

Report: The Self-Help Center Census: A National Survey (ABA 2014)



Using responses to an online survey, the [American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services](#) issued "The Self-Help Center Census: A National Survey," an analysis of court-based legal self-help centers across the country. Nearly half of the approximately 500 self-help centers identified replied to the survey.

Among the findings:

- Nearly 3.7 million people are served by self-help centers annually.
- Five or fewer full-time employees generally staff a center—most legal self-help centers rely heavily on volunteers, including lawyers, paralegals, students and other members of the community.
- Though most centers rely heavily on funding from court, state and county budgets, many are supplemented by bar associations, grants, federal or

municipal funding, some private donations and self-generated income.

- Most centers provide in-person services, document assistance and web-based information.
- The centers surveyed are most often used by people with limited resources.
- According to the survey, most of the customers' needs were met at the center, although some needs were too complicated to be serviced by the center.
- Most of the respondents believed their customers would benefit from limited-scope representation, in which the lawyer handles aspects of the case and the client handles other parts of the case.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services works to improve access to lawyers and legal services for people of moderate income who do not qualify for legal aid yet lack the resources for full legal representation.

Last updated on July 28, 2020.

Year published: 2014

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