

State Profile: California

The California Judicial Council has made access to the courts for self-represented litigants one of its top priorities. It has adopted a Statewide Action Plan for Serving Self-Represented Litigants and charged its Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness with ongoing implementation of the plan. In addition, California's deep investment in self-help services has yielded many leading tools and reports, which have been made available for everyone by the Equal Access Unit of the Center for Families, Children and the Courts at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/programs-equalaccess.htm>.

Self-Help Centers

Effective January 1, 2008, the Judicial Council adopted California Rules of Court, rule 10.960, which states that court-based self-help centers are a core function of the California courts. Self-help centers are located in or near the courthouse and are staffed by attorneys and other qualified personnel under their direction to provide information and education to self-represented litigants about the justice process and to work with the court to provide effective management of cases involving self-represented litigants. In response to rule 10.960, guidelines for the operation of court self-help centers were adopted. The guidelines address topics including attorney and other staff qualifications, scope of services, ethics, language access, and efficiency of operation. Funding is provided to every trial court to support allow self help services throughout the state. These programs, in collaboration with the family law facilitators, now serve over 1.2 million people annually.

Family Law Facilitators

Many self-help centers are combined with the family law facilitator programs in their courts. Effective January 1, 1997, Family Code section 10002 established an office of the family law facilitator in each of the 58 counties. The Judicial Council administers the program, providing funds to these court-based offices, which are

staffed by licensed attorneys. These facilitators, working for the superior court, guide litigants through procedures related to child support, maintenance of health insurance, and spousal support. They assist with cases involving the local child support agency, many of which are public assistance reimbursement cases. Family law facilitators can help parties with forms, court procedures, and support calculations, and they provide workshops and referrals to community agencies that assist parents and families.

Please find the full Fact Sheet on Services to the Self-Represented at <https://www.courts.ca.gov/partners/documents/SRLwhatweknow.pdf>.

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States

Regions

[United States](#)

Print

Table of Contents