enhancing the court’s web site, (3) providing kiosks in remote locations, (4) providing information about court services to jurors so they become better informed court users, and (5) developing and distributing brochures about available legal resources in the county.

Population Served	Types of Services Offered	Location of Service Delivery
Metropolitan	Kiosk/information Booths or Do-it-yourself Help centers	Info desk at courts/kiosks stations in public libraries and courts
Rural/outlying County area	Kiosk designed to serve 30 mile radius	Colleges/public libraries and Courts if space permits
County wide	User friendly website EZ to use	
Court Customers	User friendly Website containing helpful information regarding Court services, links to self-help sites etc.	Internet

3.b.4. Program Partners: Non-profit groups, government agencies, and individuals or special organizations, Bar Association, Legal Aid and Law Libraries, Superior Court, Self-Represented Litigant Task Force, Government agencies dealing with the court, bar association and legal aid offices, San Bernardino Jury Administration, JEM (Jury Education and Management State Organization), Bar Association and Legal Aid. Kiosk design and set-up with Inland Counties/Courts and public libraries, San Bernardino Legal Research Department, Bar Association, Legal Aid and Law Libraries

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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3.c.4. Program Plan: COURT USER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Committee For Website Re-Development	Initial meeting 3/02	Court IS Staff Committee
RFP	5/02	Court IS Staff
Select Contractor and redesign Court Website	6/02	Court Administration
Complete Website	7/02	Contractor, Court IS Staff
Standardized Packets in each location	9/02	Court Staff
Create Brochures	9/02	
Court Informational Sheets	9/02	Court Staff and Bar Association
Create Jury Service Brochures	9/02	Staff staff/Inland Counties/ public libraries/Bar Association and Legal Aid
Create jury service informational page on web-site	9/02	Same as above
Create jury service video	9/02	Court committee/college
Create Brochures	9/02	Court Staff, Bar Association, Legal Aid and Court Legal Research Department
Committee to set-up the Kiosks	10/02	Court Information Services Department and Court Staff
Committee to review and keep current	10/02	Court Information Services Department, Court Staff, Bar Association and Legal Aid
Distribute Brochures	10/02	Volunteers or Individuals working in the Self-Help Centers
Provide copies of jury service brochures	10/02	Volunteer info person

3.a.5. Program Action Plans: PUBLIC INTERFACE AT THE COURTS. Improve the quality and productivity of Self-Represented Litigant courthouse visits. The purpose of this component of the Action Plan is to improve the public’s access and experience in using Court facilities and to improve the flow of traffic throughout the Court locations. This will be accomplished by providing the public with helpful and courteous information regarding the use of the facilities and other resources such as Directions/Maps and Resource Sheets.

Population Served: Court Customers

Types of Services Offered:

- (1) **Information Booths** - The purpose of the information booths is to provide a greeting/filtering place where the public is greeted and provided information and direction. This should be located in an open area that is outside and separate from the security personnel and equipment;;
- (2) **Signage** – Signage should be posted throughout the Court that labels each location. Additional signage should be installed in front of each area in the Court that explains and prepares the public what goes on in that location and what resources that need to complete the step associated with that location;
- (3) **Materials** – In addition to the verbal information provided at the information booths, written material in the form of maps, directions, flow charts and resource directories will be developed; and
- (4) **Computer Terminals** – The Court Operational Plan calls for the creation of an automated touch-screen terminal system to provide case management information at each Court location.

Location of Service Delivery: Courthouse Lobbies, Various Court Locations

3.b.5. Program Partners: Superior Court, Self-Represented Litigant Task Force

3.c.5. Program Plan: PUBLIC INTERFACE AT THE COURTS

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Study facilities and staff needed for development of information booth at each Court	6/03	Superior Court Self Represented Litigant Task Force
Create Directional Flow Charts/Maps/Directions	6/03	Wendy Sellnow Victor Scamara
Work with facilities to upgrade signs to give clear directions	12/03	Wendy Sellnow Victor Scamara
Install electric signs, billboards at each Court	6/04	Wendy Sellnow Victor Scamara
Install Public Computer Terminals	7/04	Court Technology

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3.a.6. Program Description: TRAINING. Provide training to both court personnel and court users to better prepare each for productive interactions. Provide regular sensitivity, customer service, and other training for judges and staff to assist them in better serving self-represented litigants.

Population / Group Served: Court personnel and court users.

Types of Services Offered:

- 5. Training for court personnel regarding providing assistance without giving legal advice.
- 6. Training for court users including how to fill out forms, seminars on how to navigate the court system, and how to use a self-help work center

Location of Service Delivery: For court personnel: Jury room, conference rooms, and court training rooms. For court users: libraries, other government buildings, and community colleges

3.b.6. Program Partners: Bar associations, adult education and community colleges, law and other libraries, Inland Counties Legal Services, Regional Occupational Program, and Volunteers (to work Information Booth)

3.c.6. Program Plan: TRAINING.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Assess Training WANTS	09/02	Courts (Managers and Judges)
Assess Training NEEDS	09/02	Court Administration and Program Partners
Establish Quarterly Training	01/03	Court Administration and Program Partners
Training re sensitivity and procedural vs. legal advice	6/03	Glenda Lane, Cydney Fowler
Approval for scheduling of volunteers as needed	12/03	Program Coordinator, Family Law Facilitator, Small Claims Advisor

3.a.7. Program Description. REGIONAL SELF SERVICE CENTERS

To provide adequate services to self-represented litigants, the court with its partners will create community based regional service centers, and maximize the use of those centers by providing day care and parking for court users. Each of these “facilities” challenges is addressed in the description of this program area.

	<i>Regional Service Centers</i>	<i>Day Care</i>	<i>Parking</i>
Population Served	All Self Represented Litigants needing information concerning the nature of the legal action they need to file and access to the necessary forms and instructions to file the required paperwork.	Self Represented Litigants coming to the Court Facility for various reasons including litigation who are required by their personal circumstances to bring their minor children with them.	Self Represented Litigants who drive r privately owned vehicles to the court facilities for legal matters and litigation.
Types of Services Offered	Currently all Court Clerk offices have some instruction packages, which are made available to litigants purchasing forms to file legal actions. Various legal aid agencies have instruction packages as well as offering personal assistance in some degree for certain types of cases. Our goal is to improve the quality of self-help instruction packages and to make them available in self-service centers in each court facility.	Currently there are no child-care facilities available in any of our court facilities. Some Family Court Service facilities have a waiting room where children can remain but there are no facilities to keep the children busy. The intention of the Task Force is to develop areas in each court facility where litigants can watch their children or have others who come with them to watch the children. To consider development of in-house child care facilities manned by child care providers would require the court to carefully consider possible increases in	Currently each court facility has public parking lots adjacent to the court facility. Additionally, other parking areas, either private or public, are located in the area of each court facility. The intent of the Task Force is to publicize the existing areas near each court facility. Procurement of additional court owned parking facilities would be cost prohibitive due to real property costs and construction costs of such facilities.

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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		expense related to personnel, volunteer, and potential liability issues.	
Location	Each Court Facility.	Each local court facility	Each local court facility

3.b.7. Program Partners: Court Administration, Court Facilities, Family Court Services, Local Court Managers, Task Force, AOC, County Agencies

3.c.7. Program Plan: REGIONAL SELF SERVICE CENTERS

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Assess existing space for self-service centers, day care centers and parking	12/02	Court Facilities in conjunction with the Task Force and Local Court Managers
Assess equipment needs and uses	12/02	Task Force in conjunction with Court Facilities
Assign Space	6/03	Court Administration with input from Court Facilities and the Task Force.
Publicize Available and Alternative Parking	6/03	

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3.a.8. Program Description: PUBLICITY. The purpose of the marketing effort is to increase public awareness of Court and other services available to assist self-represented litigants.

Population Served. Individuals that will be served by efforts to get the word out about services include Non-English/Spanish- speaking, low income, and self-motivated persons.

Types of Services Offered. Press releases, videos, pamphlets, flyers, web site announcement, Public Service Announcement's

Location of Service Delivery. Media, Community-Based Org., Hospitals, Social Service Agencies, Churches, Library's (including Law Library's), Grocery Stores, Schools, Courthouses.

3.b.8. Program Partners: Community-based Outreach Centers, Universities, Hospitals, Social Service Agencies, Domestic Violence Shelters

3.c.8. Program Plan: PUBLICITY

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person/Org Responsible</i>
Web site Announcements	9/02	Court Technology
Design improved signs	6/03	Court Facilities
Press releases/ SRL efforts	6/03	Marti Parsley/Patti Termini
Develop general information about available services in the form of Flyers, Videos, PSAs	12/03	Marti Parsley/Patti Termini
Distribute to Local Media	12/03	Marti Parsley/Patti Termini

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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2002 Timeline	<i>Community Outreach and Collaboration</i>	<i>Family Law Resources</i>	<i>Multi-Lingual Services</i>	<i>Court User Information and Assistance</i>	<i>Public Interface At the Courts</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Regional Self-Service Centers</i>	<i>Publicity</i>
Mar				Committee For Website Re-Development (Initial meeting)				
Apr								
May				RFP for Web Designer				
June				Select Contractor and redesign Court Website				
July				Complete Website				
Aug	Form a subcommittee of the Self- represented litigants task force and the local BAR association to draft legislation to implement the project in the county.		Form “working” groups with staff reps. from each dept. plus volunteers					



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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2002 Timeline (cont'd)	Community Outreach and Collaboration	Family Law Resources	Multi- Lingual Services	Court User Information and Assistance	Public Interface At the Courts	Training	Regional Self- Service Centers	Publicity
Sep				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Standardized Packets in each location * Create Brochures and Information Sheets * Create Jury Service Brochures * Create jury service informational page on web-site * Create jury service video 		Assess Training WANTS and NEEDS		Web Site Announcements
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify organizations from which to recruit volunteers * Develop brochures to educate bar members and the public on the availability of the service. * Form a speaker's bureau to inform and educate the public on the availability of the service. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Committee to set-up the Kiosks * Committee to review and keep current * Distribute Brochures * Provide copies of jury service brochures 				



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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2002 Timeline (cont'd)	Community Outreach and Collaboration	Family Law Resources	Multi-Lingual Services	Court User Information and Assistance	Public Interface At the Courts	Training	Regional Self- Service Centers	Publicity
Nov			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Gather data about services provided by each department. * Develop distribution lists * Create a brochure for each service 					
Dec							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Assess existing space for self-service centers, day care centers and parking * Assess equipment needs and use. 	



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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2003 Timeline	<i>Community Outreach and Collaboration</i>	<i>Family Law Resources</i>	<i>Multi-Lingual Services</i>	<i>Court User Information and Assistance</i>	<i>Public Interface At the Courts</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Regional Self- Service Centers</i>	<i>Publicity</i>
Jan		Identify Grant Sources				Establish Quarterly Training		
Feb								
Mar			Translate brochures into Spanish and Vietnamese Print brochures					
Apr								
May			Begin distribution to pre-determined list, develop brochures on other upcoming services					



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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2003 Timeline (cont'd)	Community Outreach and Collaboration	Family Law Resources	Multi-Lingual Services	Court User Information and Assistance	Public Interface At the Courts	Training	Regional Self- Service Centers	Publicity
Jun	*Install brochure/pamphlet racks in Law Library * Develop presentation materials consisting of flyers, brochures, and public service announcements; obtain brochures on services offered.	Write & Submit Grants			* Study facilities and staff needed for development of information booth at each Court * Create Directional Flow Charts/ Maps/ Directions	Training re sensitivity and procedural vs. legal advice	* Assign Space * Publicize Available Services and Alternative Parking	* Improve Signs * Press releases/SRL efforts
July								
Aug								
Sep								
Oct								
Nov								
Dec	Install kiosk/computer interactive filing system in Law Library to allow on-site preparation of court documents				Work with facilities to upgrade signs to give clear directions	Approval for scheduling of volunteers		* Develop general information about available services in the form of Flyers, Videos, PSAs * Distribute to Local Media



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<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Community Outreach and Collaboration</i>	<i>Family Law Resources</i>	<i>Multi-Lingual Services</i>	<i>Court User Information and Assistance</i>	<i>Public Interface At the Courts</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Regional Self-Service Centers</i>	<i>Publicity</i>
2004								
Jan			Develop new venues for distribution					
Feb								
Mar								
Apr								
May								
Jun					Install electric signs, billboards at each Court			
July					Install Public Computer Terminals			
Aug								
Sep								
Oct								
Nov								
Dec								



d. Existing Resources That Will Be Used: Estimated current resources available to support implementation of the Action Plan include:

Publicity Resources:

- Paper
- Printing
- Video Production
- Other

Forms and Instruction Packages. Some sample forms and instruction materials are already in existence. Forms are available in hard copy and in computer formats. Each Court facility has potential space for use for these centers once it is identified and committed to this use. State Judicial Organizations have brochures, and videos available.

Space: The current Court Operational Plan provides for improving court facilities and the installation of Public computer terminals.

Court Locations: The State of California, County of San Bernardino Superior Court has locations throughout the County. As much as possible, the information and services will be made available in all Court locations that offer the type of cases for which the services and/or information was developed.

Community Locations: The community locations where information can be distributed include public libraries, law libraries, community based organizations, senior citizen organizations, and schools. It is also possible to arrange mobile legal service to these locations.

Partners: Task force members who are currently working on project. State Bar members who are in the process of developing the State's plan for unbundling of legal services. Volunteer and internship programs that exist within community based organizations, law schools, and other projects already identified within the Superior Court's strategic plan.

Parking: Each court facility has existing public parking in the area of the facility. Additionally, private and public parking areas are available in the vicinity of each facility.

Equipment: TV's and VCR's

Furnishings: The court has surplus furnishings that may be allocated to this project.

Personnel: The Court has existing staff that has worked on this project. It is anticipated that both the administrative and operational personnel of the Court would continue working in the planning and implementation of this project.



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Translation Services. Court brochures already developed in English will be reviewed for appropriate translation into Spanish and Vietnamese. Information developed in conjunction with the court's strategic plan 3.4.4. will be included in materials to be translated

Web Site: State Web sites – www.courtinfo.ca.gov/self help; San Bernardino Court web site - www.sbcounty/courts. The Court has allocated up the \$50,000.00 to redesign the current court website. This website will provide linkages to the State self-help website. Court Staff to review information and IS staff to keep Kiosks running.

Training and Trainers: Court staff will recruit volunteers and use existing personnel to provide the training. Customer service and fairness training is already required for all court personnel. This training will be expanded to include issues pertaining to self-represented parties. Dr. Fred Jandt and California State University at San Bernardino will be consulted for the development of videos in conjunction with court staff. AOC has developed a new Jury Video that will be utilized. Other training resources including Nolo Software, Law Libraries, Educational and Referral Handouts will additionally be used.

- e. **Additional Resources Needed:** Additional resources the court will need to implement the Action Plan include:

Marketing Expenses: Although the Court has existing materials and videos that will be used in this project, additional funds will be needed to more widely develop and distribute materials to the public.

- Paper
- Printing
- Video Production
- Other

Publications: State Department and Organizations have developed brochures that should be used to standardized information. Committee to develop and distribute San Bernardino County Court Brochures and Court information sheets, including

- Forms and Instruction Packages. Funding necessary to support the development and distribution of brochures (\$15,000). A nominal meal and car fare allowance for senior volunteers who volunteer in the program.
- Maps showing the parking areas
- Permanent signage

Space: Each Court facility has potential space for use for these centers once it is identified and committed to this use. However, many of the Court locations are not adequate in size to offer a full range of services that may be envisioned in this project. The State needs to address the whole issue of Court facilities and coordinate with the Counties to ensure that they are updated and expanded to provide comprehensive services to the public. Specifically:



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

Date Submitted: June 1, 2002 Contact Name & Phone: Sherri Quadri (909)387-4455

- Court Locations- Facilities is a pressing issue in many court locations.
- Community Locations – It is anticipated that existing community based organizations may offer space for brochures and informational packets; however, funds and permission from the State may be needed to rent locations if there is not sufficient space in Court locations or locations are identified where there are no existing Courts.

Parking: Parking space is needed to support the public usage of program services.

Equipment: TV's to show videos; electronic signs; printing costs; paper; video production costs; computer equipment, copy machines; pamphlet racks will need to be purchased to house pamphlets and brochures in public places.

Furnishings: *Desks, chairs, file cabinets, and tables will be needed in the regional centers.*

Personnel:

- Court staff and consultants: Funds to hire Coordinator and additional staff, purchase equipment and furnishings as needed, and funds to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Court staff to develop brochures and keep them updated.
- Volunteers. The project will consider using law students, advocates and ombudsmen, seniors, and community volunteers to support the project.

Translation Services. Court brochures already developed in English will be reviewed for appropriate translation into Spanish and Vietnamese. Information developed in conjunction with the court's strategic plan 3.4.4. will be included in materials to be translated. The program will need staff and volunteers who can translate materials into various languages.

Child Care Areas: Space, durable toys, books, videos with playback systems, and other child friendly items are needed. Any higher level of child care, including child care by court personnel or contracted services, would involve the commitment of substantial resources including the creation of a personnel or contract group, dedication of rooms and other facilities in each court location, and some type of insurance coverage for liability issues. This option is cost prohibitive at the present time unless such a commitment were made at the state level.

Information Services:

- Web Site and Kiosks: Follow State self-help web site and set standards. Court Staff to review information and IS staff to keep Kiosks running, web site current, and resolve any problems
- Databases. Database will need to be developed to capture user statistics and analysis of the project's effectiveness.



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

Date Submitted: June 1, 2002 Contact Name & Phone: Sherri Quadri (909)387-4455

Training:

- Court personnel: State training courses to keep up-to-date on changes in the laws.
- Public: Training for the public is critical so that the self-represented litigants are informed of how the courts really work and so that they have reliable resources for information and assistance.

Potential Sources of Funding: State Funding, Grants, and Community Partnerships are needed as follows:

- More self-help information for case types not already receiving customer assistance such as general civil, non-support family law, unlawful detainer, traffic, and guardianship cases.
- Funding for Saturday and evening instructors to conduct seminars for the public at various locations. Work Centers at the court for completion of forms. Childcare playroom for children staffed by personnel and volunteers. Flowcharts displayed in clerk's offices and/or information booths showing the different steps, forms and timelines involved in the processing of case types.
- ***Law Library:*** \$27,900.00
 - \$ 24,000.00 to purchase three kiosk/interactive computer-filing systems to be installed at three law library locations.
 - \$2,400.00 to install and support telephone lines for first year.
 - \$1,500.00 for printing and distribution of brochures/pamphlets.

Unbundling of Legal Services: Seek and/or sponsor seminars and distribute information that supports the implementation of unbundled services.

Costs Associated with Extended Hours of Operation: Instructors (funding for salaries) , costs for identifying and securing of locations f (schools, libraries, etc.), the purchase of training materials.

f. **Evaluation:** Evaluation of this project will require a coordinated approach to the gathering, storing, analyzing and use of information from a variety of sources gathered through a variety of techniques. Such a comprehensive evaluation process requires a thoughtful research and evaluation design.

The steps needed to develop the evaluation design include:

- **Define Project Working Relationships, Process and Outcomes.** Meet with Court Administration and selected Self- Help legal services providers to identify **scope** of programs, activities and outcomes to be evaluated, explore content and components of SRL programs and instrumentation options and delivery **timeline** for completion of evaluation content and instrumentation formatting.
- **Design Evaluation Strategy, Content and Instrumentation** Research possible evaluation schemas to assess existing effective strategies & approaches. Meet with Court Administration, staff and selected others to design final evaluation content instrumentation/ tools, formatting, and application. Draft initial content



and instrumentation/ tools, formatting and application. Edit for final instrumentation, submit for review.

- **Implement Evaluation Process.** Apply evaluation processes to active SLR programs and activities. Train personnel to gather data as needed.
- **Analyze and Report Data.** Analyze evaluation data from courts and community-based programs on periodic basis for comprehensiveness, accuracy, precision, effectiveness and utility relative to SLR Action Plan outcomes. Design and implement adjustments to evaluation system guided by results.

The kinds of information and data gathering tools that will be used include

- Surveys of:
 - End users and program partners to determine level of satisfaction with the service; and
 - Court staff, judges, and program partners to determine changes in preparation and efficiency of self represented litigants coming into court.
- Caseload and other service usage information to determine the level of use of SRL services and the affect on case processing of better prepared self-represented litigants.

4. State Support:

Monetary Support. Resources at the AOC level and other state agencies would consist primarily of budgetary support for operational cost. The State could also provide comprehensive educational programming and other resources. Instructional media and computer assistance could be developed by contract or by internally generated products at the AOC level, which would insure consistent guidance to self represented litigants around the state. Some funding would be required to make initial purchases of equipment, signage and other publications, and toys and other items to place in the child care areas. Recurring funding would be required to maintain these items over time. Substantial funding would be necessary if a higher level of service were to be considered.

Court Forms and Instructions. The State could also simplify Judicial Council forms to make them more user friendly; continue to advocate services for self-represented litigants; and provide funding to establish and sustain this program. The State can also lead the way in providing resources to assist the Court in developing its own video and other resources.

Marketing and Education. Support from the AOC and the State Bar will be utilized to market project and educate the public on the availability of the service.

Facilities. State/Judicial Council support for improvement and expansion of court facilities is a key element to providing suitable locations for self-represented litigant assistance services.



5. ***Unique Approaches:*** This Action Plan contains ideas similar to other courts in California who are seeking to address the needs of Self-Represented Litigants. What makes this approach unique, however, is the proposal that a collaborative effort be established with Riverside Superior Court to share resources, and expertise to support the development and implementation of the program in both counties. The augmentation of the availability of Family Law Resources is another area of innovation.

In the last several years, the addition of Family Law Facilitator services in the court has been a great improvement in providing assistance to self-represented litigants in the area of Family Law. However, the funding currently available to the program restricts the ability of the Court through the Family Law Facilitator to address issues other than child support, spousal support, and health insurance. Additionally, the program is limited in its ability to fully serve the geographical area served by the Court because of limited funding. To better serve self-represented litigants in San Bernardino County, it is proposed that both the scope and the size of the program be increased to serve a broader base of family law issues and serve a larger population in a wider geographical area of the County.

Additionally, facilitator-like services are needed in the area of probate (guardianships in particular, but also conservatorships). The self-represented litigants in this area are not adept in managing the complex pleadings and service of the process of the required notices. This results in delays in the filing process and the hearing process. Because of the complexity of the legal process, direct assistance is needed in form preparation and service of process information. Orientation to the Court process and referral for further resources need to be provided. Linkages need to be solidified with legal aid organization that assists litigants so as to maximize services in an efficient, cost-effective manner. Also involvement in the inclusion of community based organizations such as the Grandparent's Club and Senior Citizens groups should be made to gain the perspective of caregivers and solicit volunteers to assist in providing challenge.

Finally, all of these services need to better integrated into the existing court structure. Sharing staff, equipment and facilities will ensure that program resources are maximized for better service.

6. ***Sustaining the Action Plan:*** Once each service center is in place, the local Court Manager together with assigned staff would be responsible for maintaining the area, including the replenishment of forms, instructions, maps and other written information, monitoring the computer equipment and associated printers, and monitoring of daily usage and security of the equipment including toys and other items located child care areas.

Once the program components of the Action Plan are implemented, the program will need to be sustained through the commitment of the collaboration of the Court and the partnership with the community. The collaboration will have to continue to be



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

Date Submitted: June 1, 2002 Contact Name & Phone: Sherri Quadri (909)387-4455

creative in ways to improve service and to sustain the funding sources to support the services. One possible way to provide support for the program would be to set up/contract for coin-operated photocopiers at self-service work centers and facilitation centers, with profits from those machines used to underwrite some of the costs of the project.

Grant applications will be submitted to the AOC, County of San Bernardino, State Bar and other state and federal sources as well as private foundations to attain funds to sustain this project.

Volunteers and student interns will be recruited to staff the information booths and provide public education programs. This continuing activity will require working with local bar associations and colleges to train new instructors for outreach classes.

- 7. *Other Comments:*** The State of California, County of San Bernardino Superior Court is committed to providing the highest quality of service to the self-represented litigants. The well being of individuals, families and children are directly impacted by the services provided by the Court. It is the goal of this Action Plan to enhance these services.



APPENDIX 1
Roster of the San Bernardino Superior Court
Self-represented Litigant Task Force

Task Force Leadership

J. Michael Welch	Presiding Judge
Tressa S. Kentner	Court Executive Officer
Sherri M. Quadri	Family Law Facilitator (Co-Task Force Chairperson)
Cecilia Lowe	Small Claims Advisor (Co-Task Force Chairperson)
Shelley Stump	Consultant, Coyote Moon Consulting

Task Force Court and Community Members (in alpha order)

Gary Almond	Better Business Bureau
C. Mo Bank	California State University, San Bernardino
Susanna Barnett	Morongo Basin Unity Home
Ann Beal	Supervising Court Systems Analyst II
Judy Brannen	Mediator
Winifred Brewer	Judicial Staff Counsel
Sharon Caldwell	Western San Bernardino County Bar Association
Alan Crouse	Information Systems Manager
Deborah Davis	Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino
Charles Doskow	Dean, La Verne School of Law
Gail Dupre	Option House
Al Durant	Center For Dispute Resolution
Margie Gaitan	Option House
Cheryl Houde	Private sector attorney
Fred E. Jandt	California State University, San Bernardino
Mary Majich Davis	Chief Deputy Court Executive Officer
David Meek	Mediator
Loyal Nixon	Civil Service Commission
Sharon Prentiss	Court Administrative Services Manager
Yvonne T. Pritchard	Deputy Court Executive Officer
Bob Roddick	Supervising Attorney, Inland Counties Legal Services
Patrick Singer	Commissioner, Superior Court
Nancy Stevenson	Director, Family and Children's Services Division



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Self-represented Litigant Task Force

Additional Work Group Support (in alpha order)

Kathleen Bryan	Commissioner, Superior Court
Nancy Dugas	Rancho Cucamonga District Manager
Barry Eskin	Supervising Investigator, Conservatorship and Guardianship
Cydney Fowler	Supervisor, Civil
Liz Frazier	Supervisor, Civil, Family Law
Sally Lewis	Family Court Services Mediator
Bobbie Masia	Option House
Marti Parsley	Special Projects
Kim Rezendes	Supervisor, Traffic
Carol Rubio	Supervisor, Civil, Family Law, Probate
Hal Simon	Assistant Family Law Facilitator
Patti Termini	Family Court Services Mediator
Christopher J. Warner	Superior Court Judge



APPENDIX 2
San Bernardino Superior Court
Proposed Rule of Court: Family Law Facilitator Duties

In addition to the duties mandated by Family Law Facilitator Act, Family Code Section 10004 ET. Seq., the Family Law Facilitator shall have the following additional duties:

- a. Meeting with litigants to mediate issues of child support, spousal support, and maintenance of health insurance, subject to Section 10012 of the Family Code. Actions in which one or both of the parties are self-represented shall have priority.
- b. Drafting Stipulations to include all issues agreed to by the parties, which may include issues other than those specified in Section 10003 of Family Code.
- c. If the parties are unable to resolve issues with assistance of the Family Law Facilitator, prior to or at the hearing, and at the request of the Court, the Family Law Facilitator shall review the paper work, examine documents, prepare support schedules, and advise the judge whether the matter is ready to proceed.
- d. Assisting the clerk in maintaining records.
- e. Preparing formal orders consist with the court's announced order in cases where both parties are self- represented.
- f. Serving as a special master in proceedings and making findings to the court unless he she has served as a mediator in the case.
- g. Providing the services specified in Section 10004 concerning the issues of child custody and visitation as they relate to calculating child support, if funding is provided for that purpose.

If staff and other resources are available and the duties listed in Subdivision A. above have been accomplished, the duties of the Family Law Facilitator may also include the following:

- a. Assisting the court with research and any other responsibilities which Will enable the court to be more responsive to the litigants' needs.
- b. Developing programs for bar and community outreach through day and evening programs, videotapes and other innovative means that will assist self-represented and financially disadvantaged litigants in gaining meaningful access to family court. These programs shall specify and include information concerning underutilized legislation, and preexisting court-sponsored programs such as supervised visitation and appointment of attorneys for children.



San Bernardino Superior Court

*Self-Represented Litigant
Action Plan*



Date Submitted

June 1, 2002

*Action Plan Developed with the Assistance of
Shelley M. Stump, J.D.
Coyote Moon Consulting*