

News: Florida's Clerk Russell On Opening a New Self Help Center (Florida 2015)



When we saw [this inspiring video](#) of Orange County Florida Clerk of Courts Tiffany Moore Russell opening a brand new Self Help Center, we had to reach out to her. Clerk Russell has a strong dedication to helping the self-represented litigants in her county. She's already made an impact on her community, launching an [eClerk site](#) and starting [the Self Help Center](#) we interviewed her about:

What was your experience with self-represented litigants before opening the self-help center?

Prior to entering public office, I was a housing attorney for Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida and during law school I interned with Orange County Legal Aid. During that time, I learned about legal representation for the poor and the

growing need for legal assistance for the majority of society. As an attorney, I received so many questions and request for assistance to handle a legal matter. Furthermore, I served as a County Commissioner and many constituents were in need for legal forums because many citizens are not knowledgeable about the legal system.

What inspired you to start it? And what challenges did you face along the way to opening its doors?

One of my campaign platforms was to increase access to justice. Once I was elected, I made this my first priority. My team and I immediately started researching and observing two other Centers in the State. There were no concrete challenges to the creation of the Self Help Center except for the reconfiguring of the office space. We moved one of our other divisions to another location to make space for the Self Help Center and had to work around a construction timeline.



What's your vision for the Self Help Center?

My vision is that we are able to serve citizens who can not afford an attorney. Our next phase involves expanding to our branches and incorporating law students as interns. Pursuant to Florida Law, we can only assist with Family Law, Residential Evictions and Small Claims cases.

Since your opening have you seen a shift in how SRLs relate to the experience of going to court? And who do you see coming in the most?

We are still in the beginning stages of customer intake in our Self Help Center and are working on data collection along with the Judiciary and outside stakeholders to determine the effect this has had on SRLs going to court. Most of the customers that have visited the Self Help Center are family law related.

Do you have any advice for other clerks looking to do something similar?

My advice is you don't have to reinvent the system. Clerks are welcome to visit our office and meet with my staff to determine the best approach for their County. Offering a Self Help Center is a great service that helps the public and it is very much worth exploring.

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