
**Superior Court of California,
County of Orange**

Self-Help Needs Analysis

June 28, 2007

Planning and Research Unit



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction & Background	7
Court User Survey	9
1. Court User Demographics.....	9
Gender	11
Age	12
Race/Ethnicity	13
Language	14
Education	16
Income.....	18
2. Other Court User Characteristics	20
Reason for not having an attorney	20
Reason for coming to court	21
Case types	22
3. Services Used.....	23
Services used.....	23
Services used by Self Represented Litigants.....	24
Services used most frequently by Self Represented Litigants at each JC	25
Services used most frequently by Self Represented Litigants by case type	26
4. Use of the Court website by Income and Education	27
5. Did you get the information you needed today?	28

6. Were you able to complete what you came to the court to do today?	29
7. Additional Services Needed	30
Additional services needed – Family Law	31
8. Conclusions from the Court User Survey	32
Flow chart of Users and Needs	34
Results of Staff/Judicial Officer Survey	35
1. Introduction to the sample	35
2. Respondents who reported having regular contact with SRLs by Case Type	36
3. Areas of difficulty for SRLs	37
Over all Case Types	37
Traffic/Criminal	38
Civil	39
Family Law	40
Other	41
4. Recommended Services	42
Over all Case Types	42
Traffic	43
Criminal	44
Civil	45
Family Law	47
Other Case Types	49
5. “Self-Help Services are not needed”	51
6. Qualitative Information	51

7. Self-Help online Staff and Judicial Officer Survey Comments	52
“In my Courtroom”	52
“At my counter”	54
“No”	56
Results of the Attorney Survey	58
1. Source of Attorney Surveys	58
Which Justice Center do you visit for work?	58
In which types of cases do you regularly see pro per litigants?	59
2. Performance of Self-Represented Litigants.....	60
Performance and understanding of Pro Per Litigants	60
Services helpful to Pro Per Litigants	61
3. Additional Services.....	62
Areas where SRLs almost always need more help	62
Pro Per Litigants sometimes need help.....	63
Services selected which would be helpful, or currently are helpful	63
Services that were not indicated as helpful	63
Court Resource Bureau, Self-Help Center, and Facilitator Office Statistics	64
Self-Help Center Activity Log (six month period).....	65
2006 Family Law Facilitator Statistics (one year period)	65
Recommendations made by the AOC Team regarding Self-Help for Family Law	66
Outline of Conclusions and Recommendations	68

Executive Summary

The 2007 Self-Help needs analysis was conducted to examine Self-Help needs across all justice centers and case types. Three surveys were conducted: (1) an exit survey of court users, (2) an online survey of staff and judicial officers, and (3) a survey of attorneys.

Exit Survey of Court Users

The results of nearly 1,500 exit surveys provide a profile of our court users. Most were young, male, Hispanic or Caucasian adults who speak English as the primary language at home, have a high school diploma and perhaps some college credits, and have a household income well below \$50,000.

The vast majority of court users come to the court without an attorney. Of the 984 court users who stated that they were a petitioner/plaintiff or respondent/defendant on a case, only 11% indicated that they had an attorney representing them on the day of the survey.

The court user survey collected information regarding services used, services needed, and whether or not individuals were able to get the information they needed or complete what they came to do at the court on the day of the survey. The results showed that some services, especially help from court staff at the window, the Court Resource Bureau/Help Desk, and the Self-Help Center at Lamoreaux Justice Center were frequently used. Most indicated that they were able to get the information they needed and complete what they came to do at the court. However, the percentages were significantly lower at Lamoreaux Justice Center and for family law matters. Those who indicated they did not complete what they came to do at the court selected additional services which might have been useful. Most frequently selected were services providing assistance with understanding court processes, starting a case, and completing and filing forms. Those at the court for family law matters requested help with case continuances.

Staff and Judicial Officer Online Survey

285 individuals who have regular contact with self-represented litigants (SRLs) completed the online survey. They provided a good sample of those who see SRLs at the counter and those who see them in the courtroom, and across various case types. The staff and judicial officers indicated that SRLs often have difficulty in many areas including following court procedures, preparing documents correctly, needing evidence or witnesses, speaking effectively in the courtroom, and having realistic expectations of the outcomes. Specific information is provided in the report regarding the areas of difficulty for SRLs within case types.

Staff and judicial officers who completed the online survey took the time to write extensive comments regarding self-help needs. These comments are summarized within the report, and a full rendering of all the original comments can be found under the tabs. In general, the comments fell into two areas: Challenges and Issues, suggestions for programs and system changes. Challenges included: (1) SRLs lack understanding of process and procedure, documents and forms, and other matters of the court, (2) uncertainty of the staff as to what constitutes legal advice versus legal information; (3) the prevalence of illegal resources on court property; and (4) the need for more personal, face-to-face, resources to assist SRLs.

Attorney Survey

350 self-help surveys were completed by attorneys, most of whom did so while at one of the justice centers. The vast majority of respondents were private attorneys, though some public defenders, district attorneys and city attorneys also completed the survey. Many of the attorneys indicated that they regularly see SRLs over a variety of case types. Attorneys felt even more strongly than staff and judicial officers that SRLs have many areas of difficulty at the court. The attorneys selected from a list of services that would be helpful for SRLs and indicated additional services as well. Most commonly, suggestions were made to implement or expand the use of on-site facilitators, panel attorneys, consultants, or volunteer attorneys. Also mentioned were expanded pro per calendars and effective attorney referral services. An overwhelming majority of attorneys (92%) felt that self-help services are needed.

Introduction

This report provides information regarding the needs of self-represented litigants at our court. A comprehensive study was conducted by the Planning and Research Unit at the request of the Self-Help Services Steering Committee under the direction of Commissioner Leininger. In order to determine areas and levels of need for augmented self-help services, three surveys were conducted: 1) a court-user paper and pen exit survey, 2) a staff and judicial officer on-line survey, and 3) an attorney survey. In addition, we were provided with statistical reports from the Court Resource Bureau, Self-Help Center, and the I-CAN reports.

Background

In 1992, the California Public Trust and Confidence Study found a low 42% satisfaction level with the services of the California courts. Since then, the California Judicial Council has taken major steps to increase the public's satisfaction. Although the more recent study showed a significantly higher satisfaction rate of 69%, the Judicial Council is still taking steps to ensure that the courts meet the needs of the public. Since a large number of individuals currently come to the courts without attorneys, one of the avenues for increasing satisfaction is to strengthen services designed specifically to help self-represented litigants complete court business as efficiently and effectively as possible. Most recently, the Judicial Council has reaffirmed its commitment to providing services to self-represented litigants by proposing a rule of court identifying the services of court self-help centers as a "core function" of the judicial system.¹ In addition, the Judicial Council recently approved \$8.7 million to fund self-help services throughout the courts.² At the national level, a 2005 National Summit on Self-Represented Litigation funded by the State Justice Institute gave rise to the National Self-Represented Litigation Network.

The commitment to provide equal access, to remove barriers to justice, and to optimize procedural fairness requires us to augment existing services and implement new services in the areas where they are most needed. As stated by Administrative Director of the Courts, William Vickrey, at the May 2007 Self-Represented Litigants Conference in San Francisco, "our responsibility is to assess the users' needs and to respond to them."

¹ Administrative Director of the Courts, William Vickrey, speaking of proposed Rule 10.960 on 5/17/07 at the Self-Represented Litigants Conference in San Francisco.

² Speaking at the Self-Represented Litigants Conference on 5/17/07, Justice O'Leary mentioned the \$8.7 million as well as an additional \$1.5 million, and William Vickrey stated that the appropriation would be augmented each year based upon a standardized formula which would, for example, net an additional \$6 million next year.

Methodology

Developing the Surveys

Ten Self-Help Needs Analysis Surveys previously used in various counties and states were provided to us by the Knowledge and Information Center of the National Center for State Courts. These were used to draft three separate surveys: one for court users, one for staff and judicial officers, and another for attorneys. The survey drafts were reviewed by the Self-Help Core Committee and then revised. Samples of all surveys may be found under the tabs at the back of the binder, under each survey type. The Court User Survey samples include the Spanish and Vietnamese translations.

Court User Survey

The court user survey was administered as a paper and pen exit survey at six justice centers, for two days each, between April 30th and May 10th. In preparation for the survey, over 40 volunteer “surveyors” were provided with two hours of training, and a half-day “dry run” of the survey was conducted on April 27th.³ The volunteers included over 30 staff from Court Operations and a dozen UCI students who were interning at the Legal Aid Society. The time, effort and skills of the volunteers were invaluable as they provided knowledge of the justice centers, liaison communication with the sheriffs, and the ability to communicate with court users, including bilingual skills. Planning and Research staff were present at all times at each location and acted as front-line surveyors as well as coordinators and managers of the survey process.⁴

A total of 1,488 completed surveys were collected from court users exiting the justice centers. Of these, 210 (14%) were completed in Spanish.⁵ Although Vietnamese versions of the survey were available at each justice center, only three individuals chose to complete the survey in Vietnamese. The court user survey was given to all individuals exiting the court with the exception of jurors (who were advised they would be completing a jury questionnaire), court staff, judicial officers, law enforcement and attorneys. We were pleasantly surprised by the number of attorneys exiting the court that approached us and wanted to complete the survey. (Attorneys were given a paper and pen version of the online attorney survey.)

³ All staff who participated in the training received two hours of training credit. A copy of the training PowerPoint is available upon request.

⁴ We would like to thank Bill Tanner and his OC Legal Aid Society staff members and interns for assisting us with the distribution of surveys, Christie Weigand, Arizona Supreme Court, for her wonderful assistance with the logistics of court exit surveys, and Madelynn Herman, NCSC, for reference materials.

⁵ We observed that some Spanish speaking court users had difficulty reading and completing the Spanish surveys. In several cases, a bilingual staff volunteer was able to assist them and forms were completed. However, in other cases, no bilingual staff person was available or the court users were unwilling to fill out the survey after finding it difficult to complete. Therefore, we are aware that we may not have captured a representative sample of those who have less than a high school education or find surveys difficult to read.

Court User Survey – Sampling Process

Individuals exiting the court were asked to take the survey unless they were staff, judicial officers, law enforcement or jurors. Attorneys were given a separate survey. Instructions were given to the surveyors not to “push” the survey on those who did not wish to give their input, and to avoid approaching any court users who appeared to be upset or engaged in serious conversation. The response rate was estimated to be around 30% - 40% except at Lamoreaux Justice Center (LJC), where it was closer to 15%. Surveyors attributed the lower response rate at LJC to two factors: they were unable to set up a table at a central location inside the exit due to the sheriff’s parameters, and the court users were more likely to be upset or unhappy when leaving LJC than at the other justice centers. However, even at LJC, the sample reached over 100, which is often considered the minimum reliable sample size.⁶ In addition, the percent of respondents with family law cases was greater than the percent of family law filings represented in the court’s monthly filing statistics.

Findings

Demographics of Court Users

The 1,488 surveys provide information about the demographics of court users in Orange County. These data include self-represented litigants, litigants with attorneys, and also family members, friends, witnesses and others at the court. The data do not include jurors, attorneys, law enforcement, court staff or judicial officers.

The typical court user does not have an attorney with him. He is male, under age 40 (in fact, 39% are between ages 18-29), Hispanic (41%) or White (38%), speaks English as the primary language at home, has a high school diploma and perhaps some college credits, and has a household income below \$50,000 (in fact, 31% having a household income below \$20,000).

The tables and graphs on the following two pages present comparative demographic data for all court users, self-represented litigants (SRLs), litigants with attorneys, and census information for the general Orange County population.

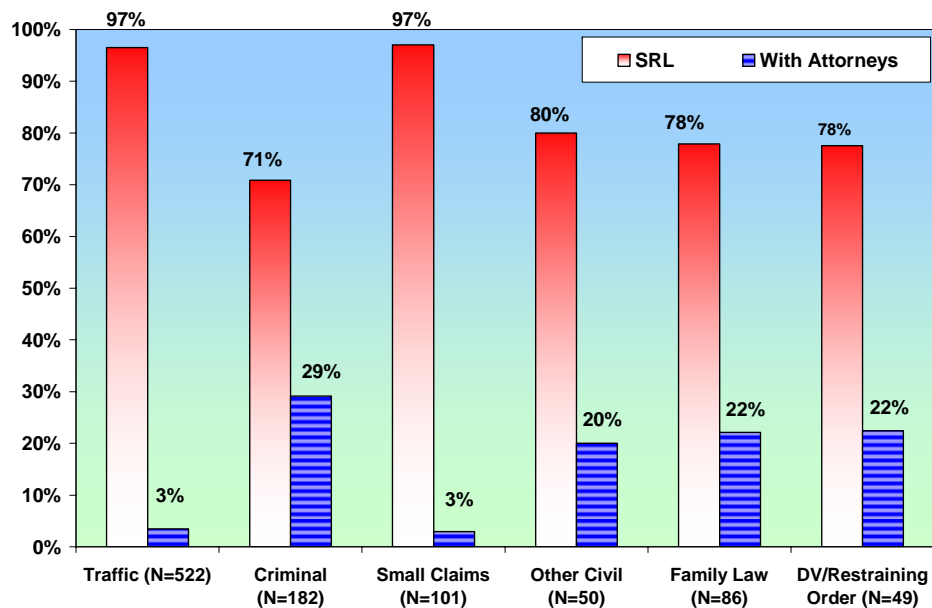
Percentage of Self-Represented Litigants

Out of the 1,488 court users who completed the survey, 984 (66%) indicated that they were at the court as a petitioner/plaintiff or a respondent/defendant on a case. Of these 984, only 111 (11%) stated that they had an attorney representing them on the day of the survey, and 873 (89%) stated that they did not have an attorney.

⁶ Care should be taken when examining results for specific areas within the sample. For example, the numbers may be too small when looking at cases with representation at Lamoreaux for specific case types. (This would be a three-way “slice”, and might result in an unrepresentative, small number of cases.)

Percentage of Self-Represented Litigants

- Of the 984 petitioner/plaintiffs or respondents/defendants, 873 (89%) stated they did not have an attorney on the day of the survey.
- The graph below shows the percentages of SRLs within each case type. (Small Claims is shown separately from all other civil cases.)



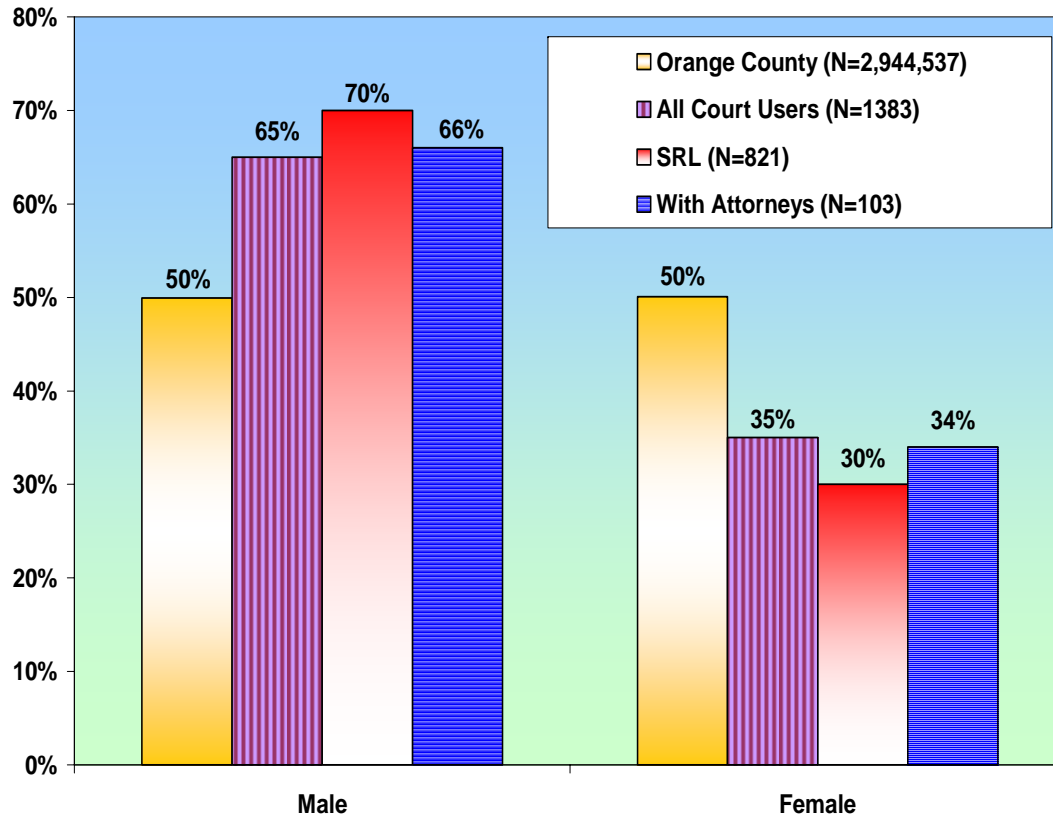
Notes:

- The 22% in Family Law who had an attorney represents 19 individuals. Of these 19, four individuals reported using the services of the Public Law Center, the Legal Aid Society, and/or the Facilitator's Office.
- Total number across case types is greater than 984 because respondents were able to select more than one case type.

Gender

- 50% of Orange County residents are male, 65% of all court users are male.
- In general, there is little difference in gender between SRLs and those with attorneys.

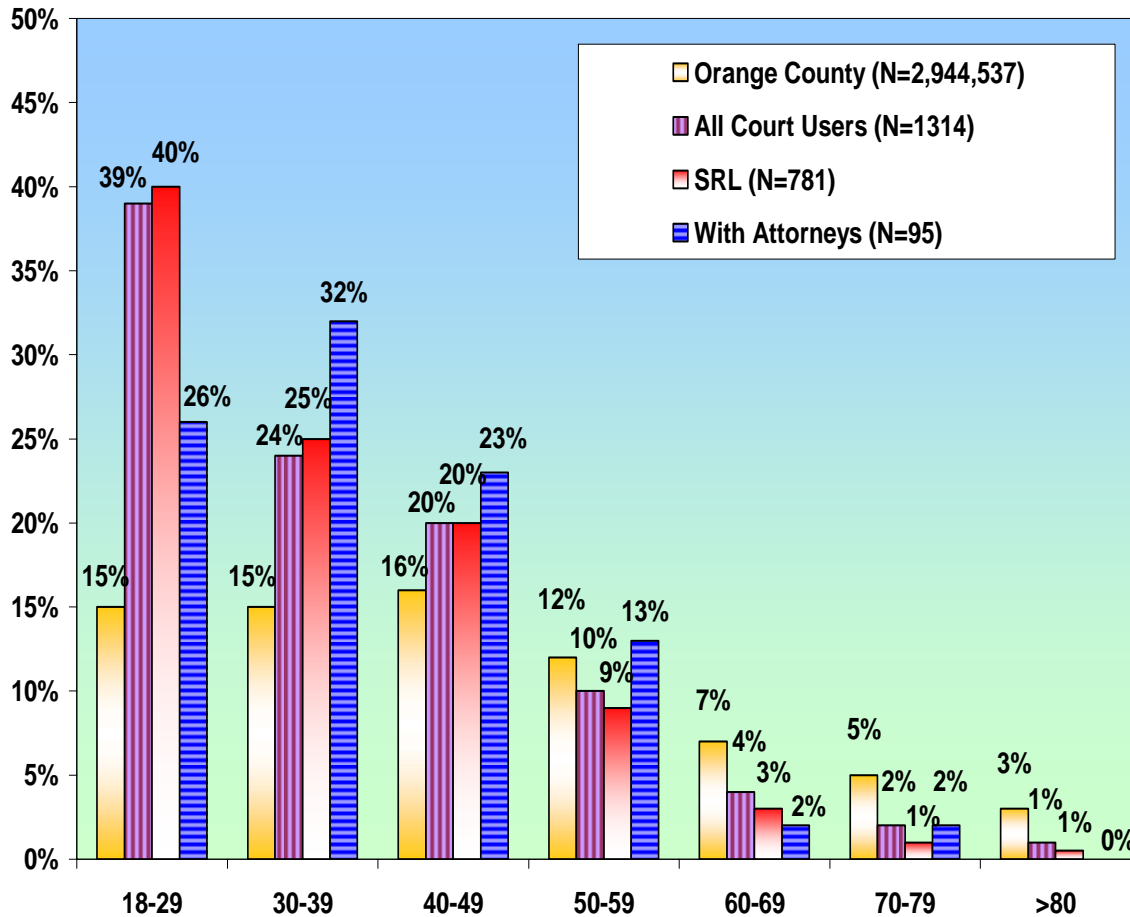
(Total number of responses to each question are less than the total of 1,488 because respondents did not answer all questions)



	Orange County (N=2,944,537)	All Court Users (N=1,383)	SRLs (N=821)	With Attorneys (N=103)
Male	50%	65%	70%	66%
Female	50%	35%	30%	34%

Age

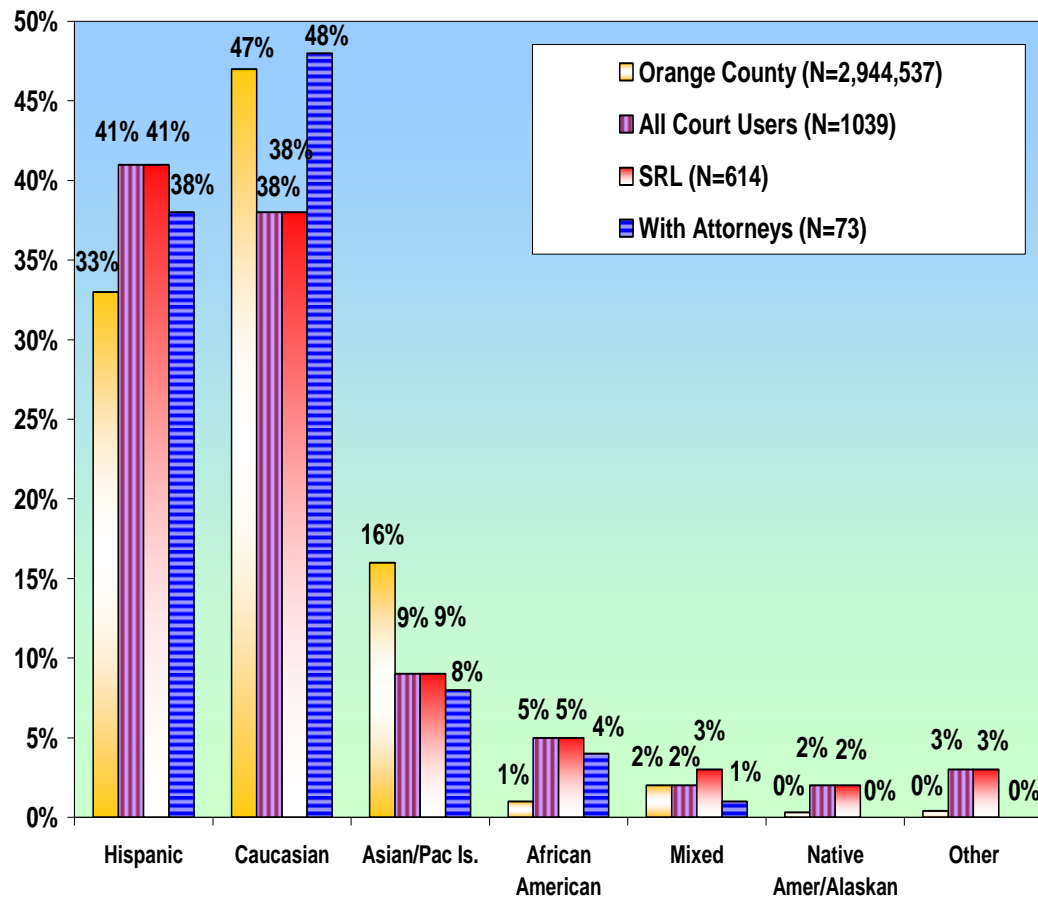
- Court users are typically quite young, especially in comparison to adults in Orange County.



	Orange County (N=2,944,537)	All Court Users (N=1,314)	SRLs (N=781)	With Attorneys (N=95)
18-29	15%	39%	40%	26%
30-39	15%	24%	25%	32%
40-49	16%	20%	20%	23%
50-59	12%	10%	9%	13%
60-69	7%	4%	3%	2%
70-79	5%	2%	1%	2%
>80	3%	1%	1%	0%

Race/Ethnicity

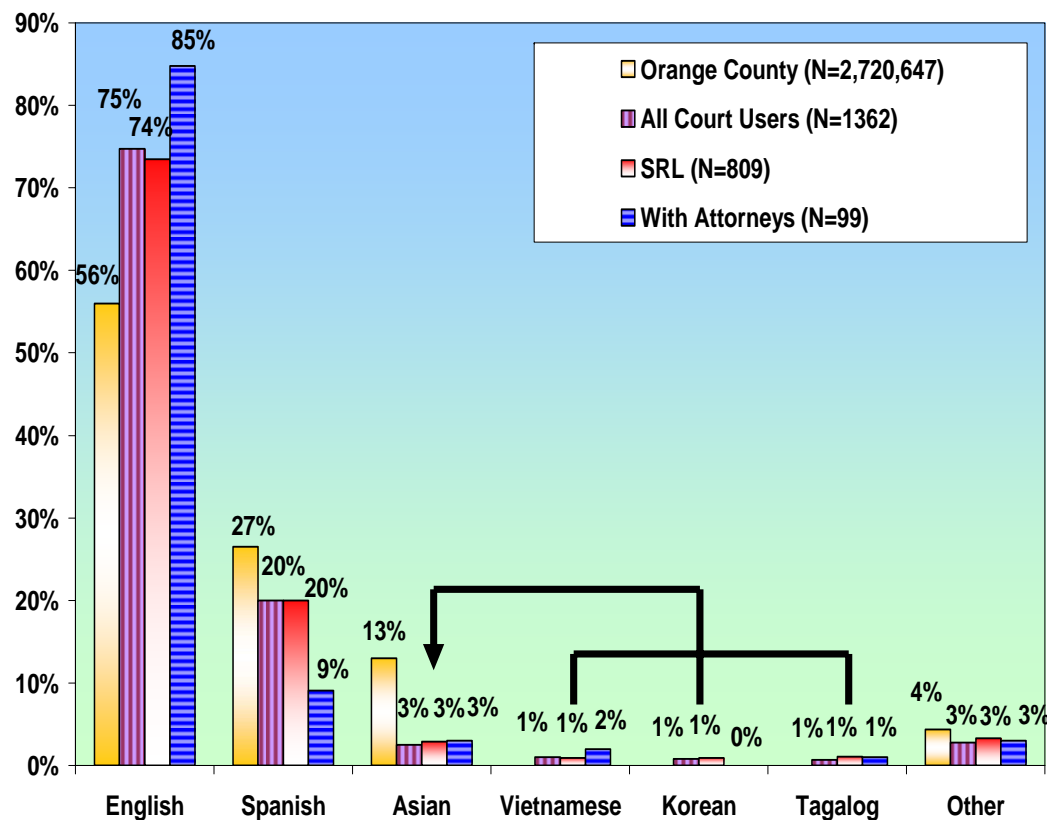
- The exit survey found slightly more Hispanics (41%) than Caucasians (38%). However, among court users with attorneys, there were more Caucasians (48%) than Hispanics (38%), which is more representative of Orange County residents. Also, if we take out the small claims and traffic cases, there are slightly more Caucasians than Hispanics in pro per cases as well.
- The exit survey picked up a smaller percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders than one would expect looking at the County census statistics. This may be an artifact of the survey process, or it may be that Asians are less likely to be at the court.



	Orange County (N=2,944,537)	All Court Users (N=1,039)	SRLs (N=614)	With Attorneys (N=73)
Hispanic	33%	41%	41%	38%
Caucasian	47%	38%	38%	48%
Asian/Pac Is.	16%	9%	9%	8%
African American	1%	5%	5%	4%
Mixed	2%	2%	3%	1%
Native Am./Alaskan	0%	2%	2%	0%
Other	0%	3%	3%	0%

Language

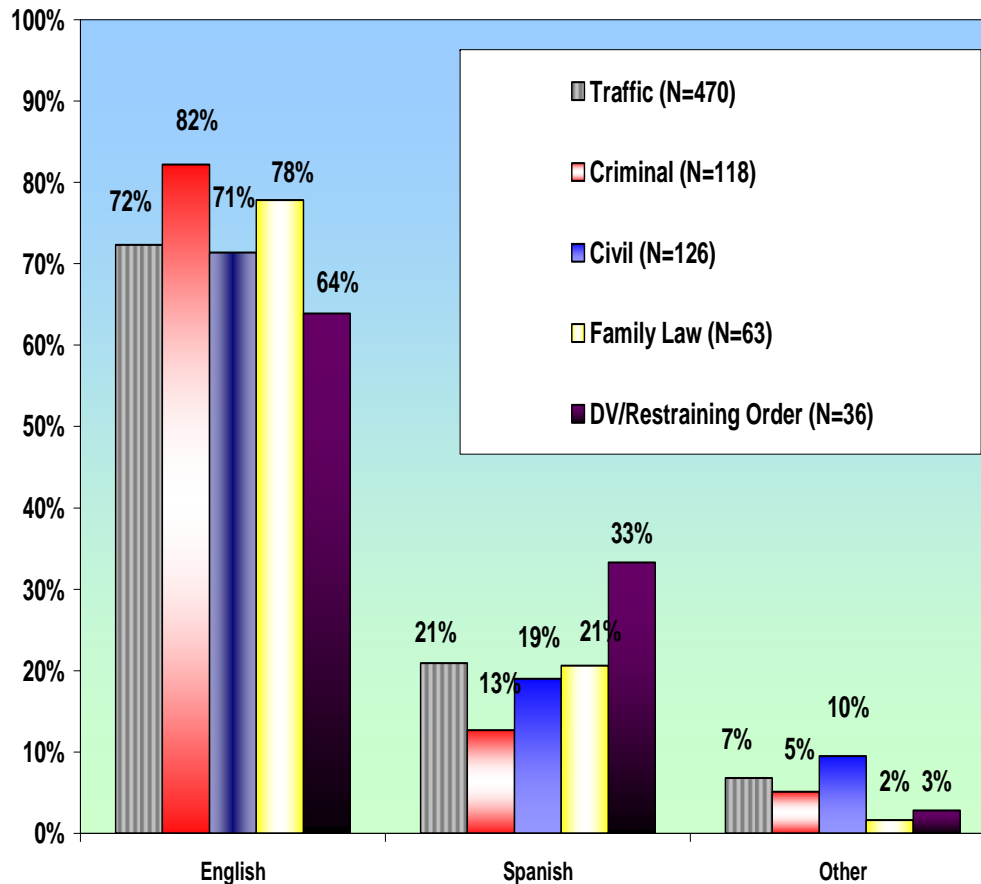
- Approximately 75% of court users speak English as the primary language at home, 20% speak Spanish, 1% speak Vietnamese, slightly less than 1% speak Tagalog, and another 3% speak other languages. In comparison to Orange County residents, a higher percentage of court users speak English as the primary language, and a smaller percentage speak an Asian language.
- We see a drop from 20% Spanish speakers for court users in general, to 9% Spanish speakers among those with attorneys.



	Orange County (N=2,720,647)	All Court Users (N=1,362)	SRLs (N=809)	With Attorneys (N=99)
English	56%	75%	74%	85%
Spanish	27%	20%	20%	9%
Asian	13%	3%	3%	3%
Vietnamese		1%	1%	2%
Korean		1%	1%	0%
Tagalog		1%	1%	1%
Other	4%	3%	3%	3%

Language – SRLs by Case Type

- Overall, a high percentage of SRLs speak English as their primary language across different types of cases (ranging from 64% in DV/ Restraining Order cases to 82% in Criminal cases).
- The next highest percentage of SRLs speak Spanish as their primary language. There are more Spanish SRLs speakers in Domestic Violence/Restraining Order cases (33%) followed by Family Law (21%) and Traffic (21%) cases.

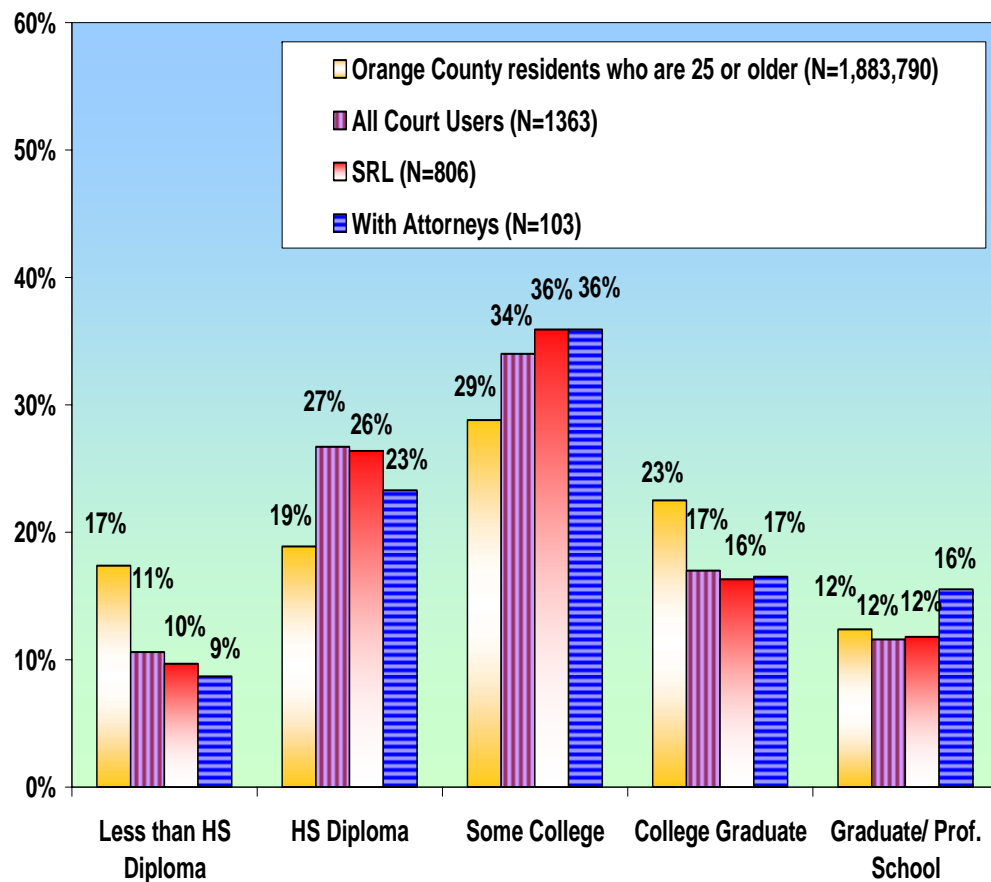


	Traffic (N=470)	Criminal (N=118)	Civil (N=126)	Family Law (N=63)	DV/Restraining Order (N=36)
English	72%	82%	71%	78%	64%
Spanish	21%	13%	19%	21%	33%
Other	7%	5%	10%	2%	3%

****Self-represented Litigants****

Education

The majority of court users have a high school degree or a high school degree plus some college credits.

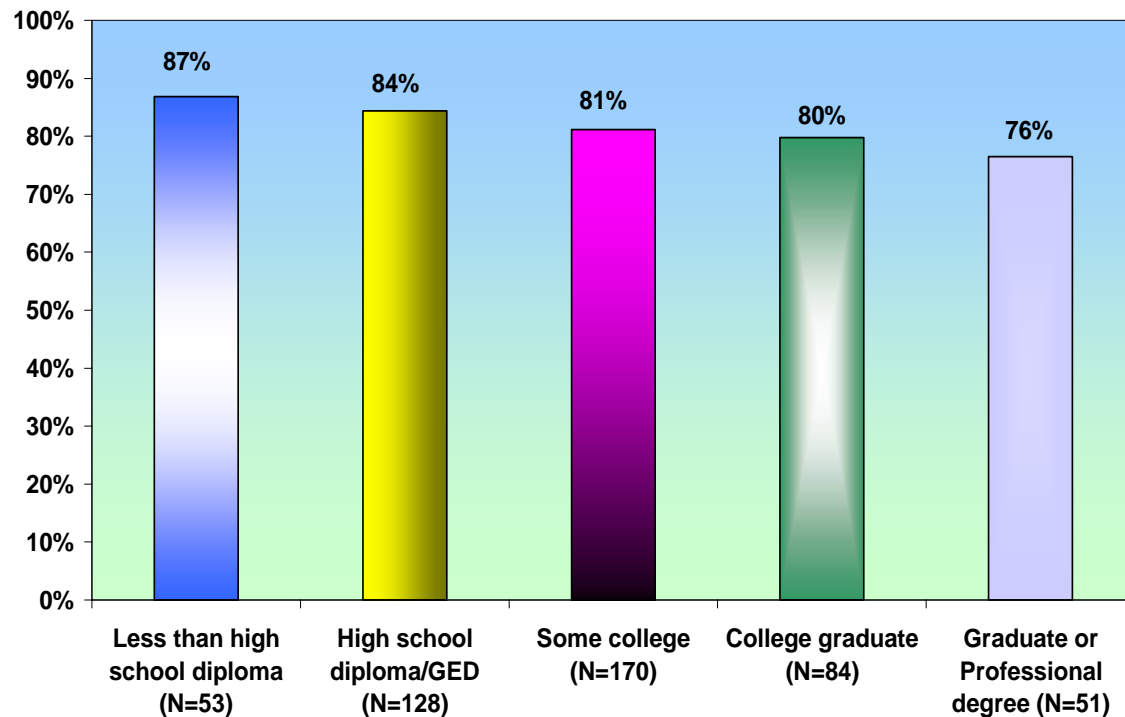


	Orange County residents who are 25 or older (N=1,883,790)	All Court Users (N=1363)	SRL (N=806)	With Attorneys (N=103)
Less than HS Diploma	17%	11%	10%	9%
HS Diploma	19%	27%	26%	23%
Some College	29%	34%	36%	36%
College Graduate	23%	17%	16%	17%
Graduate/ Prof. School	12%	12%	12%	16%

Education

We see a pattern of slightly lower percentages of self-represented litigants among court users with higher levels of education. However, the results are not statistically significant with the current sample size.

Education for SRLs⁷

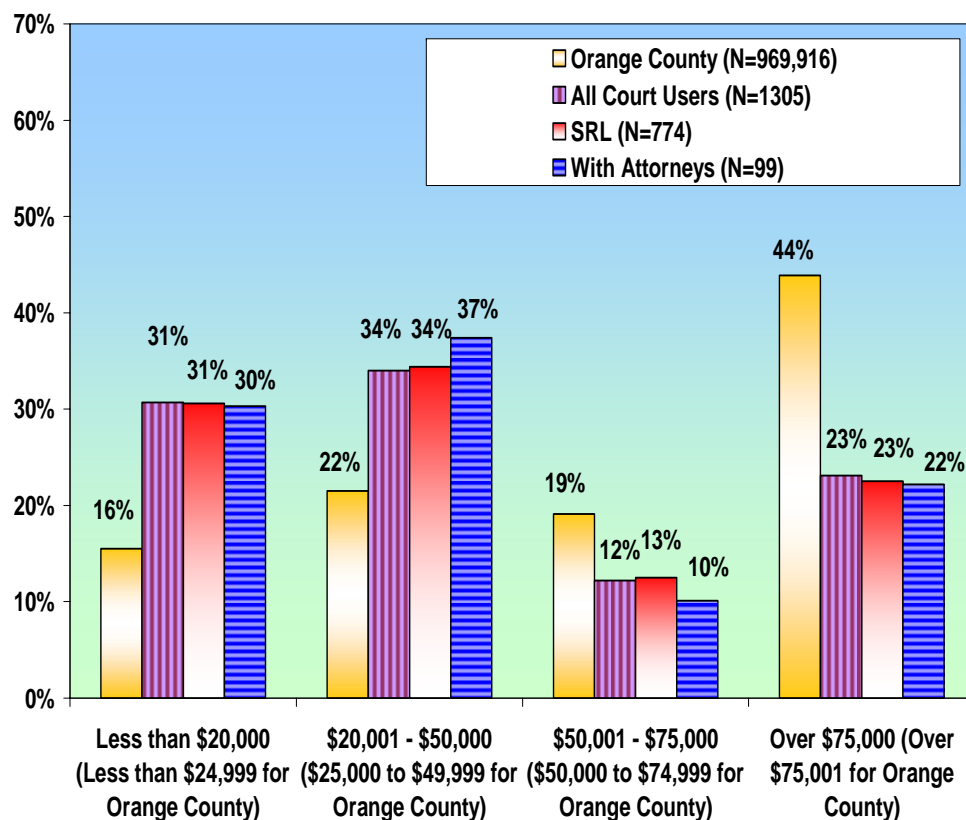


	SRLs
Less than high school diploma (N=53)	87%
High School diploma (N=128)	84%
Some college (N=170)	81%
College graduate (N=84)	80%
Graduate or Professional degree (N=51)	76%

⁷ Those at the court for small claims and traffic cases have been removed from this analysis.

Household Income

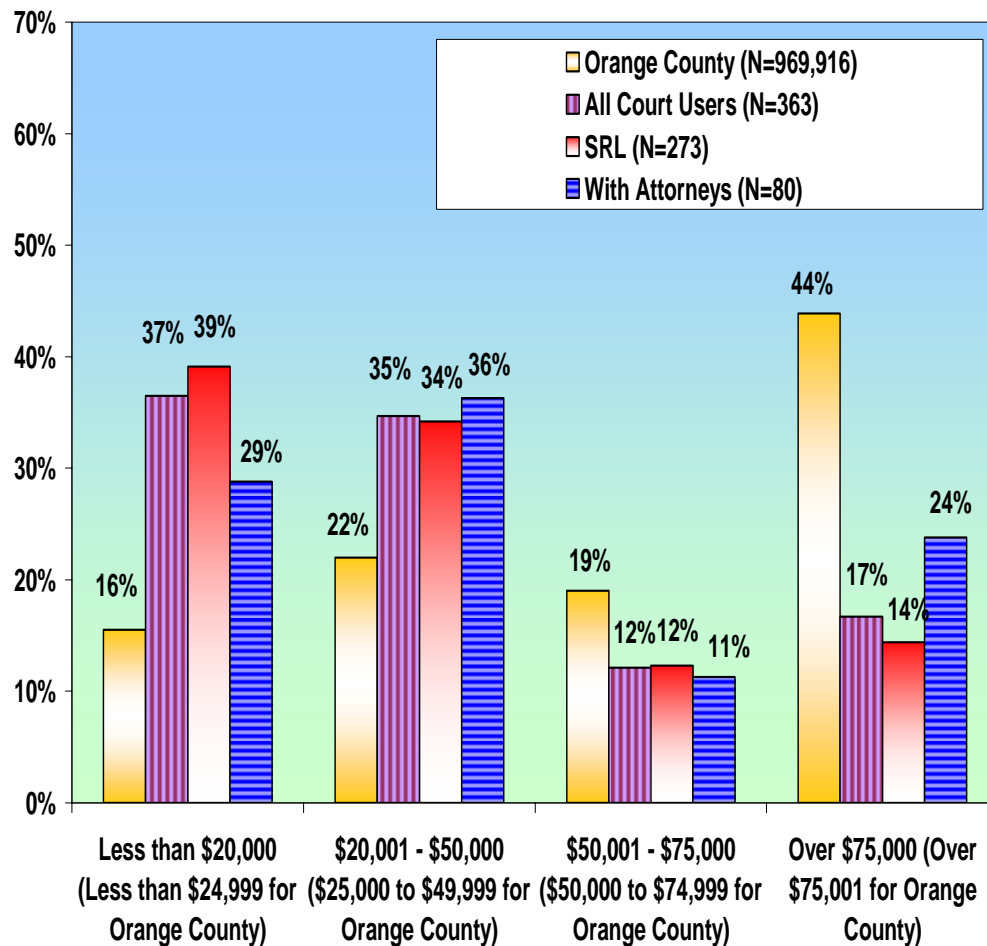
- 31% of court users have household incomes at or below \$20,000. Another 34% are at or below \$50,000. Only 12% have household incomes between \$50,001 - \$75,000. A total of 23% report household incomes of \$75,001 or above. Compared to Orange County residents, a higher percentage of court users have household incomes of less than \$20,000, while a fewer percentage of them have household incomes of \$75,000 or above.⁸



	Orange County (N=969,916)	All Court Users (N=1,305)	SRLs (N=774)	With Attorneys (N=99)
Less than \$20,000 (Less than \$24,999 for Orange County)	16%	31%	31%	30%
\$20,001 - \$50,000 (\$25,000 to \$49,999 for Orange County)	22%	34%	34%	37%
\$50,001 - \$75,000 (\$50,000 to \$74,999 for Orange County)	19%	12%	13%	10%
Over \$75,000 (Over \$75,001 for Orange County)	44%	23%	23%	22%

⁸ Note the difference in reporting brackets for the lowest two household income categories used by the Court User Survey versus the US Census.

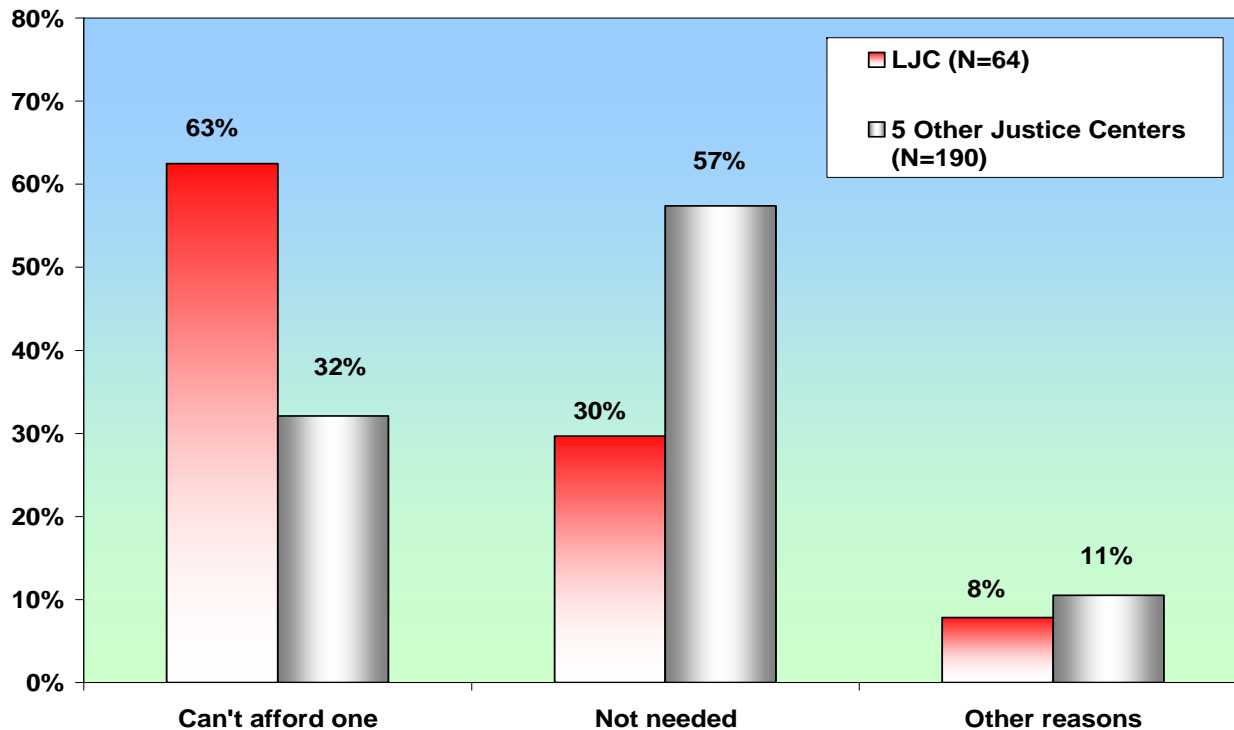
- When we take out the Traffic and Small Claims cases, we see differences in household incomes between SRLs and those with attorneys. A higher percentage of SRLs (39%) have household incomes of less than \$20,000 than do those with attorneys (29%), while conversely, a smaller percentage of SRLs (14%) have household incomes of greater than \$75,000 compared to those with attorneys (24%).



	Orange County (N=969,916)	All Court Users (N=363)	SRLs (N=273)	With Attorneys (N=80)
Less than \$20,000 (Less than \$24,999 for Orange County)	16%	37%	39%	29%
\$20,001 - \$50,000 (\$25,000 to \$49,999 for Orange County)	22%	35%	34%	36%
\$50,001 - \$75,000 (\$50,000 to \$74,999 for Orange County)	19%	12%	12%	11%
Over \$75,000 (Over \$75,001 for Orange County)	44%	17%	14%	24%

Reason for Not Having an Attorney

- We examined the reasons why respondents did not have an attorney for all those who came to the court for cases other than Traffic and Small Claims.
- The results were different at LJC than at the other justice centers. At LJC, 63% stated that they could not afford an attorney, while only 30% stated that they did not see a need for an attorney.
- At the five other justice centers, 32% said they could not afford an attorney, whereas 57% stated that they did not see a need for an attorney.

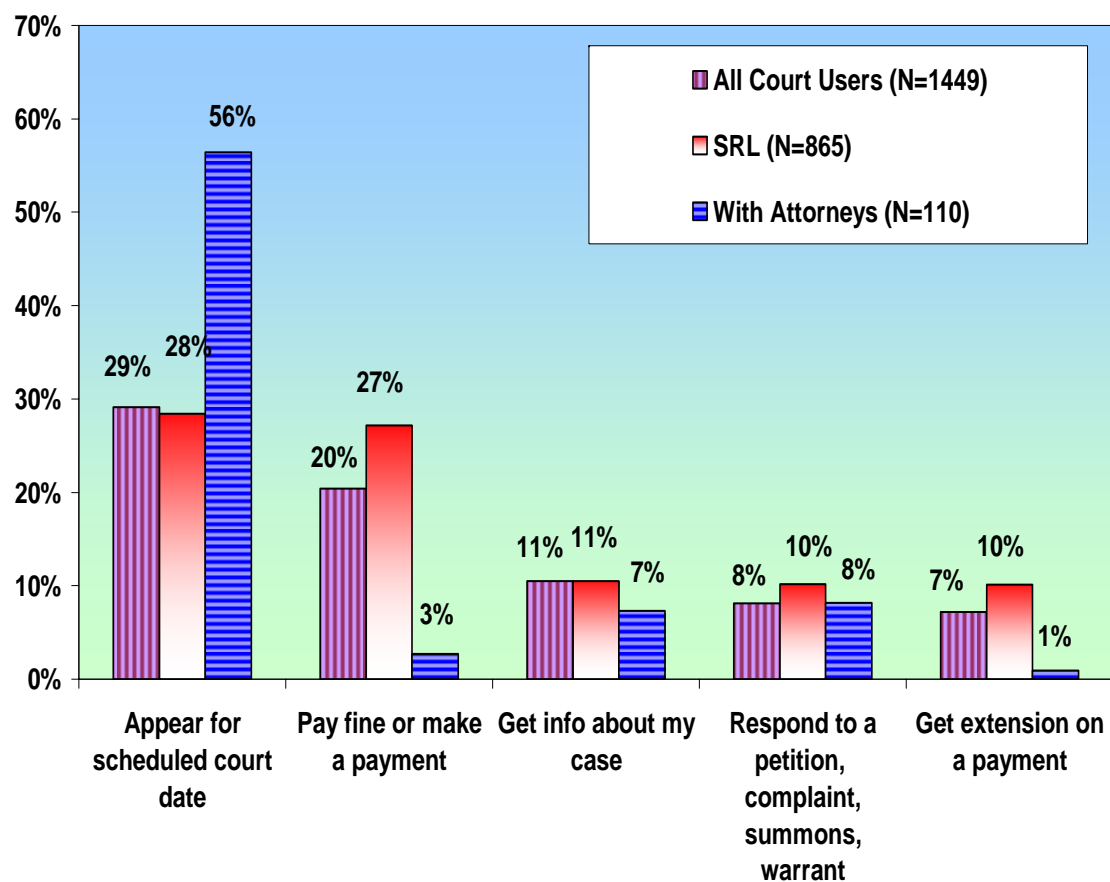


	LJC (N=64)	5 Other Justice Centers (N=190)
Can not afford one	63%	32%
Not needed	30%	57%
Other reasons	8%	11%

****Without Traffic & Small Claims****

Reasons for Coming to Court

- In general, court users reported coming to the court primarily to appear for a scheduled court date (29%), to pay a fine or make a payment (20%). Another 26% were at the court for one of three reasons: to get information on a case, to respond to a petition, complaint, summons or warrant, or to get an extension on a payment.
- Slightly more than half (56%) of those who had attorneys with them were at the court to appear for a scheduled court date.



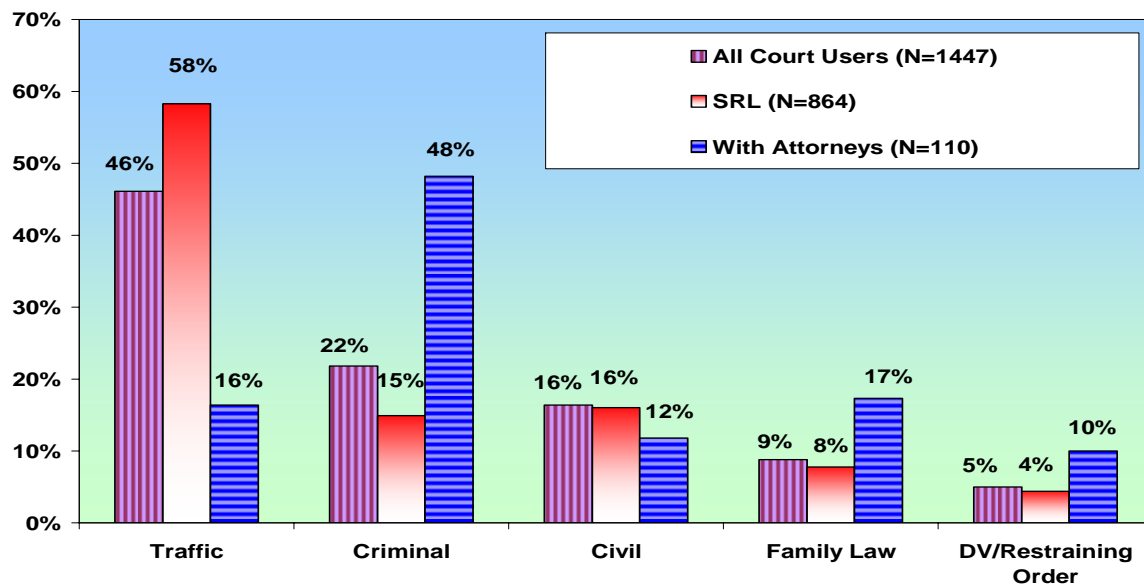
	All Court Users (N=1,449)	SRLs (N=865)	With Attorneys (N=110)
Appear for scheduled court date	29%	28%	56%
Pay fine or make a payment	20%	27%	3%
Get info about my case	11%	11%	7%
Respond to a petition, complaint, summons, warrant	8%	10%	8%
Get extension on a payment	7%	10%	1%

Case Types

Almost half of the respondents (46%) came to the court on a traffic related matter, 22% came for a criminal matter, 16% for a civil matter⁹, 9% for a family law matter, and 5% on a domestic violence/restraining order matter.

Case Types for Self-Represented Litigants versus those with Attorneys

- The case types with the largest percentages for self-represented litigants were Traffic (58%), Civil (16%), Criminal (15%), and Family Law (8%). Another 4% of SRLs had DV/Restraining Order cases.¹⁰
- The case types with the largest percentages for litigants with representation were criminal (48%), family law (17%), traffic (16%), and civil (12%). Another 10% of litigants with representation had DV/Restraining Order cases.



	All Court Users (N=1,447)	SRLs (N=864)	With Attorneys (N=110)
Traffic	46%	58%	16%
Criminal	22%	15%	48%
Civil	16%	16%	12%
Family Law	9%	8%	17%
DV/Restraining Order	5%	4%	10%

⁹ 51% of the civil cases were small claims, 11% were unlawful detainer cases, 3% were landlord/tenant cases, 2% were homeownership/real property cases, 3% were torts, and another 30% were "other" civil cases.

¹⁰ 2005-2006 Orange County Judicial Statistics indicate the following case filing percentages: traffic - 68%, civil - 15%, criminal - 10%, family law - 5%.

Services Used

- Respondents were asked which services they used at the court on the day of the survey. The most frequently used services among the self-represented litigants are noted on the next pages. Note that “Court Resource Bureau (Help Desk)” was selected even at justice centers where there is no CRB. We can only assume that the court users received help from another source and checked this box. Also, it is likely that many court users interpreted, “Court Interpreter Services” to simply mean any type of translation assistance received that day, not only the true court interpreter services in the formal sense.
- At most justice centers, “Staff at Court Windows” was by far the most frequently used resource, followed by the “Court Resource Bureau” (or other personal help services) and the “Court Website”. North Justice Center (NJC) results were slightly different, and as would be expected, Lamoreaux Justice Center (LJC) results were significantly different.
- “Court Interpreter Services” and “Small Claims Advisor” were also among the top 6 categories for most justice centers.
- “Orange County Legal Aid Society” and the “Public Law Center” did not show up in services used by SRLs at all justice centers, but did show up among the top 6 services for services used by respondents who indicated they had attorney representation.
- Those who completed the survey at NJC selected the “I-CAN Kiosks” as a frequently used service.
- At LJC, the most frequently used services were the “Self-Help Center” followed by “Court Staff at Windows”, “Family Law Facilitator”, “Court Website”, “Court Interpreter Services”, “Court Resource Bureau”, and “Self-Help Workshops”.

Services Used by Self-Represented Litigants

- By far the most frequently used service is “court staff at the windows”. The Website, Court Resource Bureau (Help Desk), Small Claims Advisor, Self-Help Center and Interpreter Services were also reported as being used by a significant percentage of self-represented litigants.

All Justice Centers	
Court staff at windows	54%
Superior Court website	13%
Court Resources Bureau (Help Desk)	8%
Small Claims Advisor	8%
Self-Help Center	7%
Court Interpreter Services	6%
I-CAN Kiosks	2%
Family Law Facilitator	2%
Public Law Center	2%
OC Legal Aid Society	2%
Self-Help Workshop	2%
Number	665

Services Used Most Frequently by Self-Represented Litigants at Each Justice Center:¹¹

- Some difference in most frequently used services are seen at Lamoreaux Justice Center and, to a smaller extent, at North Justice Center.

CJC		WJC		NJC	
Court staff at windows	52%	Court staff at windows	53%	Court staff at windows	59%
Court Resource Bureau ¹²	16%	Court Resource Bureau ¹²	15%	Superior Court Website	14%
Superior Court Website	11%	Superior Court Website	13%	Small Claims Advisor	11%
Small Claims Advisor	10%	Small Claims Advisor	13%	Court Resource Bureau ¹²	9%
Court Interpreter Services	2%	Court Interpreter Services	3%	Court Interpreter Services	6%
				I-Can Kiosks	4%
				OC Legal Aid Society	4%
HJC-NB		HJC-LH		LJC	
Court staff at windows	61%	Court staff at windows	57%	Self-Help Center	41%
Superior Court Website	18%	Superior Court Website	11%	Court staff at windows	20%
Court Resource Bureau ¹²	11%	Court Resource Bureau ¹²	7%	Family Law Facilitator	17%
Court Interpreter Services	6%	Court Interpreter Services	4%	Superior Court Website	13%
Small Claims Advisor	6%	Small Claims Advisor	3%	Court Interpreter Services	9%
Public Law Center	5%			Court Resources Bureau ¹²	7%
				Self-Help Workshops ¹³	6%
				Public Law Center ^{14, 15}	

¹¹ OC Legal Aid Society services were listed primarily among those who reported having attorney representation. Over all justice centers, 2% of all court users used Legal Aid services. At LJC, 7% reported using Legal Aid services, and at NJC 5% reported using these services.

¹² “Court Resource Bureau/Help Desk” was selected even at justice centers without a CRB. Therefore, we assume that these numbers include help services received through other personal means (at the windows, by the sheriff, etc.)

¹³ The respondents may have been referring to facilitator workshops since the self-help workshops had not yet begun at the time of the survey.

¹⁴ The Public Law Center was indicated as a service used by 6% of litigants at LJC who had attorney representation.

¹⁵ Mediation was not listed as a choice for the respondents to select. However, several wrote comments indicating they had received mediation services.

Services Used Most Frequently by Self-Represented Litigants – by Case Type

- Most frequently used services for **traffic** cases were “Court Staff at Window”, “Superior Court Website”, “Court Resource Bureau” (or other personal help), and “Court Interpreter Services”.
- Most frequently used services for **criminal** cases were: “Court Staff at Window”, the “Court Resource Bureau” (or other personal help), and “Superior Court Website”.
- Most frequently used services for **civil** cases were: “Court Staff at Window”, “Small Claims Advisor”, “Court Resource Bureau” (or other personal help), and “Superior Court Website”.
- Services mentioned for **DV/Restraining Order** were “Court Staff at Window”, “Court Interpreter Services”, and “Self-Help Center”.¹⁶
- Services used for **family law** included “Self-Help Center”, “Court Staff at Windows”, “Court Interpreter Services”, “Family Law Facilitator”, “Superior Court Website”, and “Court Resource Bureau”.
- Services used for **probate** were a smattering of “Superior Court Website”, “Court Staff at Window”, “Public Law Facilitator”, “Court Interpreter Services”, and “Court Resource Bureau” or other personal help service.¹⁷

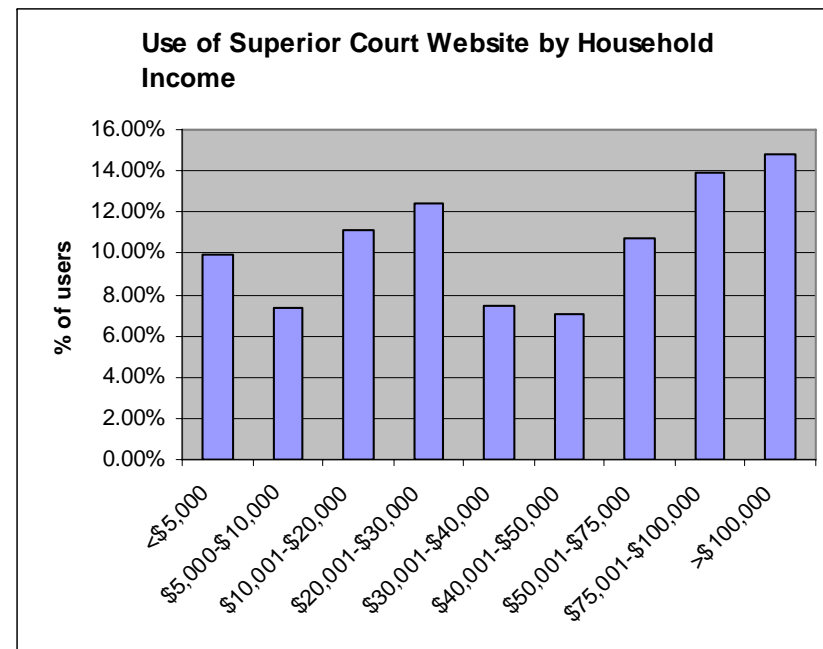
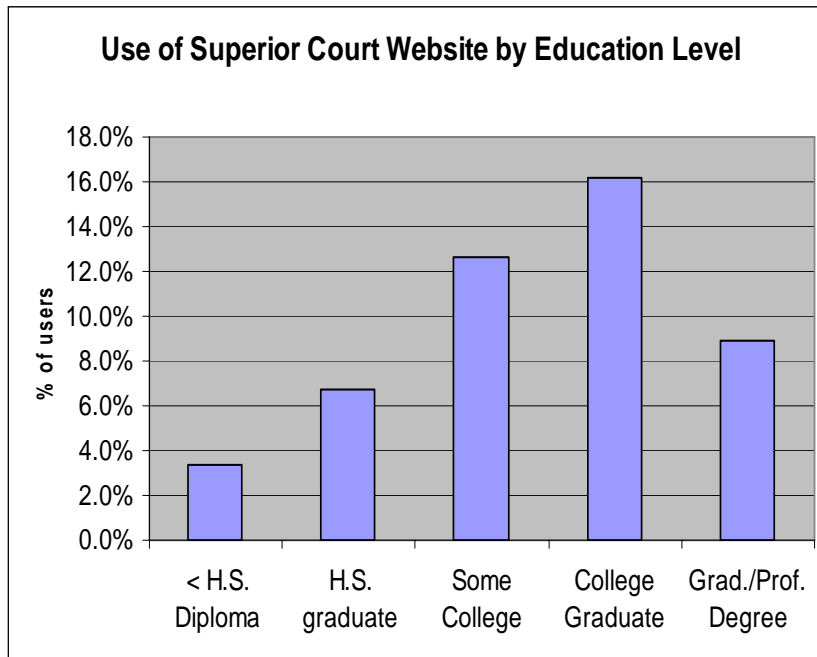
¹⁶ The numbers in the sample were very small. Results may be unreliable.

¹⁷ Same as footnote # 16.

Use of the Court Website by Income and Education

The Court Website was listed as one of the most frequently used services used most often. An examination of the educational level and household income of those who reported using the website indicated that:

- The website is used by those with some college experience or a college degree.
- Household income seems to be less of a predictor of website use. Although the highest usage rate (14%) is for those who have household incomes of \$75,000 or more, those with household incomes less than \$5,000 use the website at only a slightly lower rate (10%).



Did you get the information you needed today?

- Across all justice centers, an average of 86% of self-represented litigants reported they were able to get the information they needed. However, there were significant areas of difference among justice centers and case types.
- Satisfaction with information received was fairly high at all justice centers except at LJC.

SRLs Satisfaction with Getting Needed Information By Justice Center

	CJC	WJC	NJC	HJC-NB	HJC-LH	LJC	All Justice Center
Yes	92.1%	80.2%	87.2%	87.6%	90.5%	64.6%	86.1%
No	7.9%	19.8%	12.8%	12.4%	9.5%	35.4%	13.9%
Number	165	106	164	170	126	65	796

- Looking across case types, satisfaction with information received was comparatively high for all case types except for family law cases.

SRLs Satisfaction with Getting Needed Information By Case Type

	Traffic	Criminal	Civil	DV/Restraining Order	Family Law	Other*
Yes	87.4%	85.7%	88.1%	91.7%	67.2%	86.7%
No	12.6%	14.3%	11.9%	8.3%	32.8%	13.3%
Number	453	119	126	36	67	15

*Other cases include Civil Harassment and Probate

Were you able to complete what you came to the court to do today?

- Across all justice centers, an average of 79% of self-represented litigants reported they were able to complete what they had come to do at the court on the day of the survey. Once again, self-represented litigants indicated they were less satisfied with what they had been able to complete at LJC and for family law matters.

SRLs Reported Ability to Complete What They Came to Do at the Court By Justice Center

	CJC	WJC	NJC	HJC-NB	HJC-LH	LJC	All Justice Center
Yes	82.6%	83.0%	82.9%	83.1%	77.0%	51.5%	79.4%
No	17.4%	17.0%	17.1%	16.9%	23.0%	48.5%	20.6%
Number	167	106	164	172	135	66	810

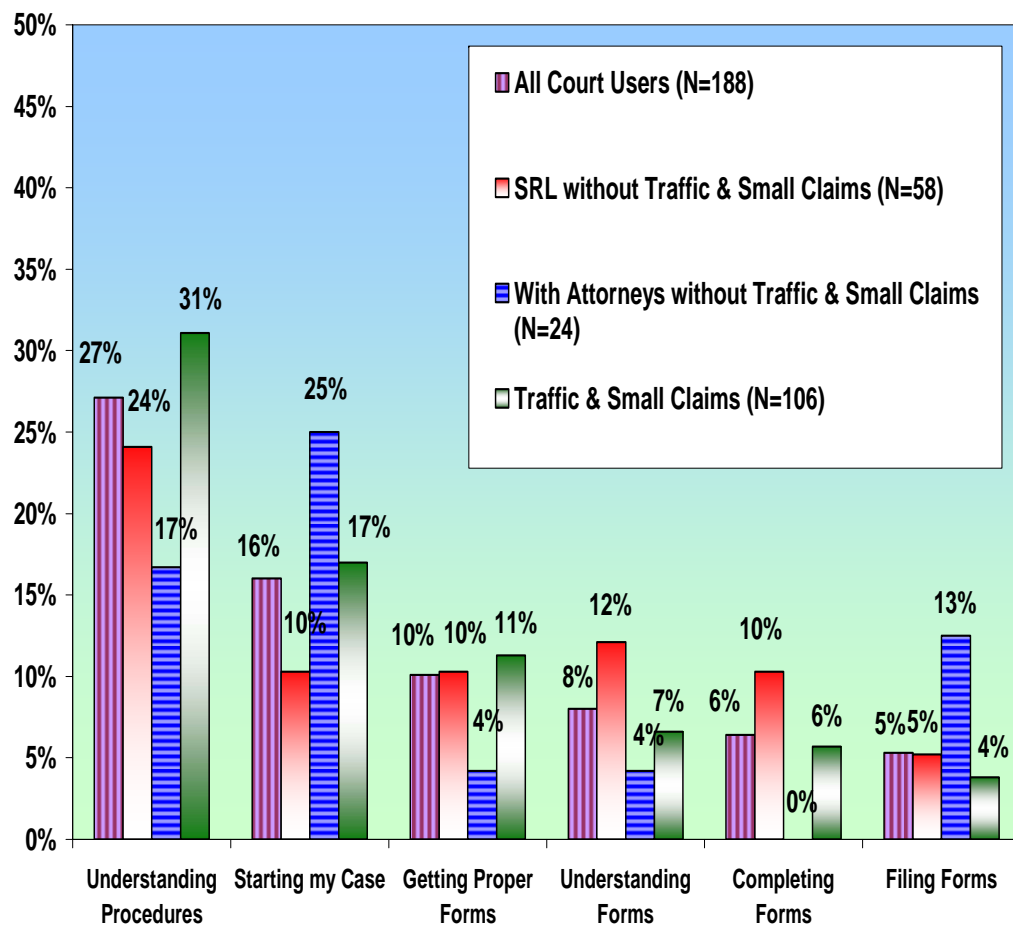
SRLs Reported Ability to Complete What They Came to Do at the Court By Case Type

	Traffic	Criminal	Civil	DV/Restraining Order	Family Law	Other*
Yes	82.2%	83.5%	78.5%	76.3%	55.2%	71.4%
No	17.8%	16.5%	21.5%	23.7%	44.8%	28.6%
Number	460	121	130	38	67	14

*Other cases include Civil Harassment and Probate

Additional Services Needed

- Most SRLs, including Traffic & Small Claims litigants, requested assistance in “understanding procedures”, followed by “starting my case”, and “getting, completing and filing forms.”



	All Court Users (N=188)	SRLs without Traffic & Small Claims (N=58)	With Attorney without Traffic & Small Claims (N=24)	Traffic & Small Claims (N=106)
Understanding Procedures	27%	24%	17%	31%
Starting my Case	16%	10%	25%	17%
Getting Proper Forms	10%	10%	4%	11%
Understanding Forms	8%	12%	4%	7%
Completing Forms	6%	10%	0%	6%
Filing Forms	5%	5%	13%	4%

For only cases that did not complete what they came to do

Additional Services Needed – Family Law

- Self-represented litigants in Family Law who reported they were unable to complete what they came to the court to do, stated they needed more help mostly with “understanding court procedures,” “case continued” (moving a case to completion), “getting proper forms,” “completing forms, and filing forms.”

Family Law	SRLs
Understanding Court procedures	22.2%
Case continued	18.5%
Getting proper forms	18.5%
Completing forms	11.1%
Filing forms	11.1%
Understanding forms	7.4%
Starting my case	7.4%
Custody rights	3.7%
Finding the right court	3.7%
Guardianship	3.7%
Info on how to find an attorney	3.7%
Info on how to transfer out of OC	3.7%
Need some pens	3.7%
Having a court hearing	0.0%
Having the respondent show up	0.0%
More efficient screening in the court	0.0%
Number	27

Summary Comments from Court Users

Court users wrote a wide variety of short comments including some in Spanish which have been translated. Some are quite helpful to read. The comments may be found at the green tab under the “Court User Survey” Tab. They have been categorized by justice center and by case type.

Conclusions from the Court User Survey

A representative sample of court users was obtained. The sample provided information regarding demographics of general court users and additional information regarding the needs of self-represented litigants.

Most court users reported coming to the court to appear for a scheduled court date (29%), to pay a fine or make a payment, or to respond to a petition, complaint, summons or warrant, or to get an extension on a payment. The typical court user is most likely to be a young male Hispanic or Caucasian adult who speaks English as the primary language at home, has a high school diploma and perhaps some college credits, and has a household income well below \$50,000. A vast majority of our court users come to the justice centers without an attorney. In fact, of the 984 court users who stated that they were a petitioner/plaintiff or respondent/defendant on a case, only 11% indicated that they had an attorney representing them on the day of the survey.

Although approximately 20% of court users speak Spanish as the primary language at home, only 9% of those with attorneys are Spanish speakers. In addition, those with an attorney are somewhat more likely to have a household income over \$75,000 and less likely to have an income of less than \$20,000. Court users at Lamoreaux Justice Center were more likely to say that the reason for not having an attorney was due to affordability, whereas those at the other justice centers were more likely to say that the reason for not having an attorney was that they did not see a need for one (even when those who were at the court for small claims and traffic cases were taken out of the analysis). At LJC, 63% stated that they did not have an attorney because they could not afford one; at the other justice centers, 32% stated that they did not have one because they could not afford one.

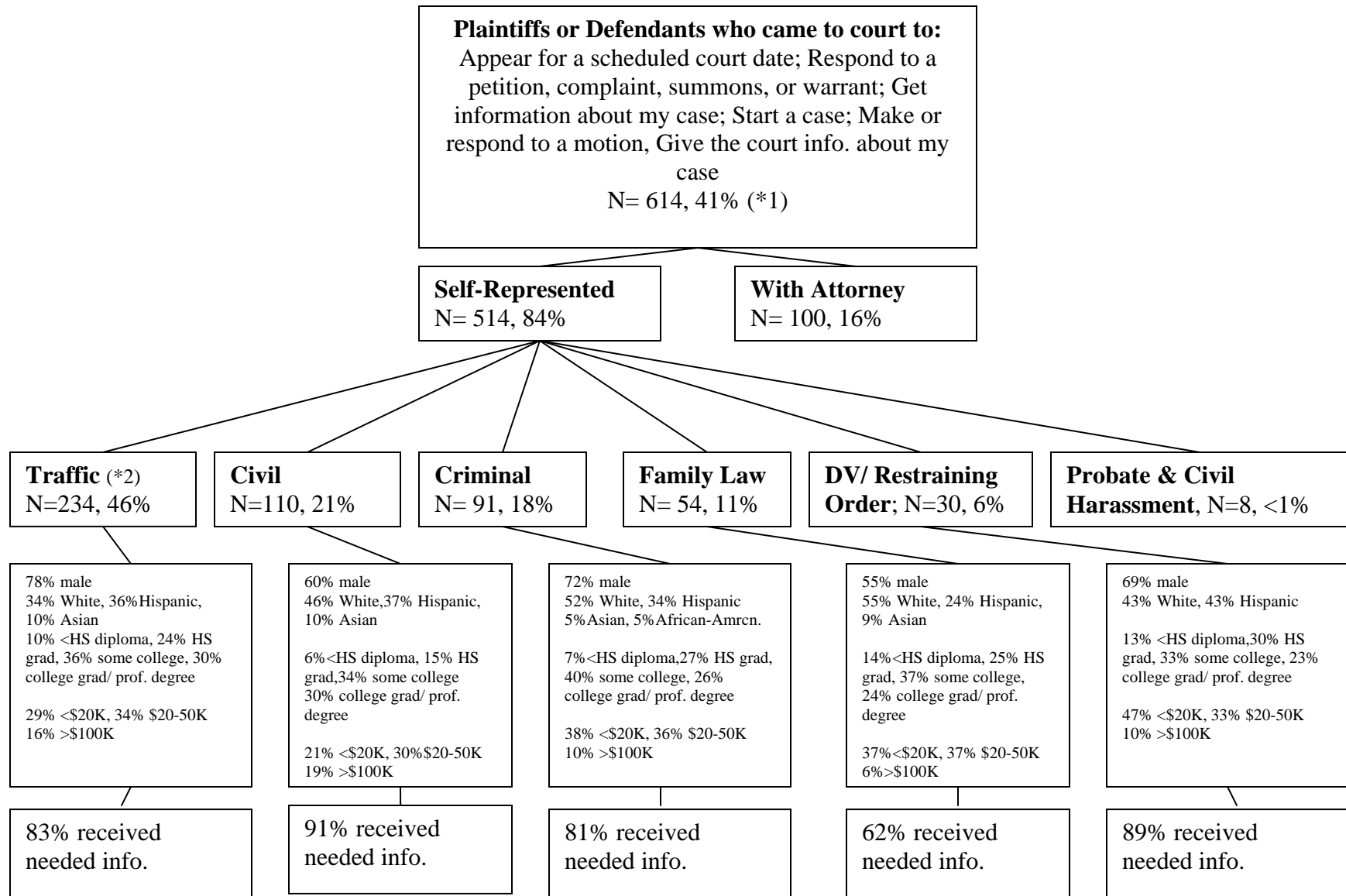
By far the most frequently used service by self-represented litigants was “court staff at the windows”. This was true at all justice centers except at Lamoreaux, where the most frequently used service was the self-help center. Other frequently used services included the Court Resource Bureau, the Website, the small claims advisor, and interpreter assistance. Also selected were OC Legal Aid Society and the Public Law Center, the I-CAN Kiosks, and workshops and mediation at Lamoreaux, but the percentages of reported use for these services were quite low.

An average of 81% of self-represented litigants reported that they were able to get the information they needed. The percentage was higher for those who were at the court for traffic and small claims, but the percentage was lower for family law matters (and at Lamoreaux).

Not as many court users were able to complete what they came to do at the court. 76% of self-represented litigants reported that they were able to complete what they came to do at the court that day. A lower number of those with family law cases were able to complete their goal for the day.

Self-represented litigants who reported that they were unable to complete what they came to do, indicated that they needed services to help with “understanding court procedures”, “starting my case”, and “getting proper forms”. In family law matters, self-represented litigants stated they needed help with understanding court procedures, with cases being continued, and taking care of the proper forms.

A visual representation of an analysis of needs for self-represented litigant, as indicated by the court user survey results, is encapsulated in the flow chart on the following page.



Results of the Self-Help Online Staff and Judicial Officer Survey

In addition to the Self-Help Court User survey, staff and judicial officers with regular contact with self-represented litigants (SRLs) were invited to complete an online survey. (See the “Staff/Judicial Officer Survey” Tab)

- A total of 285 individuals completed the survey
- 100 (35%) stated that they have regular contact with SRLs at the counter
- 109 (39%) stated that have regular contact with them in the courtroom
- 76 (26%) stated that they do not have regular contact in their current position, but that they saw SRLs in their previous position, deal with them indirectly, or have less than regular contact with them
- Those who responded to the Staff/Judicial Officer Survey reported they see SRLs primarily in Traffic (30%), Criminal (28%), Family Law (26%), Domestic Violence/Civil Harassments (24%), Small Claims (23%), and other case types in smaller percentages (see the table on the next page.)¹⁸

¹⁸ Respondents were able to select more than one case type. Percentages add up to over 100%)

Respondents Who Reported Having Regular Contact with Self-Represented Litigants by Case Type

Table 1: Case Type (More than one case type could be checked by each respondent.)	Number of respondents who see SRL in each area.
Traffic	86
Criminal	80
Small Claims	65
Limited Civil	54
General Civil	38
Complex Civil	0
Torts	19
Homeownership/Real Property	13
Landlord/Tenant	44
Family Law (in general)	74
Child or Spousal Support	46
Child Custody/Visitation	49
Paternity	40
Divorce/Separation/Annulment	46
Guardianship/Conservatorship	15
Domestic Violence/Civil Harassment	67
Will/Estate	10
Probate	15
Juvenile Dependency	9
Juvenile Delinquency	0
Mental Health	0

Questions Regarding Areas of Difficulties Faced by Self-Represented Litigants

Staff and judicial officer respondents were asked to indicate how often SRLs are able to perform six functions, or needs. Table 2, below, indicates the number of responses within each category.

Table 2: Areas of Need Across all Case Types

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Usually/Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
prepare documents correctly?	28 (13%)	144 (64%)	52 (23%)
follow court procedural rules?	28 (12%)	159 (68%)	47 (20%)
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	26 (14%)	100 (54%)	60 (32%)
"tell their story" effectively?	37 (17%)	131 (60%)	51 (23%)
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	29 (13%)	108 (47%)	90 (40%)
appear to understand the court's rulings?	70 (30%)	124 (52%)	42 (18%)

- If we examine the “Usually/Always” column, we see that only 12% - 17% of the respondents felt SRLs usually/always take care of each area well.
- For example, only 13% of respondents noted that SRLs usually prepare documents correctly.
- The only area of exception is “appearing to understand the court’s rulings”, where 30% of the respondents indicated SRLs usually understand.
- Looking at the “Almost Never” column, we see two areas where large numbers of respondents indicated a need: “having realistic expectations about the outcome” (40%), and “have the needed evidence or witnesses” (32%).
- In summary, staff and judicial officers report that SRLs have multiple needs.

Areas of Difficulties within Case Types

We can identify the areas of greatest need for SRLs by examining percentage of staff and judicial officers who selected “Almost Never” for questions within each case type. In Table 3, 28% of the respondents who see SRLs in the area of traffic indicated that SRLs almost never have realistic expectations about the outcome. On the other hand, there seem to be few problems with following court procedural rules (6%).

Table 3: Areas of Need – Traffic Cases

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never
prepare documents correctly?	15%
follow court procedural rules?	6%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	24%
"tell their story" effectively?	19%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	28%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	15%

Table 4: Areas of Need – Criminal

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never
prepare documents correctly?	13%
follow court procedural rules?	8%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	36%
"tell their story" effectively?	23%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	38%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	12%

The majority of criminal felony cases have either a private defense attorney or a public defender. Therefore, we might assume that respondents were referring to defendants in misdemeanor or infraction cases when they responded to these questions. As seen in Table 4, the two areas of greatest need are unrealistic expectations of outcomes (38%) and having the needed evidence or witnesses (36%).

Table 5: Areas of Need – Small Claims, Limited Civil, and General Civil Cases

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Small Claims	Almost Never Limited Civil	Almost Never General Civil
prepare documents correctly?	26%	16%	35%
follow court procedural rules?	18%	14%	27%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	43%	39%	50%
"tell their story" effectively?	24%	23%	32%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	43%	45%	44%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	20%	17%	18%

In the three areas of Small Claims, Limited Civil and General Civil, respondents indicated that SRLs have a need for evidence or witnesses and have unrealistic expectations about case outcomes. In addition, 35% of respondents who see SRLs in General Civil cases indicated that documents were almost never prepared correctly, and 32% indicated the SRLs almost never “tell their story” effectively. General Civil seems to be an area with relatively high need for SRL assistance.

Table 6: Areas of Need - Torts, Real Property, Landlord/Tenant Cases

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Torts	Almost Never Real Property	Almost Never Landlord/Tenant
prepare documents correctly?	63%	62%	29%
follow court procedural rules?	47%	46%	24%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	63%	67%	54%
"tell their story" effectively?	41%	46%	30%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	53%	75%	41%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	11%	17%	17%

In all three areas of torts, homeownership/real property and landlord/tenant, respondents indicated that SRLs have a need for evidence or witnesses. For torts and homeownership/real property, a high level of need was also indicated for document preparation and realistic expectations. Also, “following procedural rules” and “telling their story” effectively selected as an area of need by over 40% of the respondents who see SRLs in torts and real property.

Table 7: Areas of Need – Family Law, Child/Spousal Support, Child Custody

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Family Law	Almost Never Child/Spousal Support	Almost Never Child Custody Visitation
prepare documents correctly?	25%	25%	27%
follow court procedural rules?	28%	24%	24%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	38%	45%	38%
"tell their story" effectively?	32%	30%	28%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	37%	37%	40%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	15%	18%	19%

The highest reported areas of need in Family Law (in general) and in Child/Spousal Support and Child Custody/ Visitation are having the needed evidence or witnesses and having realistic expectations about the outcome. Preparing documents, following court procedural rules, and “telling the story” effectively are also areas of strong need. The only area with a relatively low level of need is “understanding the court’s rulings.”

Table 8: Areas of Need – Divorce/Separation/Annulment and Paternity

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Divorce/Separation	Almost Never Paternity
prepare documents correctly?	26%	26%
follow court procedural rules?	26%	24%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	40%	42%
"tell their story" effectively?	30%	32%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	36%	38%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	16%	18%

The areas of need indicated for Divorce/Separation/Annulment and for Paternity are very similar to those indicated in the previous table for Family Law (in general), Child/Spousal Support and Child Custody/Visitation.

Table 9: Areas of Need – Will/Estate, Probate, Guardianship/Conservatorship¹⁹

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Will/Estate	Almost Never Probate	Almost Never Guardianship/Conservatorship
prepare documents correctly?	30%	36%	38%
follow court procedural rules?	20%	20%	21%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	33%	42%	33%
"tell their story" effectively?	10%	9%	14%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	20%	20%	21%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	20%	13%	14%

In wills, estates and probate, SRLs have a strong level of need in all the areas except “telling their story effectively”. In guardianship/conservatorship, highest areas of need are preparing documents and needing evidence or witnesses.

Table 10: Areas of Need - Domestic Violence/Civil Harassment, Juvenile Dependency²⁰

How often do self-represented litigants in your cases....	Almost Never Domestic Violence/Civil Harassment	Almost Never Juvenile Dependency
prepare documents correctly?	19%	57%
follow court procedural rules?	19%	13%
have the needed evidence or witnesses?	35%	43%
"tell their story" effectively?	23%	44%
have realistic expectations about the outcome?	37%	44%
appear to understand the court's rulings?	14%	33%

In DV, over one-third of the respondents reported that SRLs almost never have realistic expectations about the outcome and almost never have the needed evidence or witnesses. The 9 staff/judicial officers who reported seeing SRLs in the area of juvenile dependency indicated a high level of need across all areas.

¹⁹ 10 or less respondents answered the questions regarding Will/Estate, and 15 or less answered the questions regarding Probate and Guardianship.

²⁰ Less than 10 respondents answered the questions for Juvenile Dependency.

Services That Would be Most Helpful to Self-Represented Litigants

Respondents to the staff/judicial officer survey were provided with a list of 11 possible services for SRLs and asked to select those which would be helpful. They were also asked to write comments regarding additional services that would be helpful.

Table 11 shows the percentage of respondents who selected each type of service across all case types:

Table 11: Suggested Services Across All Case Types

Services that would be helpful:	Percent of respondents
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	64%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	66%
An on-site pro per facilitator	66%
Toll-free help line	42%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	43%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	36%
Self-help centers	64%
Information desks	59%
Mobile self-help centers	23%
Self-help computers	50%
Augmented web capabilities	21%

The most frequently selected services across case types were checklists, on-site pro per facilitators, brochures, self-help centers, and information desks. Fifty percent of the respondents also selected self-help computers.

Respondents wrote additional suggestions regarding services needed into the survey form. These are noted below within each case type.

Table 12: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Traffic

Services that would be helpful:	Percent of respondents
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	63%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	65%
An on-site pro per facilitator	65%
Toll-free help line	48%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	47%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	37%
Self-help centers	59%
Information desks	61%
Mobile self-help centers	22%
Self-help computers	48%
Augmented web capabilities	24%

In Traffic, the services suggested most frequently included checklists, an on-site pro per facilitator, brochures describing the procedures and forms, information desks, and self-help centers.

Additional suggestions made via comments included downloadable forms and information, more signs (large ones) of L100 Traffic and K100 Criminal and Felony-DUI, and many suggestions to the effect that information must be in all languages, or at least in English and Spanish.

Table 13: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Criminal

Services that would be helpful:	Percent of respondents
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	63%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	65%
An on-site pro per facilitator	63%
Toll-free help line	50%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	39%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	39%
Self-help centers	64%
Information desks	61%
Mobile self-help centers	15%
Self-help computers	46%
Augmented web capabilities	20%

Again, respondents suggested checklists, brochures, an on-site facilitator, self-help centers and information desks. 50% of the respondents also suggested a toll-free help line.

Suggestions made via comments included several comments regarding the need for information in different languages, and a suggestion for videos that run before the court begins on “Big Screen” in the courtroom and during the break to explain process and procedure.

Table 14: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Small Claims, Limited Civil, General Civil

Services that would be helpful:	Small Claims	Limited Civil	General Civil
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	74%	83%	76%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	85%	85%	74%
An on-site pro per facilitator	74%	80%	74%
Toll-free help line	55%	63%	47%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	52%	48%	42%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	45%	44%	45%
Self-help centers	72%	72%	71%
Information desks	60%	70%	63%
Mobile self-help centers	37%	33%	26%
Self-help computers	55%	61%	55%
Augmented web capabilities	29%	30%	24%

Other Service Comments –Small Claims

Downloadable forms and information
 Explanation of small claims decisions upon request
 Information in different languages
 More alternate dispute resolution
 Information in English/Spanish
 Materials in other languages
 Small claims advisors in CJC

Other Service Comments – Small Claims

Bilingual on-site facilitators
 Downloadable forms and information
 Information in different languages more alternate dispute resolution

Other Service Comments – General Civil

Information in different languages
 Informational handouts tailored to the filing: appeal, motion etc.

Table 15: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Torts, Homeownership/Real Property, Landlord/Tenant

Services that would be helpful:	Torts	Real Property	Landlord/Tenant
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	80%	77%	84%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	79%	77%	84%
An on-site pro per facilitator	74%	85%	77%
Toll-free help line	53%	62%	61%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	42%	31%	43%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	53%	54%	50%
Self-help centers	79%	77%	75%
Information desks	68%	69%	73%
Mobile self-help centers	37%	46%	36%
Self-help computers	63%	62%	66%
Augmented web capabilities	32%	23%	39%

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services: – Torts

Information in different languages

More alternate dispute resolution

Information in English and Spanish

Provide all services and materials in other languages that also help pro pers understand the court policies and procedures

I do not think pro per services are needed

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services: – Homeownership

Information in different languages

More alternate dispute resolution

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services: – Landlord/Tenant

Downloadable forms and information

Information in different languages

More alternate dispute resolution

Information must be in English/Spanish

Provide all services and materials in other languages so that pro pers understand the court policies and procedures

Table 16: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Family Law (in general), Child/Spousal Support, Child Custody/Visitation

Services that would be helpful:	Family Law (in general)	Child/ Spousal Support	Child Custody/ Visitation
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	72%	76%	71%
Checklists that prop per litigants must use	72%	72%	71%
An on-site pro per facilitator	84%	83%	86%
Toll-free help line	39%	41%	39%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	60%	63%	61%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	50%	50%	51%
Self-help centers	81%	83%	82%
Information desks	65%	70%	69%
Mobile self-help centers	28%	30%	31%
Self-help computers	69%	78%	74%
Augmented web capabilities	35%	35%	37%

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services:

Family Law, Child/Spousal Support and Child Custody/Visitation Suggested Specific Services (Comments):

Bilingual access, Forms and information in Spanish, Information in different languages, Information in English/Spanish, Information in Spanish and Vietnamese, Provide all services and materials in other languages, Spanish interpreter in FL court
How to speak to the judge clearly and slowly

Effective criminal prosecution against illegal document preparers

Expand services within the facilitator's office

Example sheets for all forms showing how to fill them out and what must be filled in

Special Self-Rep Calendars

Staff person to do exit inquiry to ensure they understand what is expected by the court and/or orders

Volunteer attorneys

Volunteers to help write orders after hearing

We have the checked items at LJC already

Table 17: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Divorce/Separation /Annulment, and in Paternity Cases

	Divorce/Separation Annulment	Paternity
Services that would be helpful:		
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	70%	75%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	70%	68%
An on-site pro per facilitator	85%	88%
Toll-free help line	37%	38%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	61%	63%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	54%	55%
Self-help centers	80%	85%
Information desks	70%	73%
Mobile self-help centers	26%	28%
Self-help computers	78%	80%
Augmented web capabilities	35%	35%

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services:

The comments for this section were identical to those for Family Law in general.

Table 18: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Will/Estate, Probate and Guardianship

Services that would be helpful:	Will/Estate	Probate	Guardianship
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	100%	93%	87%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	60%	80%	73%
An on-site pro per facilitator	60%	73%	67%
Toll-free help line	50%	40%	47%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	50%	53%	60%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	40%	40%	40%
Self-help centers	90%	80%	67%
Information desks	70%	67%	67%
Mobile self-help centers	40%	40%	40%
Self-help computers	80%	67%	60%
Augmented web capabilities	40%	40%	33%

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services

Information in different languages

How to speak to the judge clearly and slowly

Materials and information must be in English and Spanish

Probate does have help with Guardianships. It has made a big difference

Table 19: Services Suggested by Respondents with SRL Contact in Domestic Violence/Civil Harassment and in Juvenile Dependency

Services that would be helpful:	Domestic Violence/ Civil Harassment	Juvenile Dependency
Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type	81%	89%
Checklists that pro per litigants must use	76%	78%
An on-site pro per facilitator	82%	78%
Toll-free help line	48%	56%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	58%	78%
Training of court staff on how to work with pro per litigants	51%	56%
Self-help centers	78%	89%
Information desks	70%	100%
Mobile self-help centers	31%	56%
Self-help computers	72%	89%
Augmented web capabilities	36%	56%

Comments – Suggestions Regarding Specific Additional Services:

- Downloadable forms and information
- Expand services within the facilitators office
- Example sheets for all forms showing how to fill them out and what must be filled in
- How to speak to the judge clearly and slowly
- Information in different languages
- Materials and information must be in English and Spanish
- Provide all services and materials in other languages
- Spanish interpreter in FL court
- Staff person to do exit inquiry to ensure they understand what is expected by the court and/or orders
- Volunteer attorneys
- Volunteers to help write orders after hearing
- We have the checked items at LJC already

“Self-Help Services are Not Needed”

Staff and Judicial Officers were given the option to check a box indicating they believed Self-Help services were not needed. Only 9 out of the 285 did so, and most handled criminal cases. The comments were as follows:

Criminal:

I handle criminal cases. Pro per assistance would not apply to them.

Felons get a lot of help from public defenders.

If they need assistance, a public defender is available or they can retain counsel.

In the misdemeanor arraignment calendar, I patiently and repeatedly explain things.

Other Areas:

(1 comment)

I do not think pro per services are needed.

Additional Qualitative Information

Many of the 285 who completed the survey took the time to write lengthy suggestions and comments at the end of the survey. Their complete comments can be found at the green tab under the “Staff/Judicial Officer Survey”.

The following pages provide a summary of the comments and the patterns seen within the comments.

- The first section summarizes comments made by those who see self-represented litigants in the courtroom.
- The second section summarizes comments from those who see them in the clerk’s office or at the counter.
- The third section summarizes comments from those who did not indicate where they see them.

Self-Help Online Staff and Judicial Officer Survey Comments: “In my courtroom”

The final question on the survey solicited narrative responses on concerns about self-represented litigants in the courtroom and any additional comments or ideas. Out of the 41 responses received, the respondents regularly saw self-represented litigants in Traffic, Criminal, Civil (both General and Limited), Small Claims, Family Law and Probate. The responses provided a sense of how judicial officers and court staff feel about the dilemmas, issues and concerns about self-represented litigants. These responses – descriptive and qualitative - illustrate the range of issues and challenges posed by litigation involving persons who represent themselves.

Challenges and Issues

The most common challenges and issues described by judicial officers and courtroom staff were:

- *Lack of understanding.* One frustration mentioned was the “time it takes to educate the pro pers on procedures and to give them a clue as to what is expected just so the court can understand what they want and why they want it.” Other remarks included how self-represented litigants want their day in court but do not know how to get it. They need help understanding the nature of the allegations against them. They “want to tell their story at each and every hearing or appearance and have the judge rule immediately.”
- *Legal Advice vs. Legal Information.* Courtroom staff are instructed not to give legal advice, or that providing legal advice is contrary to state law. Uncertainty about what constitutes “legal advice” leaves court staff unable to respond effectively to inquiries. Self-represented litigants often become frustrated that they can not get their questions answered.
- *Language Issues.* Self-represented litigants often cannot speak or understand English and need help both in navigating through the paperwork and help with translation while appearing in court. In the Family Law area, it was mentioned that sometimes an appearance or two in court is wasted because a litigant needed to obtain an interpreter. One concern was the “limited commitment to serving Non-English speaking communities” by the court.
- *Illegal Resources.* Concerns about untrained persons advertising to help people prepare their court paperwork. These people are on court property and “are in violation of 6402 Business and Professions Code”.

- *Staff Training.* Staff should be trained more than one time in Customer Service Training.
- *Facilities and Staffing Issues.* Space and staffing concerns were mentioned several times. Comments included: “We need to rethink our space allocation. If we are to serve self-represented parties in new ways, we will need to find thousands of square feet of office space...” “The biggest problems are space and staffing. We need to actively plan and seek out space solutions so that we can provide the Self-Help Services promptly...”

Programs and Systematic Changes

The majority of the comments offered recommendations, suggestions and ideas for more programs and systematic changes. They included:

- Paralegal, law clerks or law students physically present in the courthouse to answer procedural questions; the ability to talk to a person to have assistance and questions answered.
- Simple information forms and brochures explaining court procedures and relevant substantive law, checklists of steps to be taken in any given type of case, written guidelines and a step by step procedural chart.
- Expansion of services and legal aid programs, e.g. a legal clinic similar to the one in Dept L74, and a “volunteer panel” at CJC to help people who are doing Family Law cases – includes an interpreter, paralegal/supervised law clinic in a small space.
- Instructional video – includes an orientation of what to expect when you come to court.
- Children’s Chambers for Family Law cases.
- The clerk’s need time to process paperwork for litigants. This results in long wait times. Alternatives such as more on-line services, mailing paperwork to litigants, and returning later to retrieve paperwork should be considered.
- Streamlining time in court should be considered. Streamline/reduce court related and court ordered appointments. Minimize the appointments and provide alternatives for the sign-up, intake and assessments and screenings for the provider programs, (e.g. alcohol programs, Batterer’s Treatment Program, etc).

Self-Help Online Staff and Judicial Officer Survey Comments: “At my counter”

The final question on the survey solicited narrative responses on concerns about self-represented litigants who come for services at the front counters and asked for any additional comments or ideas. Out of the 48 responses, the case types represented are Traffic, Criminal, Civil, General and Limited, Court Resource Bureau (CRB), Small Claims and Family Law. The responses provided a sense of how court staff feel about the dilemmas, issues and concerns about self-represented litigants. These responses – descriptive and qualitative - illustrate the range of issues and challenges posed by litigation involving persons who represent themselves.

Challenges and Issues

The most common challenges and issues described by court staff were:

- *Lack of understanding.* The majority of the comments stated litigants “have no real understanding of what happened in the courtroom” and so they do not always understand what it takes to comply with the judge’s order. The forms and the wording on documents are too confusing. They have difficulty understanding legal processes and procedures (e.g. proof of service, civil procedures). Therefore they do not know the right questions to ask of counter staff and so they may not get the information they need. One significant concern in Traffic is the lack of understanding of the penalty assessment. After the fine is imposed in the courtroom, the defendant arrives in the Clerk’s Office to pay and is told that the fine is significantly more because of the additional penalty assessment. This results in angry customers and confrontations that staff need to deal with at the counter.
- *Legal Advice vs. Legal Information.* Counter staff are instructed not to give legal advice, or that providing legal advice is contrary to state law. Uncertainty about what constitutes “legal advice” leaves court staff unable to respond effectively to inquiries. Self-represented litigants often become frustrated that they can not get their questions answered. Counter staff feel that they are “limited to a very narrow focus as to the information/direction that we can provide”.
- *Illegal Resources.* A few respondents in the Family Law area had concerns about untrained persons advertising to help people prepare their court paperwork.
- *The Human Element.* A majority of the comments described the need for more personalized legal assistance. One comment included: “The human connection of someone to assist them personally is what continues to be the element

that is most lacking.” Most litigants do not want to read too much information, they want personalized instructions and hands on assistance with filling out forms, etc. These comments came from Traffic, Criminal, CRB, Civil and Family Law. Staff have concerns about reference lists and handouts not being well received and the litigants not wanting to use the kiosk – all adding to additional frustration.

Programs and Systematic Changes

The majority of the comments offered recommendations, suggestions and ideas for more programs and systematic changes. They included:

- Self-Help Centers – staffed with volunteers from law schools, and/or ABA approved paralegal.
- A court facilitator in Civil to assist in completing paperwork, providing information and answering questions.
- In Family Law, re-look at the phone recording tree for added functionality.
- Create an 800 number to provide correct information on Traffic citations before the due date – including a brief explanation on how to take care of the citation before the due date.
- Simple information tools, forms and brochures explaining court procedures and relevant substantive law, checklists of steps to be taken in any given type of case, written guidelines and a step by step procedural chart.
- Expansion of services including clerks dedicated to reviewing judges’ orders with the litigant after court appearances.
- Triage area – a “place or person to assist them before they come to the counter it would speed up counter use.”
- A dedicated window at the counter in Family Law for self-represented litigants.
- Educational workshops for litigants on what to expect and what to do and for staff so that the information is accurate.
- Instructional video – includes an orientation of what to expect when you come to court, accessed from the Court’s website.

Self-Help Online Staff and Judicial Officer Survey Comments: “No”

Some who answered “No” to the question of whether “self-represented litigants appear in your court” offered comments. They may have worked with SRLs in the past or have observations on services. Out of the 17, two responses were from judicial officers and the balance from Traffic, Criminal, Legal Research, Administrative Assistants, Family Law, Civil and Probate case types. The responses provided a sense of how court staff feel about the dilemmas, issues and concerns about self-represented litigants. These responses – descriptive and qualitative - illustrate the range of issues and challenges posed by litigation involving persons who represent themselves.

Challenges and Issues

The most common challenges and issues described by judicial officers and court staff were:

- *Lack of understanding.* People leave the courtroom and do not understand what has happened. Litigants do not understand the process and are frustrated with the lack of resources available to them. The presentation of printed materials is often confusing for them, depending on how well the materials are drafted. More often than not, they do not understand and do not follow courtroom procedure and do not effectively argue their positions. Litigants often do not know the type process that would best fit their situation. They have “no clue as to what to expect procedurally.” They do not know how to find a lawyer or navigate the system. “We often get pro pers whose papers fail for procedural reasons, even though their contentions may have merit.”
- *Legal Advice vs. Legal Information.* Staff is instructed not to give legal advice, or that providing legal advice is contrary to state law. Uncertainty about what constitutes “legal advice” leaves court staff unable to respond effectively to inquiries. Staff feel there is “a fine line between helping and giving legal advice.”
- *Language/Literacy Issues.* The Hispanic population has an extremely difficult time in understanding the court proceedings even though there are interpreters involved. Some of the litigants are close to being illiterate and have a hard time expressing themselves in writing.
- *Judicial Explanation.* Litigants are upset about not receiving an explanation of the judicial officer’s decision and they want to talk to someone. Letters are received and marked ‘no response’ and placed back into the court file. One

comment included, “People have a right to an explanation of the judge’s ruling and this would go a long way in building people’s confidence in their small claims courts.”

- *Frivolous cases.* “Along with providing information about procedural rules, etc, the Court may also want to provide information about the pitfalls of filing frivolous/unmeritorious cases. I fear that making it even easier to file litigation will result in a large increase in frivolous/unmeritorious cases/motions being brought.”
- “We sometimes get pro per litigants who challenged the jurisdiction of the court on the ground that California is not a state or they are not citizens of it. They attach pages of ‘authorities’ that appear to have been circulated by some kind of fringe group and that have nothing to do with the matter at issue.”
- *Staff Training.* Counter staff mistakenly take in forms with filing fees at the window that are unacceptable and then as it is processed through the Clerk’s office, it is kicked back to the litigant who becomes frustrated. Training for court staff on changes in the court systems was suggested.
- *Facilities and Staffing.* Several comments included physical space constraints and staff issues which limit the amount of personal assistance that can be offered at times by court staff.
- *Other.* One comment offered was “Pro per litigants tend to be rude sometimes to counter staff as they feel that they know more about policies and procedures.”

Programs and Systematic Changes

The majority of the comments in this area offered recommendations, suggestions and ideas for more programs and systematic changes. They included:

- Self-Help Center – including a video and checklists specific to their case types, accessibility to Judicial Council forms and phone numbers for Public Law Center, OCBA Lawyer Referral, Legal Aid, etc.
- Procedural checklist of basic requirements for law and motion.
- A list of sources of assistance might be helpful, e.g. legal aid offices.

Results of the Attorney Survey

A total of 350 self-help surveys were completed by attorneys: 327 paper and pencil surveys completed at one of the justice centers, 7 by members of the Family Law Bar, and 16 online surveys.

Table 1. Source of Attorney Surveys

Source of Survey	Frequency	Percent
CJC	193	55%
NJC	55	16%
HJC-NB	37	11%
WJC	27	8%
LJC	9	3%
HJC-LH	6	1%
Family Law Bar	7	1%
On-line	16	5%

The vast majority of respondents were private attorneys (85%), but public defenders (5%), district attorneys (4%), and other attorneys (e.g., city attorneys) (6%) also completed the survey. Attorneys were asked which justice centers they visit for work. Most commonly, the Central Justice Center was listed as a regular work site with more than 80% stating they regularly work there. North (45%), West (43%), and HJC-HB (41%) were also listed by more than 40% of attorneys as a regular work location. Table 2 below lists the justice centers usually visited for work.

Table 2. Which Justice Center Do You Visit For Work?

Justice Center	Number	Percent
CJC	288	82%
NJC	159	45%
WJC	151	43%
HJC-HB	142	41%
LJC	126	36%
HJC-LH	73	21%
HJC-LN	73	21%
CXC	45	13%

A wide majority of attorneys indicated that they do regularly see Self-Represented Litigants, with only 8% stating they do not. Nearly all of those attorneys who do not see SRLs were private attorneys. As virtually all of the public defenders, district attorneys and others indicated that they regularly see pro per litigants.

Attorneys responded that SRLs are most commonly seen in Criminal Cases. Forty percent of attorneys reported that they have seen clients representing themselves in Criminal Cases. General Civil Cases, Domestic Violence/Civil harassment, and limited Civil Cases, were also mentioned by at least a quarter of attorneys as types of cases in which SRLs appear regularly. Table 3 lists the most common case types for self-represented litigants.

Table 3. In which types of cases do you regularly see pro per litigants?

Case Type	Number	Percent
Criminal	141	40%
General Civil	100	29%
Domestic Violence/ Civil Harassment	93	27%
Limited Civil	86	25%
Traffic	83	24%
Divorce/Separation/Annulment	72	21%
Small Claims	68	19%
Child/Spousal Support	60	17%
Child Custody/Visitation	60	17%
Landlord/Tenant	55	16%
Paternity	55	16%
Torts (personal injury)	37	11%
Probate	26	7%
Homeownership/Real Property	21	6%
Complex Civil	18	5%
Juvenile Delinquency	17	5%
Will or Estate	16	5%
Guardian/Conservatorship	12	3%
Juvenile Dependency	11	3%
Mental Health	3	1%
Other (legal malpractice, dissolution)	57	16%

Performance of Self-Represented Litigants

Respondents were asked to rate the performance and understanding of SRLs on a series of questions ranging from document preparation to understanding the court's rulings. The six questions assessing attorney's perceptions of SRLs are:

How often do pro per litigants in your cases:

- 1) Prepare documents correctly?
- 2) Follow procedural rules?
- 3) Need evidence or witnesses?
- 4) "Tell their story" effectively?
- 5) Have realistic expectations about the likely outcome?
- 6) Appear to understand the court's rulings?

Respondents were asked to use the following scale to rate the frequency of each of the events: Always, usually, sometimes, or almost never. The results of these questions show that attorneys feel Self-Represented Litigants are rarely prepared for court and often misunderstand likely outcomes and rulings. A few findings are of particular concern. First, more than two-thirds of attorneys believe that Self-Represented Litigants have unrealistic expectations about a case's likely outcome. Second, documents are rarely completed correctly. More than 60% of attorneys stated that SRLs "almost never" prepare documents correctly. Third, SRLs are seldom following procedural rules. More than half believe that SRLs "almost never" follow procedural rules.

Table 4. Performance and Understanding of Pro Per Litigants.

How often do pro per litigants...	Always/Usually	Sometimes	Almost Never
Prepare documents correctly?	8%	29%	63%
Follow procedural rules?	8%	34%	58%
Have needed evidence or witnesses?	11%	23%	66%
"Tell their story" effectively?	7%	44%	49%
Have realistic expectations about the likely outcome?	6%	27%	68%
Appear to understand the court's ruling?	13%	50%	37%

Attorneys were also asked which services they felt are, or would be, most helpful to Self-Represented Litigants. A list of services, some that already exist in Orange County Superior Court as well as new services, were presented. Attorneys were also given the option to write in any services that they thought would be helpful that were not included in the list.

Topping the list was checklists that would be mandatory for Self-Represented Litigants. Half of all respondents selected this as a helpful service. This checklist could be used to ensure that litigants have completed all necessary forms and procedures. Self-help centers were also listed as helpful, followed by brochures that describe procedures and forms by case type, and on-site facilitators. Also mentioned by at least 20% of attorneys were videos that explain court procedures and etiquette as well as a toll-free helpline. Table 5 lists the services that were deemed helpful in order of the number of attorneys listing it.

Table 5. Services Helpful to Pro Per Litigants.

What additional services would be helpful?		
Checklists that pro pers must use	176	50%
Self-help centers	169	48%
Brochures describing procedures and forms	127	36%
On-site pro per facilitator	127	36%
Self-help computers	96	27%
Toll-free helpline	81	23%
Videos explaining courtroom etiquette and procedures	74	21%
Training staff to work with pro pers	74	21%
Augmented web capabilities	69	20%
Information desk	61	17%
Mobile self-help centers	36	10%
Other	36	10%

Attorneys were also asked to suggest any additional services that they thought would be especially helpful for Self-Represented Litigants. Of the 350 respondents, 36 (10%) offered suggestions on how to help pro per litigants. Most commonly, (one-third of the comments), suggestions were made to implement or expand the use of on-site facilitators, panel attorneys, consultants, or volunteer attorneys. Also mentioned were expanded pro per calendars (8%) and effective attorney referral service (8%). Other comments included setting up mock trials, divorce education classes, and probationer checklists listing all the terms of probation.

On the contrary, 9% of attorneys commented that they feel self-help services are not needed. Explanations generally fell into three categories. One, self-help is an inefficient use of taxpayer money (N=6). Comments in this category reflect the opinions that self-help services encourage litigation and back up the system. Second, SRLs have difficult personalities and are being rewarded with help (N=4). Third, self-help should be discouraged because only experienced attorneys can navigate the complex legal system (N=4).

Other comments include concerns that self-help services can cross the line into practicing law, and that it takes work away from practicing attorneys.

When Analyzed Separately, Results from the Family Law Bar Board Members (7)

Results from the seven Family Law Bar board members, indicated the following:

As would be expected, all 7 are private attorneys who visit CJC and LJC. One person indicated that he/she regularly sees SRLs in divorce cases only. The others indicated that they regularly see them in several types of cases including: divorce, child or spousal support, custody or visitation, paternity and DV/civil harassment cases.

Areas where SRLs almost always need more help included:

- preparing documents correctly
- following court procedural rules
- needing evidence or witnesses

The responses also indicated that Self-Represented Litigants sometimes need help with:

- having realistic expectations
- telling their story effectively
- understanding the court's rulings

Services selected which would be helpful, or currently are helpful:

- On-site facilitator (5 out of the 7 selected this one)
- Check-lists that pro per litigants must use (4 out of 7)
- Self-Help centers (4 out of 7)
- Mobile self-help centers (3 out of 7)
- Training of court staff on how to work with Self-Represented Litigants (2 out of 7)
- Self-help computers (1 out of 7)
- Augmented web capabilities (1 out of 7)
- Toll-free help line (1 our of 7)

Services that were not indicated as helpful (now, or if implemented), included:

- Brochures describing the procedures and forms by case type
- One of the board members selected the following instead of one of the listed services: "I do not think pro per services are needed. Please explain." He/she wrote: "This takes away work from practicing attorneys and backs up the system."

Other than this one individual, the Family Law Bar board members' responses seem to indicate that they believe services for SRLs litigants are important and needed.

Court Resource Bureau Statistics, Self-Help Center Statistics, and Facilitator Office Statistics

Summary statistics from the January through June 2007 Court Resource Bureau (CRB), the Self-Help Center (Dec 06 – May 07) and the Family Law Facilitator Office (Jan – Dec 06) are available under the “Additional Stats” Tab in the binder.

Court Resource Bureau Statistics

- A review of the six month summary log for the Court Resource Bureau shows that a large number of court users make use of the Court Resource Bureau each day. (310 per day at CJC, 124 per day at WJC, and 211 at LJC.).
- At CJC and WJC, most of the questions have to do with traffic and criminal cases, court procedures, and courtroom locations and calendars. A smaller percentage of questions have to do with jury location, civil cases, small claims in particular, and records.
- At LJC the questions range over a broader number of areas including those regarding the self-help center, juvenile check-in, courtroom location, the family law clerk’s office, forms, juvenile clerks office, family law records, the facilitator, divorce information and custody and visitation issues.
- Over 95% of the questions are asked in person rather than over the telephone.
- At LJC, 26% of the questions (an average of 61 per day) are asked in Spanish.
- At CJC, 17% of the questions are asked in Spanish (approximately 60 per day).
- At WJC, approximately 3% of the questions are asked in Spanish, and less than 1% are asked in Vietnamese.

Self-Help Center Activity Log (Six Month Period)

During the six month period from December 2006 through May 2007, the Self-Help center at LJC:

- Had a total of 35,272 visitors during the six month period.
- 52% of the questions were for general information, 48% concerned form packets, computer forms and loose forms.
- Less than 1% had to do with Kiosk usage.
- 99% of the questions were asked in person rather than over the phone.

2006 Family Law Facilitator Statistics (One Year Period)

- 11,553 individuals who used Family Law Facilitator office services during the year completed a survey.
- Language: 83% speak English, 15% speak Spanish, 1% speak Vietnamese.
- Ethnicity: 47% are Caucasian, 38% are Hispanic, 7.5% are African American, 6% are Asian/Pacific Islander, .
- Age: 39% are between 30-39, 27% are between 20-29, and 27% are between 40-49.
- Gender: 69% are male and 29% are female.
- Income: 38% have an income of \$24,000 or less. 59% have an income at or below \$30,000.
- Employment: 75% are employed, 15% have no income, 7% have help from family and friends, 6% are receiving child support.
- Children: 52% have one child, 23% have two children, and 9% have three or more children.

Recommendations Made by the AOC Team Regarding Self-Help for Family Law: (May 29 – 31, 2007 Technical Assistance Family Caseflow Management Project)

A technical assistance team²¹ from the AOC conducted a study regarding family caseflow management. The resulting observations and recommendations included aspects related to self-help services. These challenges and recommendations are quoted below:

Challenges

- Provide adequate services to SRLs in non-IV D matters
- Provide workshops or one-on-one assistance to help litigants fill out court forms
- Prepare orders after hearing for all SRLs
- Present court information packets in a manner so that they effectively convey the information contained in them and tell people how to fill out forms
- Provide space in the Self-Help Centers for litigants to fill out forms
- Improve court services such that the court does not need to depend upon outside organizations and volunteers to provide core court services
- Provide assistance to respondents in DV cases
- Improve the court website so that it is not confusing and uninformative to SRLs
- Institute a pro-active approach to managing all family law cases, especially those involving SRLs

Recommendation: Expand substantially the court's services to self-represented litigants

- Consolidate all self-help staff under the Family Law Facilitator's office
 - Protection of Family Code Section 10,000 et seq
 - Maximize flexibility of self-help staff to service Self-Represented Litigants and to serve the court
 - Devote all available resources to centralized support services

²¹ Members included: Deborah Chase, AOC CFCC; John Greacen, LLC; Susan Groves, San Diego Superior Court; Frances Harrison, San Diego Superior Court; Bonnie Hough, AOC CFCC.

(Self-Help Related Recommendations from the AOC technical assistance team, continued.)

- Dramatically expand the staffing for self-help to provide:
 - Workshops for self-represented litigants' preparation of documents for filing
 - One-on-one assistance for litigants
 - Assistance to litigants to prepare orders after hearing
 - Assistance of judges and litigants for SRP-like calendars

- Involve clerk's office in self-help assistance
 - Clerk's office should hand out appropriate forms
 - Clerk's office staff need training on legal information and legal advice

- Revamp current information packets
 - Establish committee to review and revise information packets
 - Look to the Equal Access website for other examples of materials
 - Los Angeles has developed effective information packets
 - Packets are not the long term solution

- Clarify the roles of other entities
 - Court must be able to rely on its own staff for the provision of all core services
 - Recruit law student interns supervised by the Family Law Facilitator to supplement court self-help resources
 - Use Public Law Center to recruit volunteers for pro per calendars
 - Supplant Legal Aid's Family Law clinics to free up resources to represent poor family law litigants
 - Use Judge Firmat's stature to promote unbundled family law services and use LRC lawyer referral service to promote them

- Give priority on all calendars to lawyers with pro bono cases
- Provide coin, cash and credit card operated copy machine in self-help center
- Create self-help referral form for judges to use to inform facilitator staff why person is referred from the courtroom for assistance
- Integrate the Family Law Facilitator fully into the court's management structure

A Brief Outline of Conclusions and Recommendations

- SRLs are here to stay. They represent a large part of our business/service.
- The Judicial Council has shown their commitment to serving the needs of the public.
- A majority of our some staff, judicial officers and attorneys understand the need to assist SRLs, but some education is still needed for others – Self-Help Services do not encourage more self-help litigants, they are a necessary part of our operations.
- SRLs are faced with difficulties at the court in many areas including following court procedures, filling out forms, starting their cases and presenting their cases (having evidence and witnesses, “telling their story” well, and other areas.)
- Without better assistance, SRLs slow down the system and may hurt their own cases.
- In Family Law, SRLs also need assistance with understanding the steps of a family law case and moving the case towards completion.
- Staff and judicial officers have specified a number of items which would help SRLs. These can be evaluated for possible implementation.
- SRLs need to have access to all materials and information in Spanish as well as English. A particularly high number/percentage of individuals who speak Spanish as the primary language at home were found at CJC, LJC, and in Traffic, Small Claims and Family Law.
- Vietnamese and Tagalog materials may also be needed.
- SRLs need referrals to attorney services, they may also need to understand why/when having an attorney would be helpful to them.
- When compared with other types of cases, those in family law are less likely to report that they got the information they needed and completed what they came to the court to do.
- All court users, and especially SRLs, want and need assistance from a person. Recommendations were made by staff, judicial officers and attorneys regarding how to provide more in-person assistance (greater use of referral services, volunteers, pro bono services, etc.).
- The court website was listed as one of the top three services accessed and used by court users. The court should optimize this resource as a tool for SRLs.