



# The Resource Page: Focus on Self-Represented Litigants



## TRAINING MATERIALS

### Court-Staff Training Materials

<http://goo.gl/xN6MNH>

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission has excellent resources for court staff to use in learning how they can—and cannot—help self-represented litigants. There’s a bench card and poster listing the things staff can do (such as explaining how the court works) and things it cannot do (like letting someone talk to the judge outside of court or telling someone what to say in court). Answers to questions about what staff may do often are not self-explanatory to court staff, and the Maryland Commission has offered a handy checklist.

There’s also an 18-minute training video for court staff on how to respond to inquiries from litigants. Additional materials for self-assessment and for peer training accompany the video. These materials could easily be adapted for use in other states.

### Judicial Training Materials

Access Brief: <http://goo.gl/nmWt6E>

Curriculum: <http://goo.gl/7VHLuk>

The Center on Court Access to Justice for All has materials targeted to judges. A March 2014 “Access Brief” explains the trend toward greater judicial engagement. The paper, written by Richard Zorza and National Center for State Courts researcher Pamela Casey, discusses the approach called “engaged neutrality” (see pp. 54-55 in this issue) in which judges provide greater guidance to self-represented litigants while maintaining neutrality. The Access Brief also provides an overview of a detailed set of training materials for judges. That training curriculum is available in full on the website.



## GENERAL RESOURCES

### Center on Court Access to Justice for All

<http://www.ncsc.org/atj>

The National Center for State Courts has established a web-based Center on Court Access to Justice for All, which seeks to assist judges and courts in providing better access to justice. The Center works with a number of national organizations, including the American Judges Association, to implement realistic access-to-justice solutions.



One key feature of the Center is a series of “Access Briefs,” short papers on key topics for access to justice. The first paper, issued in November 2012, was on self-help services (<http://goo.gl/FvGvl>). It’s an 11-page paper setting out various options for providing help to the self-represented litigant, with examples of courts that have set up useful websites, courthouse desks or offices, telephone-based programs, in-person clinics, and courtroom assistance.

The Center offers three webinars: (1) Self-Represented Litigation Curriculum, covering a wide variety of materials available for judicial training; (2) Procedural Fairness and Self-Represented Litigants; and (3) Forms Development. The procedural-fairness webinar, presented by Minnesota state trial judge Kevin

Burke, is available on the website without registration. The other two require registration, available by contacting the Center.

The Center also offers technical assistance to state and local courts seeking help in providing better access to justice. Click the “Assistance” tab on the Center’s home page and you’ll find more information and a link to the “technical assistance request form.”

### Court Statistics Project: Rules for Cases with Self-Represented Litigants

<http://goo.gl/yeffCb>

Most would agree that self-represented litigants often need some assistance if they are to successfully navigate their way through the court system. But to determine how many resources should be devoted to helping them, ideally you would want to know how many self-represented litigants you have and whether their number is growing in your jurisdiction. But it turns out that it’s not as easy to count these cases as one might initially think—something that Richard Schaufler and Shauna Strickland explain in an essay at pp. 52-53 of this issue.

For more guidance on how to count cases involving self-represented litigants, go to the Court Statistics Project website, a joint project of the National Center for State Courts and the Conference of State Court Administrators. The entry page we’ve given has detailed guidance on how to keep track of these cases.

### Self-Representation Resource Guide, National Center for State Courts

<http://goo.gl/UQ9t0b>

The National Center for State Courts general website also has an excellent resource guide that provides links to articles, web-based resources, and organizations dealing with how to improve services to self-represented litigants.