

Self-Help Resources and Referrals

Private Attorneys	Illinois LawyerFinder: Call (800) 922-8757 or visit http://www.illinoislawyerfinder.com/
Legal Aid & Pro Bono Attorneys	LAF (Cook County): Call (312) 341-1070 or visit https://www.lafchicago.org/ Prairie State Legal Services (Northern Illinois): For contact information visit https://pslegal.org/ Land of Lincoln (Southern Illinois): Call (877) 342-7891 or visit http://lollaf.org/
Mediation & Arbitration	List of programs in Illinois: http://courtadr.org/sourcebook/
Public & Law Libraries	Check your local resources
Self-Help Centers	Check your local resources
Pro Bono Clinics & Help Desks	Check your local resources
Social Service Providers	Mental health programs in Illinois: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=3089 Emergency and transitional housing programs in Illinois: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=646863 Supportive housing programs in Illinois: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=64687
Standardized Forms	Statewide forms and instructions available in six languages: http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/Forms/approved/
Language Access Tools	Circuit plans and statewide interpreter registry: http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/CivilJustice/LanguageAccess/default.asp
Domestic Violence Programs	DV programs in Illinois: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31886
Online Legal Information	Free legal information, referrals, and forms for civil, expungment and traffic legal problems: https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/

Tips for Making Strong Referrals



Double Check

Check your resources periodically to see if services, hours, eligibility, or contact information has changed.



Write It Down

Litigants may be overloaded with information at court. Write it down or use a referral sheet to help them out.



Be Specific

Provide information about the scope of services available, the application process, and any eligibility criteria



Manage Expectations

Inform litigants of possible limitations (e.g. referral cannot take all cases, may require waiting)



The AOIC Can Help! For more information on access to justice resources, including the Safe Harbor Policy; standardized forms; language access tools; courthouse signs; and self-help templates, please contact Samira Nazem at snazem@illinoiscourts.gov or (312) 793-2305.

How Can I Best Assist Self-Represented Litigants?

The Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Assistance to Court Patrons by Circuit Clerks, Court Staff, Law Librarians, and Court Volunteers outlines the services that can and cannot be provided to help self-represented litigants and other court patrons. Services offered in accordance with this policy do not constitute the unauthorized practice of law. View the full text at: http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/Policies/Pdf/Safe_Harbor_Policy.pdf.

Legal Information Is...

Objective, fact-based information about the law or legal process that is intended to help a court patron navigate the court system.

Legal Advice Is...

Guidance regarding an individual's legal rights and obligations in light of their unique facts and circumstances

Should versus Could: Turning Legal Advice into Legal Information

Court patrons may ask for legal advice (“What **should** I do?”) but by changing one word, you can turn legal advice into legal information.

Example: How **should** I serve someone?

Answer: I can’t tell you what to do, but I can explain your options. There are three approved methods of service you **could** choose.. Here are some resources with more information...

I Can...	I Cannot...
Tell a litigant what they can do	Tell a litigant what they should do
Explain a process to a litigant	Make a prediction for a litigant
Share all available options	Suggest one particular option
Give a litigant information that may help them make an informed decision	Make a decision on behalf of a litigant
Provide forms and basic instructions	Fill out forms
Refer to bar associations and legal aid	Refer to individual private attorneys
Help individuals with disabilities or low literacy by reading documents out loud and/or writing down their answers word-for-word	Make suggestions about what to write on a form or change a litigant's words in any way
Refer a litigant to legal and non-legal resources inside or outside the courthouse	Represent a litigant in the courtroom
Assist a litigant with self-guided research	Provide legal analysis or legal research
Share publicly available case information	Share information from sealed cases
Review forms for completeness	Review forms for accuracy
Give information about interpreters and reasonable accommodations	Limit access to litigants with limited English proficiency or disabilities
Inform all litigants about fee waivers	Decide who should get their fees waived