



Self-Represented Litigation Network

Serving Self-Represented Litigants Remotely

A Resource Guide

Prepared for the Self-Represented Litigation Network
SRLN.org

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Introduction

The purpose of this Resource Guide is to provide information on technology and business process options for courts and other entities interested in providing services to self-represented litigants using electronic means in lieu of, or in addition to, face-to-face alternatives such as walk-in services, workshops, and clinics. This resource is a response to the urging of the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators to “national organizations to develop tools and provide assistance to states in achieving the goal of 100 percent access [to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs] through a continuum of meaningful and appropriate services.”¹

The Guide is the result of contributions from eight sites – state level programs in Alaska, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, and Utah and county level programs in Butte, Lake and Tehama and Orange Counties in California. Idaho and Montana were chosen as well for programmatic efforts of their legal services programs, Idaho Legal Aid Services and Montana Legal Services Association.

Each of the sites contributed significantly to this effort by collecting user satisfaction information on individual cases, arranging and hosting visits to their programs by project teams, and supplying information about their programs. Each site representative participated in a visit to another project site.

The methodologies used in this study are:

- Onsite observation of remote service delivery in each of the eight sites
- Interviews of remote service provider supervisors and staff
- Interviews of judges and court staff in the jurisdiction served by the remote services program
- Completion of a program characteristics spreadsheet for each project site. These spreadsheets are a study product, available on the Self-Represented Litigation Network website.
- Focus groups of remote services users in two sites (see footnote 7 on page 15 for a description of those groups and the reason they were not conducted in all sites) and telephone interviews with selected remote services users in other sites

¹ CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES and CONFERENCE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATORS, RESOLUTION 5, Reaffirming the Commitment to Meaningful Access to Justice for All, adopted as proposed by the CCI/COSCA Access, Fairness and Public Trust Committee at the 2015 Annual Meeting.

- Collection of feedback information from roughly 200 remote services users in seven of the project sites (Montana was able to collect information from only 80 users and Orange County, California did not participate in this process). The summaries of each of the site surveys as compiled by Survey Monkey are also a product of this study; they, too, are available on the Self-Represented Litigation Network website. There are two separate reports for Maryland, which conducted one survey primarily of chat line users and a second survey primarily of telephone services users. In Idaho, the feedback surveys were conducted both by lawyers within Idaho Legal Services and Court Assistance Officers within the court self help assistance program. The data contains no indicator of which surveys were conducted by legal aid and which by the Court Assistance Officer program. Consequently, the Idaho data is not comparable to the data from the other six sites and it is not included in some of the tables in this report for that reason.
- Collection of data on the likelihood of case completion for remote services users in Utah and in Butte, Lake and Tehama Counties in California.
- Review of the 2002 National Legal Aid and Defenders Association evaluation of the effectiveness of legal services hotlines.

The Guide is not intended to define a “best practice” model for all courts or jurisdictions to use in establishing or expanding remote services to self-represented litigants. Rather, one of the major learnings of the study is the need to tailor remote service programs to the jurisdiction and clientele to be served. We urge persons, entities, and jurisdictions interested in developing or expanding their remote services to consider all of the technologies and business processes in place in the study sites, and in other jurisdictions we were not able to include in our study or which have instituted remote services approaches since the study was conducted.

The final section provides a reference to strategic planning materials for jurisdictions interested in applying the information contained in this Resource Guide to their own situations.

The Self-Represented Litigation Network (www.srln.org) is prepared to offer assistance to jurisdictions seeking more help than this Guide is able to provide. You can contact SRLN at consulting@srln.org.

This project is made possible by the generous support of the State Justice Institute. It is one of two efforts supported by a single grant to the Self-Represented Litigation Network. The second is the development of business and process requirements for a statewide triaging portal, conducted under a subgrant to the National Center for State Courts, directed by Tom Clarke, Vice President for Research and Technology. Several participants in the Remote Services study have served on advisory groups for the portal requirements project, and vice versa. Triaging portals are mentioned in this Guide, but they are not described at any depth because no

comprehensive portal is in operation as of the date of this report. Triaging portals will be a significant component of future justice system service delivery. Persons, courts, agencies, and jurisdictions interested in learning about them should consult Thomas M. Clarke, **Building A Litigant Portal – Business and Technical Requirements**, National Center for State Courts (2016), which is available at <http://www.srln.org/node/629/report-building-litigant-portal-business-and-technical-requirements-ncsc-2015> .

Findings and Recommendations

While this study was not designed to develop a national “model” for delivery of services to self-represented litigants using remote technologies, it did produce some clear findings.

Delivery of services using telephone and internet-based technologies (e.g., e-mail, chat, text messaging) is an effective and efficient means of providing information and assistance to self-represented litigants, and should be a part of the service delivery strategy of every entity interacting with this customer group.

- Much of the public expects courts, legal services, and the bar to engage with them using these technologies.
- Providing services in a way that does not require the public to visit a courthouse or office is advantageous in terms of time and cost savings both for self-represented litigants and for the organizations that serve them.
- Remote services make sense in urban as well as rural settings.
- Most remote service court users surveyed in the course of this study would not have preferred a different service method; most of those preferring a different method would have chosen a different remote service method – not a face-to-face method.
- Studies in two of the participating courts showed that persons for whom documents were created using a remote services method were highly likely to obtain a determination on the merits – and obtain the relief they were seeking – if they filed the document.

Use of multiple remote services (e.g., telephone, e-mail, live chat, videoconferencing and text messaging) is advantageous to the service provider and the user.

- Each remote delivery method has advantages and disadvantages: Websites provide information quickly for persons who know what questions need to be answered. Telephone-based services are available to virtually everyone, but entail the possibility that the user will not be able to get through to a service provider at the time s/he calls. Purely online services, such as e-mail, live chat, and text messages, provide a much higher likelihood of an immediate response for a user and deliver a permanent record of the interaction – freeing service providers from the need to send a follow up email to ensure user understanding of the information provided verbally over the phone. Use of

videoconferencing allows a face-to-face interaction at a distance but requires both the sender and receiver to have more technology.

- All entities providing services remotely need to be prepared that users will not always know what questions they need to ask. Remote services delivery staff must have the training and attitude required to spend the time with a user to explore her or his situation sufficiently to ensure that s/he gets the information needed.
- Multiple delivery modes provide users with more choices. Those with the highest technological capabilities can take full advantage of them. Those without those skills can get always get phone based services.
- The smartphone is fast becoming the communication method of choice for users and all services need to be provided in a format usable on a smartphone screen.

Courts and other entities serving self-represented litigants need to be aware that some users will not be able to get their needs met through remote mechanisms. The programs studied are remarkably inventive in creating and maintaining relationships with other organizations and individuals to whom users can turn for supplemental assistance. An indispensable aspect of these relationships is that programs take responsibility for making careful referrals; “pass the buck” referrals waste the time of the self-represented litigant and the entity to which the referral is made. Referral to legal services, particularly to lawyers providing limited scope representation, is a critical outreach activity, but, like other referrals requires the exercise of judgment by remote service staff. If done perfunctorily, such referrals will be disregarded by persons who have already decided that they do not have the resources to hire a lawyer.

Courts have a responsibility to take advantage of the expertise and experience of their staff members who work with self-represented litigants to learn what parts of the legal process create the greatest obstacles for self-represented litigants and to modify their processes to remove them. Several of the remote services programs have assisted their courts in developing proactive case management processes that actively direct self-represented litigants through the court process or provide expedited resolution processes that obviate the need for contested hearings.

Remote Services Delivery Options

This Guide uses the term “Remote Services” to refer to any means of providing information or assistance to a self-represented litigant, or a person who has not become a litigant but is seeking information about a legal problem, other than a face-to-face interaction with the person at a courthouse or the physical location of a legal services, library, advocacy group, or other entity.

The following technologies for remote service delivery are in use in courts and legal services entities today. The eight study sites employ different combinations of these technologies to address their own needs and capabilities. The technologies are:

For transmitting documents

Mail – using the US Postal Service or a commercial package delivery service such as UPS or FedEx.

Fax – transmission of documents over standard grade telephone lines using fax machines at the sending and receiving ends of the transaction – captures all images on a page, including graphics, signatures, and other handwritten material.

Scanning and transmission as an email attachment – an alternative to faxing with the same benefits which substitutes a scanner (which is often a feature of a home office printer) for a fax machine and transmission of the electronic image.

Photographing and transmission as an email or smartphone message – an increasingly popular means of transmitting pictures, including pictures of documents, quickly and accurately. Used by banks for depositing checks (take a picture of the check to be deposited and send it to the bank from your smartphone) and by insurance companies for documentation of claims (take a picture of an accident scene and send it from your smartphone to your insurance agent). This process can also be used with any digital camera and a computer to send the image as an email attachment.

Virtual law office – software that allows a lawyer or paralegal to receive and send documents from clients or third parties, compose documents for a client to review or sign, and receive signed documents from clients. The software supports the client's signing of documents and transmitting them back to the law office. These transmissions are secure. The software also enables a client to maintain all documents and correspondence related to a matter in a single location, accessible through the internet.

E-filing – a secure process for sending documents to a court for filing in a case, including documents initiating a new case, and for receiving messages and documents from the court. E-filing can also include automatic service of documents on opposing parties. Most court e-filing applications have been developed for lawyers, not self-represented parties. Some allow SRLs to register and file in the same manner as lawyers. Others are combining e-filing with document assembly; once a user has completed a document by

answering questions in an automated interview, s/he can submit the document to a court electronically, paying any associated filing fee through an electronic payment mechanism.

For providing information

Website – www.Lawhelp websites developed by legal services through Legal Services Corporation technology innovation grants exist in every state and provide information on frequently asked legal matters, forms, and guidance concerning court processes. Many state court systems provide users a link to the state lawhelp site or have developed their own websites providing the same sorts of information. Website content – information and forms – is regularly referenced in remote service interactions conducted through other means. Websites are now accessed through smartphones and tablets more frequently than through computers; “responsive design” is used in the construction of websites to deliver content in a format appropriate to the device used to access the website. Websites provide “one way” communication to a user; the user can query the system to locate the most relevant information on the site, but cannot ask specific questions of the system unless it is equipped with a chat feature. Websites also support referrals to other services or to other entities, using links.

Chat – live chat is a website feature that enables a user to initiate a written communication with a staff person at the entity supporting the website. The expectation is that chat is a “synchronous” communication – with receipt of a response following very closely on the submission of a question or request.

Email – written messages between an SRL’s email address and the serving organization’s email address. The organization must ensure that its staff access and respond to emails submitted to the institutional email address. There is no expectation that email is a “synchronous” communication; it is more usually “asynchronous” – answered at a time different from the time a question or request is sent. Documents, links to website content, links to videos, and links to scheduling software to sign up for hearings, appointments, or workshops can all be attached to, or included in, email messages. Email messages are often used as a means for sending written follow up information after a telephone communication.

Voice telephony – like mail, the voice telephone is a widely used traditional communication technology for the delivery of remote services. The service provider usually uses a landline; the SRL customer may use a cell phone or landline. Service providers frequently employ “call center” technology to route incoming calls to multiple

staff, to provide standard information to callers prior to routing them, to monitor call volume and wait times, and to collect data on the performance of the phone system and of individual staff. A central issue in the use of voice telephony is whether to support voicemail messages, which would usually require callbacks.

Co-browsing – software that allows a remote services staff person, with the consent of the SRL, to control the operation of the SRLs computer to navigate a website or complete a document on the SRLs computer. Free co-browsing softwares include Twiddla, ShowDocument, Clavardon, TeamViewer, and Brosix. It is usually used during a telephone call, but could also be facilitated by other communications processes.

Text messaging – Many smartphone users prefer text messaging to voice telephony. Text messaging can be either synchronous or asynchronous, depending on the availability of the person texted to respond immediately. Avid texters engage in synchronous texting. But asynchronous texting is generally preferable to leaving voice messages. Current generation smartphones use voice recognition to generate text messages, combining the advantages of quick message construction with the advantages of text messaging over voicemail if the person called is not immediately available.

Outbound dialer – software that sends recorded, voice-synthesized, or text messages to users' phones or email messages to their email addresses; when the software includes the option for the person called to connect with a live operator, it is called a "predictive dialer." The most typical outbound dialer application is to send reminders for upcoming appointments or hearings. Outbound dialers are integrated with scheduling systems, case management systems, or customer relations management solutions to run exception reports and automatically send appropriate reminder messages to users.

Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing – recreates the face-to-face experience for two persons communicating from different locations. The original videoconferencing solution for courts was the Polycom hardware and software; it is still the top-of-the-line product. But its reliance on dedicated T1 phone lines makes it very expensive to operate. Courts are currently using Skype and Zoom, applications that use the internet to transmit voice and video signals, at a very low cost and satisfactory signal quality.

Customer relations management software

CRM – widely used in private industry to create and manage relationships with individual customers. They often involve the creation and use of customer loyalty cards

which when swiped at the time of a purchase link the purchase with the customer in the CRM database. The information gathered allows the company to notify customers of specials for products they are likely to be interested in purchasing. The Orange County, California Superior Court is implementing the Microsoft “Dynamics” product for use with SRLs, allowing the court to track SRL visits, services rendered during previous visits, and link them with the stages of a case recorded in the court’s case management information system.

Statewide triaging portals

The 2012 Legal Services Corporation Report on the Summit on Using Technology to Enhance Access to Justice publicized the notion of a **statewide access to justice portal** that would enable users to enter information about their situation and themselves, and, using an artificial intelligence engine, diagnose an appropriate legal context for the problem, confirm that diagnosis, and make a referral to the least expensive resource reasonably likely to lead to a successful outcome for the user. Fully implemented, the portal concept would involve courts, self help centers, legal services providers, the bar (both full and limited scope representation options), advocates (e.g., domestic violence shelters), libraries, law school clinical programs, senior centers, and social service agencies as referral options. Several southern California trial courts collaborated to produce a small claims portal that helps persons with small value civil disputes decide how to proceed to seek redress, i.e., use of a demand letter, attempting informal negotiation or ADR, or filing a small claims petition. New Mexico Legal Aid, using funding from a Legal Services Corporation Technology Innovation Grant, will deploy a full scale civil legal services portal in early 2016, involving a half dozen New Mexico legal aid organizations. The Florida Access to Civil Justice Commission is sponsoring the first fully collaborative triaging portal involving all justice sector entities, to begin with a pilot in a northeast Florida county in 2016.

With the exception of mail, all of these technologies should be accessible via a mobile phone or tablet as well as through a computer. The challenge presented by mobile phone access (and in some cases for tablet access) is that information needs to be displayed differently to be read and manipulated on the screen of a mobile phone. Services that display information differently on different devices are referred to as incorporating “responsive design.”²

² <http://www.srln.org/node/612/srln-brief-tools-mobile-engagement-customers-clients-colleagues-and-partners-srln-2015>.

The Value Proposition for Remote Services Delivery

Remote services delivery mechanisms offer resource savings for both service providers and their customers. In today's resource-challenged environment, being able to provide the same service at less cost is of significant benefit. And to be able to provide it at less cost to the customer maximizes the benefit.

Service providers save resources in these ways:

- Remote services delivery staffing can be centralized. Instead of having to deliver a full range of services at every court or legal services location, high level expertise can be assembled in a single location (or within a single unit even if staff are located in different places). The high level expertise can be used as needed over the entire geographical area. The savings can be easily visualized when a centralized remote services staff is compared to the amount of staff required to travel to remote facilities to deliver the same services face-to-face.
- Staff/customer interaction time is shorter. The same communication conducted over the phone takes less time than when it is conducted face-to-face. The Alaska Family Law Self Help Center conducted an experiment on this topic early in its existence; the results led to its decision to provide assistance exclusively over the phone. Minnesota explains part of the reason for this phenomenon from the customer's perspective; "if you arranged for child care or time off from work, spent half an hour driving to the courthouse, found public parking, and waited in line for another fifteen to twenty minutes, would you feel satisfied with a four minute interaction (Minnesota's average phone call duration) with court self help staff?" Courts using chat lines are able to have up to three chats open simultaneously.
- It is often easier for staff to establish boundaries for a remote conversation than for a face-to-face conversation.
- Several directors of remote self help services report less staff burnout than with traditional walk in service centers. Staff are better able to control the pace and demands of their work.
- Facilities costs are reduced. If fewer people are coming into the courthouse or legal aid office, the court needs less space to accommodate them – less waiting area, less private meeting space for sensitive conversations, and less office space for staff (especially if they are allowed to work from home). Walk in self help facilities should be located on the first floor of a courthouse in close proximity to clerks' windows. This is the most

valuable space in the courthouse. Reducing self help space requirements allows other services access to this prime space.

- Security issues and costs are minimized, but not eliminated. If there are fewer people coming into the courthouse, there are shorter weapons screening lines. Court self help centers and legal aid offices do have to arrange for security and deal with security incidents. Direct physical confrontations are not possible with remotely delivered services. However, virtual centers must deal with different types of security issues: for example, what to do with a caller indicating a suicide attempt; how to handle written or verbal threats to specific individuals or courthouses.
- Nebraska has used call center software to take advantage of underutilized staff resources. In Nebraska, every limited jurisdiction court must have full-time staffing even in small towns where the judge is present only one day per week. The employees in these remote locations have to know how to handle all case types; but there is not enough business to keep them fully occupied. By implementing call center software, the Nebraska AOC has been able to enlist the services of these experienced clerks in providing telephone services to customers in limited jurisdiction courts all over the state. The call center software enabled the state to “find” additional resources without hiring additional staff. Orange County, California uses the same technology to route incoming calls to a new self help center in the southern part of the county where staff have the most time available to answer them.

Customers benefit from similar savings:

- They do not incur the time and mileage costs of driving (or taking public transportation) to a courthouse or legal services office.
- They do not incur parking, child care, and meal costs associated with a trip to the nearest courthouse or legal services office.
- These costs are most extreme in sparsely populated areas where the distance to the nearest courthouse or legal services office can be a hundred miles. In Alaska, there are no roads connecting many communities with their nearest courthouse.
- Customers are able to access services many more hours per week. Even if they do not get through on the first call, they can call back at times convenient to them rather than having to arrange to be at a courthouse or a legal services office at a specific time when self help staff will be present. Remote services can be delivered outside of regular business hours if they do not require staff to be present in the courthouse or legal services office.

- Customer interactions with self help staff may be less stressful in the sense that if a customer forgets to ask a question, s/he can recontact the service without having to incur transportation time and costs.
- Remote services can offer right-sized, just in time delivery of legal help in a way that face-to-face services that require users to plan for a courthouse visit, incur travel costs and time, and often encounter long waits for service cannot. The best example is for answers to simple, straightforward questions – where the cost of a face-to-face visit is grossly disproportionate to the service provided.

Remote service can be better than face-to-face service:

- Service providers can bring together their most experienced staff to provide the highest quality service. In most of the programs we visited, remote services staff work closely with local staff to ensure that they answer basic questions and deliver forms, referring users to the remote services staff for the assistance that the local staff are not qualified to deliver. Having remote services staff co-located or centrally managed facilitates service standardization and quality not possible when staff are widely dispersed and work for different entities and managers.
- The Alaska Family Law Self Help Center offers services from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Thursday, expanding the court’s 8:00 am to 4:30 service window which customers with full-time jobs may find hard to use. Maryland’s statewide telephone self help service is now open from 8:30 am to 8:00 pm from Monday through Friday.
- The remote delivery staff can be tasked with developing specialized materials to improve their own services and to enhance the materials available to the public and to local service providers as well, such as
 - “Canned” email and text responses
 - Short, focused YouTube videos
- Remote services offer the customer a greater degree of privacy. Communication takes place from a private place, not in a public space where a customer may be uncomfortable discussing sensitive material. It does not take place at a public facility where one’s vehicle can be identified in a small community.
- The centralized approach of statewide remote self help services programs gives managers an optimal vantage point from which to recommend ways to simplify court procedures (referred to as “inreach” later in this report), as they have a bird’s eye view

of all local practices and can easily compare and contrast to find the most effective and efficient options.

The public in general does not perceive these services to be inferior to face-to-face service. Online services have become commonplace in daily life and are an expected part of the way goods are sold and services rendered.

- Online retailing has become a major factor in U.S. and global marketing. [Forrester Research](#) estimates that the United States online retail industry will be worth \$279 billion in 2015.³ The popularity of online shopping continues to erode sales of conventional retailers. For example, [Best Buy](#), the largest retailer of electronics in the U.S. in August 2014 reported its tenth consecutive quarterly dip in sales, citing an increasing shift by consumers to online shopping.⁴
- In 2009, a report by Gartner Group estimated that 47 percent of U.S. adults and 30 percent in the United Kingdom banked online. Today, many banks are internet only banks. Unlike their predecessors, these internet only banks do not maintain brick and mortar bank branches. Instead, they typically differentiate themselves by offering better interest rates and more extensive online banking features.
- In a November 3, 2015 Nielsen Survey of Health Care Remote Services, the firm found that patients want much more online services than they are currently receiving.
 - Over 50% want online scheduling
 - One third want test results through an online portal
 - One quarter want to be able to send photos of medical conditions electronically for phone or email consultation
 - Among those 18-34, 40% want text reminders of appointments
- In Alaska we visited the Child Support Services Division. Front counter staff interacting with the public were being asked to maintain a tally sheet on which they recorded their interactions and, for each one, answered the question, “Could this interaction have been conducted satisfactorily by phone?”
- In December 2015, the Orange County, California, Superior Court distributed surveys to determine the level of interest in remote services from persons attending four court family law calendars. Of the 63 persons who completed surveys, 81% would have liked to be able to select the date and location of a court-sponsored workshop online, 84%

³ ["Forrester: Online Retail Industry In The US Will Be Worth \\$279 Billion In 2015"](#). TechCrunch. February 28, 2011.

⁴ ["Best Buy looks to new products to push sales"](#). Minneapolis News.Net. 26 August 2014.

were interested in receiving email updates and video guides, and 86% were interested in being able to manage and track their cases online.⁵

Given the universal acceptance and expectation of online services, we were not surprised to find that court users in the study sites approve of remote delivery mechanisms. Seven of the study sites conducted user satisfaction surveys of roughly 200 persons served remotely during 2015.⁶ At the end of the survey, we asked “Would it have been better for you to get assistance today in some way other than (add the method of service provided today, e.g., “by phone,” “by chat,” “by video conference”)?” In every site, a majority answered, “No.” In four of the seven sites, fewer than 20% answered, “Yes.”

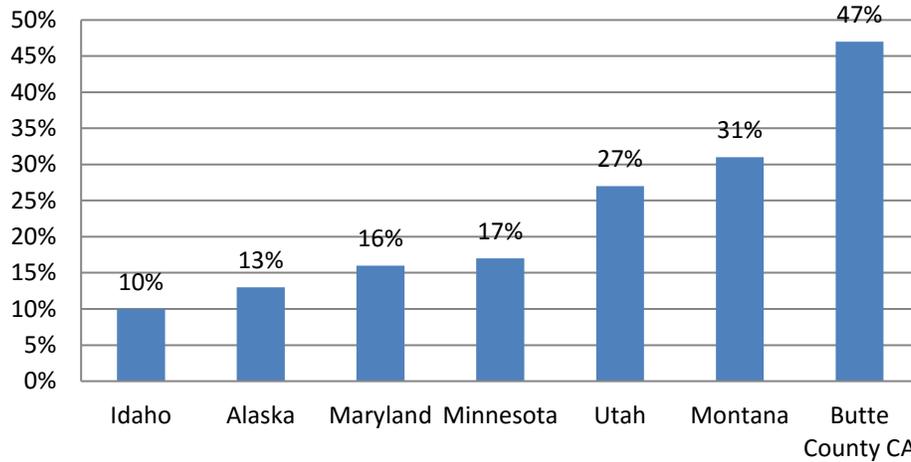
Further, most of the preferences for other methods of service delivery were for other remote services methods. Persons stating that they would have preferred a different form of service were allowed to identify multiple preferred forms of service. The surveys recorded 401 such preferences. Of these, 165 were for face to face interaction. The remaining 236 preferences (59% of the total stated preferences) were for other forms of remote service, such as preferring text or chat over telephone communication.⁷

⁵ The survey is discussed more fully in the discussion of Orange County’s self help services later in the report.

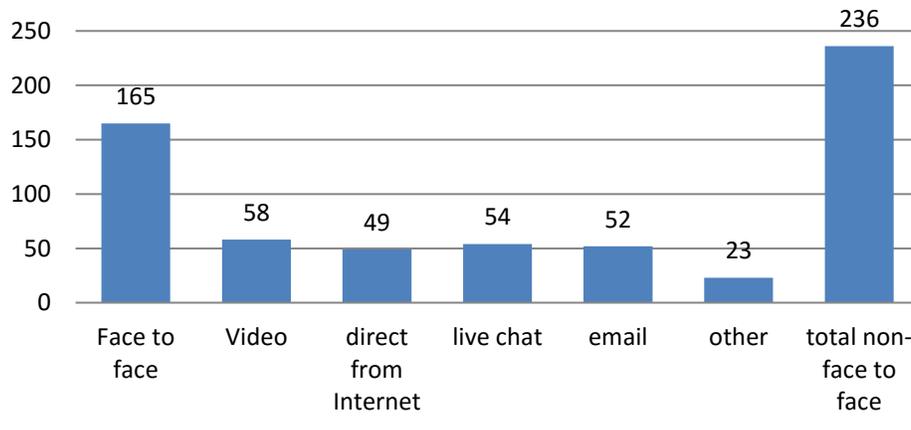
⁶ Montana was able to complete only 80 user satisfaction surveys.

⁷ The study design included convening focus groups of remote service customers to explore further their experiences with remote service delivery. Small focus groups of four persons each were recruited in Idaho and Montana. In both instances, the participants were older persons from the local community we visited. The input we received in each location was the same – the remote services were completely satisfactory, but “of course, communication is always best when it is face to face.” Given the difficulty of recruiting focus group participants who would be representative of the target audiences for remote services, we discontinued the focus group component of the study. In Utah and Alaska we spoke with individual remote services customers from rural settings by telephone; they confirmed not only that the remote services they received were entirely satisfactory, but that face to face services would have been impossible or prohibitively expensive to access.

Percentage of Remotely Served Persons Who Would Have Preferred a Different Delivery Mechanism



Preferences for a service other than the service provided



Limitations on the Use of Remote Services

The “digital divide”

The major concern expressed about remote services delivery is that 100% of Americans do not yet access the internet. Of the sixteen remote access methods catalogued in this report, ten of

them require internet access. Five more require access to a telephone. The final one – snail mail – merely requires a mail address (which cannot be taken for granted for those in transition because of a divorce or eviction, or of course not for the homeless as well⁸).

The Pew Research Center provides regular surveys of technology use in the United States. Its most recent report on device ownership shows that 73% of Americans own computers, 68% own smartphones, 45% own tablets, and 19% own mobile reading devices.⁹ Eighty-five percent of Americans now have broadband internet access. Some demographic groups have more limited internet access – often because of a lack of interest or a perception of lack of relevance to their lives, inability to learn how to use it, or the cost of owning an access device, connecting to the internet, and paying monthly usage fees. The groups with lower than average internet access are seniors (65 years of age and older) – 61%; persons with a high school education or less – 67%; persons in households with less than \$30,000 annual income – 75%; rural Americans – 76%; and Black and Hispanic Americans – 80% and 82% respectively.¹⁰

A 2001 study sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust found significant differences in internet penetration from state to state; 64% of Alaska’s adult population had internet access compared to 37% in Mississippi. New Hampshire, Colorado and Maryland were also high in access, while Mississippi’s neighboring states were low. Data gathered for this study show similar disparity in the use of communications technologies by remote services users in seven of our study sites.

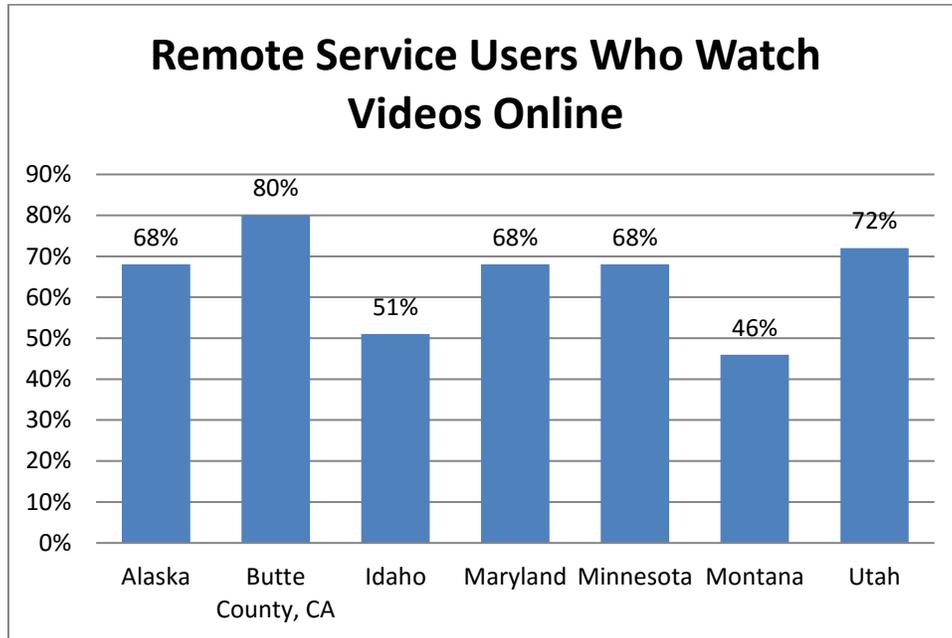
Self help staff in seven of the study sites surveyed roughly 200 remote services users in each site during the course of this study; Orange County, California was unable to participate and Montana was able to complete only 80 surveys. Eighty-four percent or more of the remote services users surveyed agreed to answer questions for the survey, except in Utah where the participation rate was only 51%. We asked three questions to gauge the level of technological sophistication of remote services users: “Do you watch videos online (like YouTube, Facebook, or videos made by family or friends?” “Can you do word processing?” “Do you have access to a printer?” The results are shown in chart form below.

⁸ Alaska’s Family Law Self Help Center does send written documents to homeless shelters, which in Alaska accept mail for their residents.

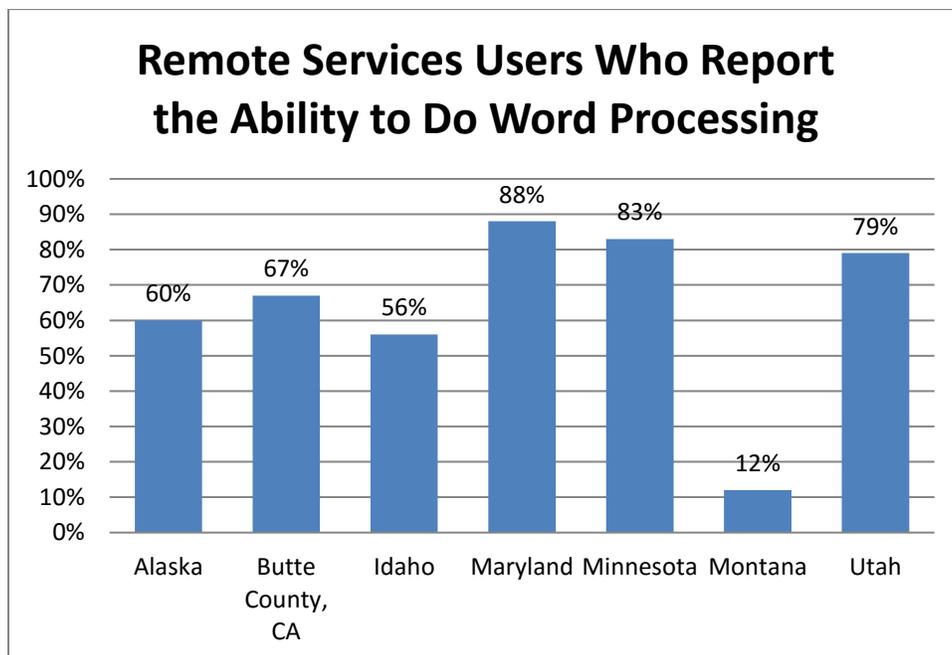
⁹ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/29/technology-device-ownership-2015/>

¹⁰ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/28/15-of-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/>

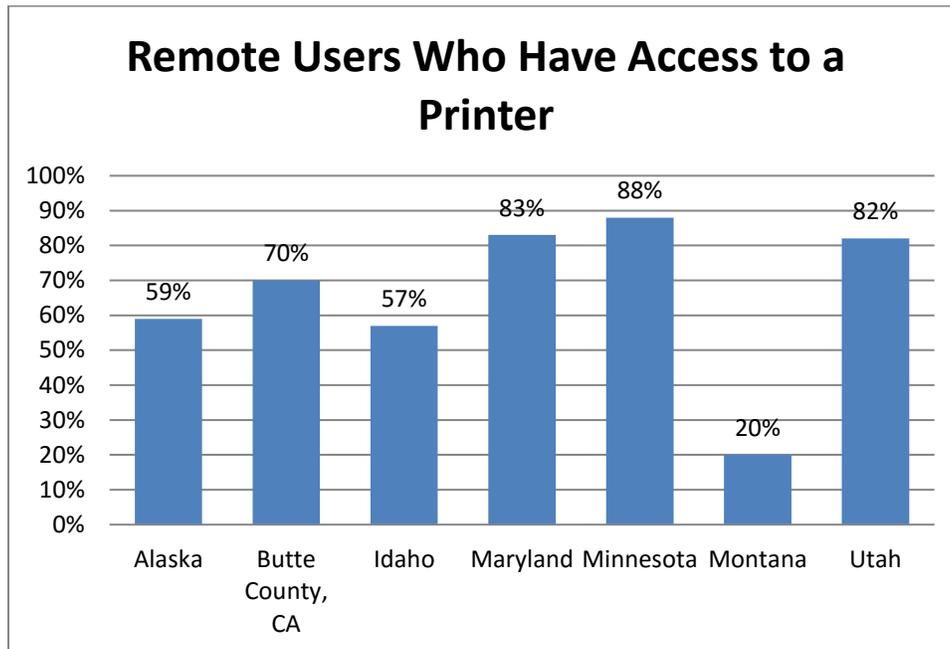
In four of the sites, roughly two thirds of remote services users watch videos online. The percentage was highest in Butte County, California (80%) and only roughly half in Idaho and Montana.



Ability to do word processing varied far more widely, from 88% in Maryland to 12% in Montana. More than half of remote services users outside of Montana reported that they can do word processing.



The variation in access to a printer mirrors the ability to do word processing. Over 80% of the remote users in Maryland, Minnesota and Utah have access to a printer. More than half in Alaska, Butte County, California, and Idaho have printer access. But only 20% of Montanans report having such access.



This study data shows that technological sophistication varies markedly from state to state. And service providers should take steps to learn the level of sophistication of their users in designing their delivery system. For instance, Montana courts and legal aid should not assume that their users will be able to use document assembly applications from their homes or without assistance elsewhere.

On the other hand, this data on varying levels of sophistication comes from remote services users – users who overwhelmingly (except in Butte County) favor the remote service delivery system they used over other alternatives, including face to face communication. Therefore, the evidence also stands for the proposition that persons without high levels of technological sophistication are able to use remote service delivery methods successfully.

We summarize all of this data on the varying use of technology across the country in this way: The internet has now reached the 85% penetration rate nationally, with variations from state to state. Resources invested in internet-based service delivery will have a very high return on investment for justice system entities, just as has proved true for the rest of our economy and

other service providers. The way in which those services are deployed should take into account the possibility that a particular population lags behind the national rate of technology adoption. Is there any validity to the view that internet based service delivery should not be used because some demographic subgroups fall below the national average in accessing the internet? No. The reality today is that the “digital divide” is not very wide – only 5% for Black Americans, 9% for rural Americans, 10% for poor Americans, and 24% for our seniors.¹¹ The heavy majority of persons in all demographic groups has access to and use the internet, and will benefit from online services. Service providers should, however, ensure that alternative delivery systems are available for non-internet users. Descriptions of the service delivery models in use in the eight study sites provide good examples of collaborative efforts to provide those alternative service delivery mechanisms.

This discussion identifies one of the themes highlighted in the Executive Summary – more alternative means of access to services are better, provided they are not disproportionately resource intensive.

Other obstacles to remote service delivery

Remote service delivery faces a variety of real obstacles that are inherent in all forms of justice system activities – obstacles associated with lack of functional literacy,¹² lack of English proficiency, problems posed by hearing and sight impairment, and physical mobility challenges. Just as these problems are not unique to remote services delivery, their solutions are the same as in other areas. The eight study sites employ a number of methods for engaging interpreter services and assistive services for other impairments.

Special challenges inherent in the delivery of services by telephone

In a courthouse, you can see how many people are waiting to be served. On the internet you see a queue of messages waiting for responses. Unless a program uses call center software, you do not know how many telephone customers get a busy signal or abandon their call because they have been on hold too long. But even with call center software, you cannot measure what percentage of customers is not actually reaching your staff. Alaska has spent considerable effort to ascertain this statistic. Over a one year period, it found that 58% of callers got through on the first attempt, an additional 23% got through to the staff at another time, and 19% never made contact with the Center. This service “gap” is a significant issue. It is not necessarily an indication of insufficient staff resources. It simply reflects that a potential

¹¹ Note that the backbone of legal services for seniors comes through a well established remote delivery system of a national network of senior legal hotlines. For more information see <http://www.legalhotlines.org/>.

¹² See National Assessment of Adult Literacy at <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/index.asp> .

user was not able to reach your services at the time s/he attempted to do so – and chose not to continue to try to reach you. The crisis hotline point of view (for instance, domestic violence or suicide prevention) is that every call presents a possibly unique opportunity for intervention. A small portion of the calls for self-help assistance may fall into this category, but the vast majority of calls do not. It is more likely the case that the caller found an answer elsewhere – on a website or in a document repository, or by making contact with another service – or decided that obtaining the answer was not worth the time required to obtain it.

To a significant extent, this problem is actually no different from other service delivery mechanisms. The courthouse-based self help center has no way of measuring the percentage of potential users who fail to take advantage of the service because of the inconvenience of accessing the courthouse. Email and chat programs have no way of knowing how many potential inquirers encounter sufficient difficulties articulating their problem or question that they do not send a message.

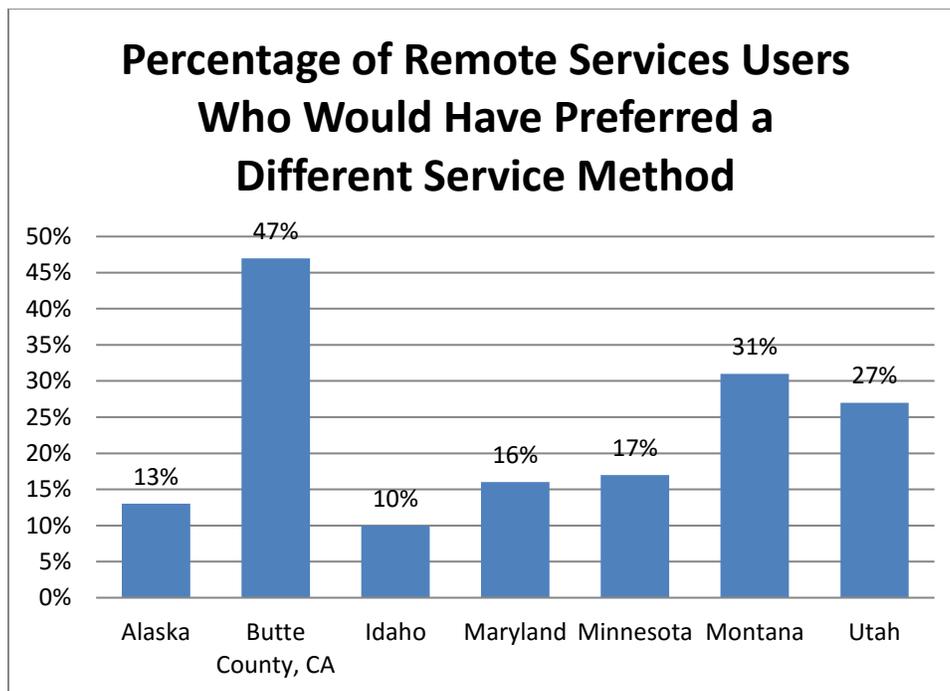
Telephone service delivery poses several additional special problems:

- Whether to use voicemail. Giving a caller an opportunity to leave a message with a callback number provides a solution to the problem of the unknown level of unavailable access. However, the Alaska Family Law Self Help Center did an experiment with and without voicemail. It found that following up on voicemail messages so frequently resulted in failed calls and “telephone tag” that the Center staff were able to complete more calls by eliminating the voicemail function.
- Necessary callbacks. There is a category of call that we refer to as “complex” in which the staff member needed more detailed information about the case or about the court process than s/he could obtain during the call. In this situation, the staff person could reach agreement that the response will be provided by email. But it is often necessary to arrange for a callback to a specific phone number at a specific time. The program needs to have a policy on how many times the callback is attempted.
- Whether to give preferred access to “repeat” customers. There are advantages to having a staff person continue to interact with a repeat customer. The experience of remote service providers is that a customer will want to talk about the specifics of her or his case with every new service provider s/he encounters. This can be avoided with a familiar staff person who knows the background for the call and what assistance has been provided previously. The staff person and caller may have established a useful level of trust and rapport. To take advantage of these factors, Alaska allows its staff members to give out their direct line phone numbers for future reference; calls on that line take precedence over calls coming into the main number. Staff private lines in Alaska do have voice mail; staff who do not have a pending call from the central number will use the time to make call backs to these repeat customers. Other programs, such

as Minnesota, treat every caller the same, whether it is the first or the tenth call on the same matter from the same caller. A return call goes into the standard rotation and will probably be answered by a different staff person.¹³

Evidence of Efficacy

Post-service delivery surveys conducted in seven of the eight program sites showed that persons who received self help services through a remote service delivery mechanism would not have preferred a different service method. While 47% of users in Butte, Lake and Tehama Counties in California would have preferred a different service method, most of the programs had fewer than 20% with that answer, and no other site had even one-third who would have preferred a different method.



As noted previously, most of the preferences for other methods of service delivery were for other remote services methods. Persons stating that they would have preferred a different form of service were allowed to identify multiple preferred forms of service. There were 401 stated preferences – 165 for face to face interaction and 236 (59% of the total stated preferences) for other forms of remote service, such as preferring text or chat over telephone communication.

¹³ This same issue arises in walk in self help centers. Does the service attempt to pair customers with staff who have served them previously?

The study supplemented this data with interviews with judges and court staff in every site visited. Uniformly, judges and staff expressed complete satisfaction with the services delivered remotely in their jurisdiction. Judges reported how their courtrooms ran much more expeditiously when remote service users came to court with papers in proper order and prepared to participate in the proceeding. Staff noted how useful it was to have a resource to which to refer persons whose questions they were unable to answer – either because they lacked the requisite knowledge or were unable to devote the time needed to meet the customer’s needs. Several of the judges and staff members reported seeking assistance directly from the self help center staff to answer legal or procedural questions of their own.

The Utah Self Help Center gathered data on three sets of cases to address the question, “How effective are persons in Utah in getting their cases resolved through the court process if they receive self help services remotely?”

The first study was of 50 divorce cases initiated between July 1 and December 30, 2014 using the Utah state OCAP on line forms preparation service in which both parties were self-represented. As of June 2015, 38 of these cases (76%) had final divorce decrees. Six cases (12%) were still pending. One of the cases was dismissed at the request of the parties. Five cases (10%) were dismissed by the court for procedural reasons. Of the cases resolved by June 2015, 89% of them had been completed successfully. On average, these cases were decided within 3 months.

The second study was of 50 divorce cases filed in Utah in which a self-represented party contacted the Self-Help Center between January 1 and October 31, 2015. The data was collected in November 2015. Utah has a 90 day waiting period between filing of a divorce petition and entry of a final decree, unless waived for extraordinary circumstances. Twenty-nine of these cases (58%) had a final divorce decree at the time of data collection. Twelve of the cases (24%) remain open. Three (6%) were dismissed at the request of the parties and six (12%) were dismissed by the court for procedural reasons. Of the cases resolved by November 2015, 84% of them had been completed successfully. On average, these cases were decided within 5.5 months.

The third study was of 50 minor guardianship cases filed in Utah between July 1 and December 30, 2014 using the Utah state OCAP on line forms preparation service in which the petitioners were self-represented. Data on these cases was collected as of June 2015. These cases require certification of completion of testing on the duties of a guardian (included in the OCAP program), and a hearing on the petition. At the time of data collection, 28 (56%) of the cases

had resulted in full guardianship and 10 (20%) had resulted in school guardianship. One was dismissed at the request of the petitioner. One was denied on the objection of a parent. Six (14%) were dismissed by the court for procedural reasons. Only two of the cases were still pending. Of the cases decided at the time of data collection, 88% were decided on the merits, and 85% were completely successfully from the point of view of the petitioner. On average, these cases were decided within 7 weeks.

This data paints the Utah courts, their OCAP forms process, and the Utah Self-Help Center in a very favorable light. From 84% to 89% of the cases initiated by self-represented litigants were completed on their merits in a very timely fashion. Beyond doubt, it is possible for persons representing themselves to get their cases completed in the Utah courts using the remote services available to them.

Data collected by the SHARP program in Butte, Lake, and Tehama Counties in California show similarly positive results for persons assisted remotely by that program. The program collected data on 50 participants in workshops conducted by remote videoconferencing. It reviewed court records to find out how many of them filed papers developed during the workshops and, of those, how many obtained relief, how many did not, whether those who did not failed on procedural grounds or on the merits, and how many were still pending. The results are presented in the table below.

SHARP Data on Effectiveness of Remote Video Workshops

Participants tracked	Documents filed	Relief obtained	Relief denied on the merits	Procedural dismissal	Still pending
50	34	28¹⁴	3	0	4

Of the 35 participants who filed papers prepared during the videoconference workshop, 80% obtained relief, 9% were denied relief on the merits, none were dismissed on procedural grounds, and 12% were still pending. Of the filed cases that have been resolved, 90% resulted in the participant obtaining the relief requested and 10% resulted in denial on the merits. Both of these results are successes for the remote services self help program, since it has no stake in the outcome of a matter – merely that the party assisted was able to present the matter to the court for resolution on the merits.

¹⁴ In one instance a participant did not file the child support modification paper prepared during the workshop but nonetheless obtained relief administratively through the child support enforcement agency.

The conclusion to be drawn from the SHARP data is the same as that shown by the Utah data – there is no doubt that persons served remotely in the three counties served by SHARP are able to get their cases completed in the courts in a timely manner.

Review of the Literature on Legal Services Hotlines

Jessica Pearson and Lanae Davis of the Center for Policy Research, working in conjunction with the project for the Future of Equal Justice, completed an evaluation of effectiveness of telephone Hotline services provided by legal services programs. The third phase of the study, published in 2002¹⁵, followed up with persons who had been assisted by Hotline services to learn whether they 1) understood the advice they were given by a Hotline, 2) whether they followed up on that advice, and 3) whether they realized a satisfactory resolution of their problems. The study conducted follow up telephone calls with over 2,000 Hotline users three to six months after their interaction with one of five Hotlines representative of Hotlines throughout the nation. They also reviewed Hotline case files and interview notes.

The differences between legal services hotlines and remotely delivered court-based self help services are such that many of the findings of the Pearson/Davis study are of little relevance to this study. Legal services hotline programs deliver legal advice to a client with the outcome measure being whether that client prevails in her or his legal matter. Court-based self help services provide legal information to assist court customers to make use of the court's processes if they decide to do so. They provide assistance to all parties in a controversy if they ask for help. The court self help service has no stake in which party prevails, seeking rather to ensure that all customers succeed in having their matter presented to and resolved by the court on the merits.

Consequently, the portions of the Pearson/Davis study of most relevance to this study are those dealing with client comprehension of the advice given them by the hotline. Those findings are:

- Clients who were told to hire a private attorney had the worst outcomes and were the most dissatisfied. Only 18% of persons advised to hire a private attorney did so.
- The most favorable outcomes resulted from “brief services” – instances in which the Hotline attorney wrote a letter or made a telephone call on behalf of the client or completed a form or made a “hot” referral rather than relying on the client to perform those actions. In descending order of efficacy were coaching a client how to deal with a

¹⁵ <http://www.nlada.org/DMS/Documents/1037903536.22/finalhlreport.pdf>

private party, providing written legal information, and coaching clients on how to proceed on their own in court. The least effective services were coaching to deal with a government agency or referral to another agency.

- Clients with the least favorable outcomes were Spanish-speaking, Hispanic, individuals with the lowest educational attainment, those who reported no income and those who were separated and living apart from their spouse. The most successful clients were white, English-speaking, educated at least to the 8th grade, and not separated from their spouse.
- Many clients interviewed faced barriers to following up on advice given. One of those was a family disability or health problem; this category of client fared no worse than the average. However, clients with transportation problems, depression or fear of a current household member or former partner, inflexible work, school or daycare schedules, or with serious English comprehension difficulties fared worse than the average.
- Chances of a favorable outcome were enhanced by getting written material, by getting a follow up call from the Hotline, or help from someone other than the Hotline worker.

Some of the recommendations of the study are pertinent to remote delivery of self help services:

- Hotlines should recognize that certain demographic groups are less likely to obtain favorable outcomes, screen callers for those characteristics, and develop protocols for dealing with those clients, including increased support and more extended services.

Remote service delivery programs included in this study typically obtain demographic data after providing assistance, not before, and do not vary the nature of assistance rendered based on user demographics. There are two exceptions to this general statement: In Maryland, remote service lawyers obtain demographic information before dispensing advice and therefore are able to take this information into account in tailoring their advice. In Alaska in particular, and in some other programs, remote services delivery staff screen for particular user characteristics, such as membership in an Alaska Native tribe, active duty military, or victim of domestic violence – which are highly relevant to legal and service options available to them.

This study has documented the myriad ways in which court-based remote service delivery programs create a network of collaborative relationships with programs and entities that can provide more intensive assistance to persons whose needs cannot be met through remote services alone.

- Hotlines should routinely provide written information to clients.

Remote service delivery by email, chat, and text automatically incorporate written information; telephone services delivery in Utah is invariably followed up with a personalized email follow up. This usually happens in Alaska. It happens when the staff deem it necessary in Butte and Orange Counties in California, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, and Montana.

- Hotlines should recognize that telling a caller that they should obtain a private attorney is unlikely to result in a successful outcome and “explore alternative services that are more likely to result in successful outcomes.”

Remote services programs routinely advise SRLs to obtain lawyers when the circumstances of their case suggest that they are unlikely to obtain a successful outcome without one. That is unlikely to change, since it is considered part of providing professionally responsible information. However, many of the remote services programs in this study are in states that have encouraged and fostered the development of limited scope representation law practices, which are an “alternative service” more likely to result in successful outcomes. The court remote services programs help callers understand the difference between legal information and legal advice, and through that conversation help the consumer understand why a lawyer would matter. This is a decidedly different approach than just telling someone to get a lawyer

Dr. Deborah Chase of the California Judicial Council’s Office of Families, Children and the Courts conducted an analysis of available data on the cost of legal services hotlines and telephone-delivered self help services in 2003. The document was in internal report and was never published or placed on line.¹⁶ She found that legal services hotlines average fewer than 10 calls per staff member per day. The national domestic violence hotline, whose function is to make referrals to local programs, handles 20 calls per staff member per day. A court-sponsored forms hotline in Maryland at the time handled 20 calls per staff member per day. The court self help center in Alameda County, California and the Alaska Family Law Self Help Center handled 40 to 44 calls, respectively, per staff member per day. The major reason for the low productivity of legal services hotlines was the requirement for legal services lawyers to conduct financial eligibility screening and conflict checks for every call.

¹⁶ A copy is available from the author.

Summaries of the Eight Study Site Programs

This section of the report provides a general overview of the history, components and processes of each of the eight study sites. Following the program descriptions is a matrix of program characteristics to help users of this Resource Guide identify programs with characteristics they might wish to adopt. A spreadsheet describing each program's characteristics in greater detail is available on the Self-Represented Litigation Network's Remote Services webpage at www.srln.org/node/841/srln-brief-remotes-services-srln-2016, which includes this Report and all supporting materials, as well as many additional resources.

Alaska Court System Family Law Self-Help Center

www.courts.alaska.gov/selfhelp.htm

Begun in 2001, Alaska's Family Law Self Help Center was the first statewide self help service program in the nation, providing all self help assistance by telephone throughout Alaska. It is responsible for the state website and forms. It is a model for effective outreach and inreach activities.

Beginning in 2001, the Alaska Court System has provided self-help assistance exclusively by telephone and a comprehensive website with forms and plain language information. Alaska has a huge landmass with very few roads and many isolated communities. Alaska has led the nation with people accessing the internet from any location (home, work, public access). SRLN Coordinator, Katherine Alteneder, who served as the Founding Director of the Alaska's program, envisioned a system that could serve all Alaskans, by combining the examples of the Senior Legal Hotlines with comprehensive web-based information imagined for the LawHelp network. While it would be possible to provide walk-in services in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and possibly a few other locations, the system she created treated all Alaskans equally by providing universal phone-based services.

The Self Help Center has an attorney director, two other attorneys who spend significant time on the early resolution programs in multiple locations, and four non-lawyer facilitators. One of the facilitators is fluent in Spanish and another in Tagalog. All staff work 37.5 hours per week. The Center operates from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Thursday. The phone service is not available on Fridays; the staff uses that day for training programs, early resolution calendars, and local workshops.

The program handles approximately 7,000 calls annually. Calls are randomly assigned to the next available staff person, except for Spanish and Tagalog speakers. Once a staff person interacts with a customer, s/he handles subsequent calls from that customer if s/he is available. This is accomplished by giving out the staff person's direct line for call back purposes. While facilitators are responsible for answering the general helpline number, if there is a lull in helpline calls, s/he will answer her direct line and respond to that caller but otherwise lets the direct line go to voice mail and return the message later during another lull. Personal relationships with customers are maintained to take advantage of the staff person's prior knowledge of the case, of the customer, and of services previously provided. Staff obtains information from the customer by mail, fax, or email; court files are available physically from the court in Anchorage and will be scanned and sent by other courts upon request. Center staff are able to listen to court hearings for persons they have assisted, either live as they take place or by listening to the audio recording (available through the internet) at a later time. Staff sends follow up information and materials by email, fax, mail, or by leaving packets at the clerk's counter in Anchorage for Anchorage customers.

The FLSHC has built and maintains an extensive website structured around frequently asked questions. The website has many plain language forms; the list of forms is 26 pages long. The website also includes short videos on most of the website content. The staff uses co-browsing to help customers navigate the website. Follow up emails often refer to the website; the program does not otherwise have "canned" responses for use in email messages.

The FLSHC has a tradition of making evidence-based programmatic decisions. It conducted early experiments comparing the time to serve customers face-to-face and by phone. It did an experiment on the use of voicemail, using the results to decide not to give customers the option to leave voicemail messages on the helpline. If they do not get through, they are forced to call back until they do.

One of the facilitators analyzes the monthly toll-free phone bill – which shows the caller's phone number for calls that are not completed as well as for those that are. She determines how many of the persons who do not get through on one occasion ultimately succeed in reaching the Center. The data shows that within a one year period, 58% of callers got through on the first attempt, 23% were not successful on their most recent attempt but have spoken to a facilitator at some point in the past and 19% did not make contact with the Center from the same phone number. The program maintains data for each call on the demographics of the caller and the nature of the services rendered.

The Alaska program works very closely both with judges and court staff and with external justice partners, including the legal aid program, domestic violence advocates, child support enforcement, custody investigators, the local bar, and libraries, and does outreach to over 200 Alaska Native tribal entities. Judicial officers and their assistants regularly contact the Center's staff to ask them to contact litigants. Many judges routinely refer people to call the Center for assistance by including information in orders, providing the Center's business cards in the courtrooms and orally during court proceedings. The Director serves as an informal advisor to the judges on issues regarding self-represented litigants. The Alaska court system has non-lawyer magistrates in several small communities. The FLSHC Director provides training at statewide conferences and individualized assistance to these judicial officers as well as to the state's general jurisdiction judges.

The FLSHC maintains close relationships with the bar. The Director will take calls from lawyers and answer their questions. Lawyers regularly use the FLSHC website and forms. The Alaska bar is unique in its embrace of limited scope representation. The bar has a separate section for unbundled service lawyers. The bar association maintains a list of unbundled attorneys by practice area and tasks they are willing to perform at their identified range of fees. It also includes FAQs about unbundled legal services on its website. The FLSHC Director interacts with section members, attending statewide bar section meetings of the family law, unbundled services, ADR and military sections, and provides occasional training.

The Center maintains a close relationship with the clerical staff in the Alaska court system. The Director devotes roughly 30% of her time to training. The judicial branch has recently purchased learning management software called SmartU to help with the training process. The Director participates in annual conferences and teleconferences with all the clerks of court and occasionally posts questions or notifies them of new information on an email list serve connecting them all together. Those processes enable the exchange of requests and suggestions for improved assistance to SRLs and to the courts; she also notifies them of new self-help forms, videos, website content and programs. The FLSHC emphasizes quick responses to requests from the clerks to let them know that their input has been taken seriously. The goal of this intensive interaction is to create a partnership with the clerks in which they will provide as much assistance as possible to persons coming into the courthouse, calling the FLSHC for help, and making appropriate referrals to the FLSHC for assistance beyond what they are comfortable providing.

When a customer appears unable to absorb the information provided, or to use the resources provided by the Center, staff ask if s/he has a friend or a service provider who could help her/him with the process. If not, staff reaches out to local court staff, a case worker, a tribal

entity, a library, or another resource to serve as an intermediary. Center staff are happy to facilitate three-way dialogue between the customer, service provider or friend and the FLSHC.

The Director serves as a senior member of the staff of the Alaska Administrative Office of the Courts and as lead access to justice staff for the Alaska judicial branch. She researched a simplified domestic relations trial process that judges and most of the commenting attorneys supported; this ultimately resulted in a recent Supreme Court rule that provides for simplified courtroom procedures when both parties agree to have an informal divorce or custody trial or post-judgment modification hearing. The Center manages the Early Resolution Program (ERP). In ERP, Center staff attorneys review newly filed contested divorce and custody cases and the parties' history of all previous court cases. They do a two level triage: first to determine if the case is likely to resolve according to screening criteria and second, whether it would benefit from the assistance of volunteer unbundled attorneys, a mediator and/or a settlement judge. The objective of the program is to match litigants up with the appropriate legal resource to help them resolve the case as quickly as possible without trial, with most cases fully resolving on the day of the ERP proceeding, with FLSHC staff assisting with the preparation of final documents to make that possible. The program has benefited greatly from collaborations with the Alaska Pro Bono Program who recruit, train and coordinate the volunteer attorneys, the court's mediation program that provides trained mediators, the Child Support Services Division and the court custody evaluators, both of whom are available as resources to the parties at the hearings.

Alaska, the most mature remote self help services program in the nation, is also the most comprehensive, in the sense of its responsibility for its own website and forms, in its extensive outreach to the bar and multiple other state and local entities, and its impact on how self-represented litigants are treated in the courts and in the courtrooms.

Butte, Lake and Tehama Counties, California SHARP Shared Services Model

The SHARP program is unique in the nation in linking self help assistance in multiple, widely separated, California counties. It is also unique in its extensive use of videoconferencing to deliver workshops and to enable staff physically located in one county to provide face to face service in another location.

The Self Help Assistance and Referral Program in northern California provides an example of regional cooperation in the delivery of services to self-represented litigants – both face-to-face and remotely. Three northern California counties (Butte, Lake and Tehama), separated by as

much as 100 miles, employ the same person to serve as Family Law Facilitator and Director of Self Help Services.¹⁷ The three county area has one large community, Chico, and many smaller towns and agricultural communities. The Family Law Facilitator employs staff who serve all three counties and four separate courthouses in those three counties. Two of the staff members are fluent Spanish speakers; their services are used in all three counties.

The SHARP program is unique in our eight sites in its use of videoconferencing. Originally the program used a Polycom system which proved expensive – not only in the original cost of the videoconferencing equipment, but more importantly in the \$1,000 per month cost of maintaining T1 telephone lines to support the transmissions. SHARP experimented with Skype – an online videoconferencing service widely used for personal video exchanges – and found that its quality was not sufficient for business use. Zoom – a more recent cloud-based online videoconferencing service – has proved to be both inexpensive (\$10 per month) and of high audio and video quality.

SHARP uses the videoconferencing system for a number of purposes. The primary use for the videoconferencing system is for small and large workshops conducted in multiple court locations simultaneously. A single staff person can provide content and individualized assistance to workshop participants who are physically present in multiple locations. Workshops are provided for child custody and visitation, child support, and guardianship. The second use is for ongoing communication among the multiple court self help offices and staff. The video system remains on during all business hours and provides a means for the supervisor to monitor activities in all locations and for staff to communicate with and obtain assistance from each other. Another use is for staff in one location to remotely assist self-represented litigants in another location. The most frequent use is to provide Spanish language assistance throughout the three county area. The video system is also used when there is a mismatch between staffing resources and user needs – a staff member physically present in a different location can help with a large workload somewhere else. Review of documents is accomplished by holding the document up to the video camera or scanning the document into the computer and posting it on the screen.

A challenge for use of the videoconferencing system is noise. Having the system on during all business hours produces a significant level of background noise. But more importantly, when the system is used for customer interactions, it will pick up and transmit background noise from the local office environment, making it difficult to hear the primary communicators. SHARP has had to dedicate separate office space in each location, with doors that can be closed to keep

¹⁷ Over the history of the program, one other county participated for a period of time. The SHARP program is open to extending its shared services approach to other small, rural Northern California counties.

out unwanted sound, to ensure the effectiveness of one-on-one communications. The issue was addressed for use in the workshops by securing more than one Zoom account and using the lines separately. The video workshops also require the availability of dedicated space.

The survey data collected by the SHARP project for this study suggests that the average time for a videoconference customer interaction is 22 minutes.

SHARP also provides walk in and in person appointments in all of its locations and remote services using the telephone and AskSHARP email. It can obtain documents from customers by mail or fax and information about a person's case from the case management system in use in two of the three counties. Case information is not available electronically from the third county. SHARP uses Wave Viewpoint call center software that queues calls for all locations and produces statistics on phone use, average call times, drops, etc. The system has a caller ID function that enables staff to know who is calling (although that information is not maintained as part of the program's records). Calls average 2 to 2.5 minutes in length. The most frequent service provided is to schedule a workshop or individual appointment, with the latter dependent upon the urgency of the situation, such as at risk children.

SHARP uses the Viewpoint phone system to "hot desk" phones, allowing staff to access their own personal extension from wherever they are assigned in Butte County. A staff person whose phone extension is located in the Chico SHARP can use a phone in the Oroville criminal division, and the "hot desking" application allows that person to use the phone as their own. Viewpoint allows users to take their personal phone extension number with them to whatever desk or site they use. This allows staff to work flexibly among the sites in Butte County. Unfortunately, Lake and Tehama counties do not have the Viewpoint phone system.

SHARP also uses a line queue system called QMATIC. The QMATIC system allows litigants to take a number when they arrive and then they can sit comfortably while waiting for their number to be called rather than standing in line. The QMATIC system allows the SHARP staff to record how many litigants they served, and records whether the litigant was there for a previously made appointment or need immediate help with emergency paperwork. It allows management to determine how long each litigant is waiting for service, how long it took to complete the task they are working on, and allows SHARP staff to transfer a litigant to the clerk's window for filing their completed papers.

SHARP has 7 fulltime and 4 "extra help" staff (a total of 8.5 FTE) – 2 lawyers and 9 who are not lawyers. It is projected to complete over 29,000 interactions with customers in 2015.

The Family Law Facilitator attends court calendars dedicated to self-represented persons (“Pro Per Calendars”) and assists with proactive management of SRL cases. She and the staff interact extensively with the court staff in the two of the counties. The judge in the third county considers such interaction as inconsistent with the role of the judge as supervisor of the court staff. There is no current interest from the bench in the use of videoconferencing for court appearances, although all three counties allow telephonic appearances for status conferences.

The “W Drive” is a unique resource developed by SHARP for employee training and daily use. It consists of a series of resources for staff in analyzing situations presented by SHARP customers. The W Drive also guides staff in interviewing customers to ensure that all information important for assisting the customer is elicited. The W Drive includes:

- Powerpoints
- Hypotheticals
- The processes for each legal case type, including the forms in chronological order for that process
- Sample completed forms, including financial information worksheets
- Trial readiness statement, with explanations of preclusion implications for leaving out witnesses or exhibits
- Complaint forms
- Next step instructions tailored to the processes used in each county
- Bench guides
- Flyers and other information for inclusion in public information racks
- Ethical rules
- How to deal with jail mail
- Scheduling guidelines
- Decision trees for every legal topic
- How to use the court’s technology
- Frequently asked questions
- Instructions and forms concerning birth certificates
- Spanish instruction translations

Chico, California has a unique legal assistance program based at California State University, Chico. A faculty-supervised, student run Community Legal Information Center (CLIC) assists 15,000 clients a year in areas of consumer protection, community outreach, jail law, disability rights, environmental issues, family law, housing law, student law and juvenile rights, penal law, misdemeanors, tickets and traffic, women’s law and worker’s rights. CLIC is a unique resource for SHARP’s remote services program – an alternative to coming to a SHARP location for in-person assistance.

The situation of court customers in Clearlake, on the southern edge of Clear Lake in Lake County is illustrative of the needs of rural court users to obtain greater services remotely. Lake County's self help center is located in Clearlake, where the county's least affluent citizens live. The main courthouse is located in Lakeport, a more affluent community on the northern shore of the lake, many miles and a long bus ride away. All documents must be filed in Lakeport. Until the court implements electronic filing, residents of the county have to travel to Clearlake to obtain self help services and then travel to Lakeport to file documents.

Idaho Judicial Branch Court Assistance Office and Idaho Legal Aid Services

The Idaho Court Assistance Officer program, begun in 1999, provides face to face and telephone self help assistance throughout Idaho. Over the years it has worked closely with Idaho Legal Aid Services, a national leader in the use of technology, which has developed a virtual law office application to interact with clients in remote areas of the state.

The Idaho site visit included programs of the Idaho state judiciary and Idaho Legal Aid Services, the unified statewide legal services provider for Idaho, known for its effective use of technology.

The Idaho Court Assistance Office (CAO) Project was implemented as a pilot in 1999 and made permanent in 2000. It was one of the first statewide programs to assist self-represented litigants in the United States. The design of the program is to have Court Assistance Officers, who may or may not be lawyers, assigned to each of the state's seven judicial districts. They visit the different courthouses within the district on a regular schedule, meeting with SRLs seeking assistance. They work closely with the local bar, arranging workshops conducted by volunteer lawyers. The work of the formal Court Assistance Officers is supplemented by staff of the Clerk of Court in each county. In the last reporting year, the CAO program had 11 FTE, 4 of which are lawyers and 7 are non-lawyers.

The business model of the CAO program begins with maintenance of a state website with information on a variety of civil legal topics, with an emphasis on family law matters where the largest numbers of SRLs appear. The courts initially worked with Idaho Legal Aid Services to use its Law Help Interactive document assembly program to deliver interviews for frequently used court forms. The LHI software uses the answers to the interview questions to populate the appropriate court form, which is then generated for the user's review and printing. In the last

two years, the CAO program has begun to implement an independent forms development and delivery process using Tyler Technology's "Guide and File" application.

In working with SRLs, the first priority of the CAO is to link a litigant with a lawyer. The CAO program has developed a list of Idaho lawyers who are willing to provide limited scope representation to SRLs. This list is posted on the Supreme Court website and used by CAOs to link SRLs with lawyers. If a lawyer is not available or not desired, the CAO provides assistance in the form of standard information, forms and instructions packets (at nominal cost), forms review, and other assistance as requested and appropriate. The CAOs use the nationally recognized distinction between legal information and legal advice, providing the former but not the latter. Legislation authorizing the CAO program provides that services provided by the program do not constitute the unauthorized practice of law.

In addition to in person face-to-face services, Court Assistance Officers also offer services over the phone, by text message, by email, or, in some districts, by videoconference. The Idaho surveys also reported one instance of the use of videoconferencing as the service delivery modality. In the last reporting year, the CAO program provided assistance with 63,745 matters, 77% of which were in the area of family law. The next three case types in which assistance was provided were landlord/tenant, small claims, and name change. The program's data reports the nature of the service rendered, as well as significant demographic information on the users; but it does not record what percentage of the services are delivered in person or remotely. When services were provided by phone, staff computed an average phone call length of 3.92 minutes. The average time recorded for Idaho for the study surveys was 18.6 minutes per interaction.

The CAO program has ambitious plans to make use of its statewide website as an intake portal, triaging the needs of customers and referring them to information and forms on the website when possible, or to other services when those materials do not meet the customer's needs. This model will allow more centralization of the program's resources. The program envisions providing services by phone, email, and live chat and linking with the state's planned e-filing system for forms review.

Idaho Legal Aid Services provides legal information and forms on its website – <http://www.idaholegalaid.org>. It has seven staffed offices throughout the state which operate hotlines for seniors and for domestic violence. It has also implemented a centralized online intake process.

This project was particularly interested in the program’s Virtual Law Office (VLO), implemented in 2014, which uses the Clio application. The VLO is designed for persons living in rural areas, persons who are homebound or have limited mobility, persons with unusual work schedules, and mothers with young children. It offers a full scope of legal services and interactions delivered remotely through its Clio application together with phone, GoToMeeting web conferencing, or videoconferencing communications options.

The Clio application requires that the client be technically competent, or have a trusted family member, friend, or other person available to provide technical assistance. To use VLO for a case, the ILAS lawyer creates accounts for the client and for the matter.¹⁸ Clio provides a secure internet environment for information sharing, requiring the client to have a password protected account, validated by an email account. Once the Clio account is set up, the client receives notification of new messages or materials in her or his Clio account via email. The VLO allows the lawyer and client to upload documents, which can also be shared with a lawyer colleague. The lawyer can send documents to the client for review and signing. Communications can be conducted by live chat using the Clio VLO, by a web conference, by videoconference using Zoom or Skype, or by phone. The client’s access to the VLO account ends when the case is closed.

The ILAS VLO has been tested and is fully operational. It has not been used extensively. At the time of our visit to Boise, the application had been up for six months and had only been used four times. It is not clear why it is not used more frequently – whether there are few instances in which remote communications are necessary and worthwhile or whether lawyers and/or clients are reluctant to use a new technology-based product.

Maryland District Court Self Help Center

A leader in the development of face to face self help services in its general jurisdiction courts, Maryland in 2011 developed a statewide telephone and chat self help service for persons using its limited jurisdiction courts. That service has recently been expanded to provide remote services to general jurisdiction court users. Unique among the study sites, Maryland contracts its remote service delivery to Maryland Legal Aid and authorizes its staff, all of whom are members of the Maryland bar, to provide legal advice to persons seeking assistance.

¹⁸ One of the awkward features of integrating Clio with ILAS’s Legal Server case management system is that a “matter” in Clio is not the same as a “matter” in Legal Server, which uses a precise Legal Services Corporation definition of the term. An additional awkwardness arises from the need to enter case documents separately into Legal Server and Clio for VLO cases. .

Maryland was one of the first states to provide services to self-represented litigants. The state's law schools led the early efforts in the state by creating walk in clinics staffed by law students. In the early 2000s, the state judicial branch provided funding for Family Law Self Help Centers in every circuit court – the county based general jurisdiction trial courts. That program did not extend to the District Courts– the statewide limited jurisdiction court responsible for handling landlord/tenant, small claims, limited civil and contract matters, debt collection and peace and protective orders. A number of the District Court and circuit court locations provide space for Protective Order Advocacy Representation (POARP) programs and similar programs operated by local domestic violence providers. These programs provide assistance in filing a petition for protection, court accompaniment and full representation in final protective order hearings. In December 2009, a pilot District Court Self-Help Center was opened at the Glen Burnie location, in Anne Arundel County. The Center was implemented through a contract with Maryland Legal Aid, which took complete responsibility for staffing and operating the Glen Burnie program. Following an extensive evaluation of that program, which documented its effectiveness,¹⁹ the Judiciary decided to expand and relocate the phone and live chat services, originally located in Glen Burnie, to a statewide call in center located in Annapolis – also operated by Maryland Legal Aid. A second walk-in District Court Self-Help Center was opened in 2015 in Upper Marlboro in Prince Georges County.

The Maryland Courts Self-Help Center uses the same phone system, Verizon ACD call center technology, that Maryland's statewide Traffic Processing Phone Center uses. The Traffic Processing Center is staffed by 13 full time employees, with 2 Spanish language operators, who answer all traffic ticket inquiries, including calculation of fine amount, arrangement for fine payment, and changes to court dates statewide.

The Self-Help Center uses web-enabled software from Live Person to support its live chat service operated through the statewide website.

In providing services through its contract with the state judicial branch, Maryland Legal Aid does not conduct means testing to screen its clients for ability to pay for services. Services are provided to anyone who calls, except for businesses, attorneys, and persons calling on behalf of others.

Maryland's self help services are unique in the nation in that they provide legal advice as well as legal information. This is true of the Family Law Self Help Centers in most of the Circuit Courts as well as the walk in and remote services provided for District Court cases. Maryland has adopted the ABA's Model Rule 6.5, which provides that in the absence of actual knowledge of a

¹⁹ Administrative Office of the Courts, Evaluation of the Glen Burnie District Court Self-Help Center (April 2012)

conflict, court or non-profit-based programs that provide short-term limited legal services to a client without expectation by either the lawyer or the client the lawyer will provide continuing representation, are not subject to the ordinary rules requiring conflicts checks. Consequently, a lawyer providing services in this context in Maryland is barred from representing a client only if s/he has actual knowledge of a conflict of interest. In operating its self-help services, Maryland studiously avoids recording any name or other personally identifying information that would enable self-help lawyers to identify such conflicts. If attorneys have actual knowledge of a conflict, the second persons requesting assistance will be referred to an alternate provider. Although funded by the courts, program attorneys are employed by an independent entity and are not supervised or managed by court personnel. In other states, the distinction between contracted and employed staff would not be considered to affect the propriety of a court official providing legal advice to a party. In a few Maryland courts, notably Montgomery County, self-help attorneys are employed directly by the court. There is no lawyer-client relationship between court personnel and the parties using the self-help center in most locations. Where the attorney is a court employee, the attorney's legal work is not supervised by a judge or other court official.

When a person calls the Self-Help Center, callers are asked to choose from a number of selections to identify whether they are calling for traffic, family or other civil case types. Callers are told that the Center also does not assist businesses, lawyers, or persons who are represented by a lawyer. Callers are also informed that services are provided by Maryland Legal Aid, that only limited legal services are provided, that Maryland Legal Aid will not provide representation beyond the advice provided during the call, and that callers will be expected to provide demographic information.

Our observation of interactions with callers in the Maryland Self Help Center convinced us that empowering self-help lawyers to provide legal advice provides Maryland users with more information than the standard "legal information" provided elsewhere in the United States. The provision of an analysis of the application of the law to their situation and of strategic and tactical advice is advantageous to self-represented litigants. Lawyers providing this sort of brief service always face the challenge of eliciting enough information from the client to provide professional responsible legal advice; during our short time of observation, we were not uncomfortable with the advice given to self-help clients in the Self-Help Center. Maryland Legal Aid provides malpractice coverage for its attorneys working on the Self-Help Center contract.

When a caller uses the live chat function to contact the Self-Help Center, staff draw upon a library of "canned" response information in crafting a written answer to the query posed.

When advice is given by phone, Self-Help Center staff may send a follow up email if it is deemed necessary.

The Self-Help Center will give advice on trial preparation including how to organize a case, what is cross examination, and how to introduce documents into evidence. Staff do not otherwise attempt to instruct on the rules of evidence. They do refer callers to applicable videos and they attempt to alert callers to situations in which they will find themselves at a distinct disadvantage if they appear in court without an attorney. Although Maryland has had some rules changes, they have not developed any specialized dockets to address the unique needs of SRLs.

In fiscal year 2015, which runs from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015, the Self-Help Center provided assistance to 11,651 phone callers and 6,320 chat inquirers, 5,568 walk-in users, and 2,176 emails with five FTE of staff, all of whom are Maryland lawyers. The study survey data showed that self-help staff spent an average of 6.7 minutes answering chats and 15.1 minutes answering phone calls.

Maryland's public website for legal information, referrals, forms, and self-help is called the People's Law Library (www.peoples-law.org), and is currently maintained by the Maryland State Law Library, a court-related agency of the Maryland Judiciary. The site is supported by volunteer contributors from Maryland's non-profit legal services providers, bar associations, law schools, judiciary, and state government, as well as the broader pro bono legal community.

The site features over 350 articles covering a wide variety of substantive legal topics, and over 100 articles related to court procedure, alternative dispute resolution, the legal research process, and statewide forms. The site links to a document assembly tool for custody, visitation, and child support forms, set up by Maryland Legal Aid. The site links from each translated article to versions in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, or French, as available, and allows searches of the database in each language.

The site provides links to email and online chat with law librarians at the Maryland State Law Library and attorneys at the Maryland Courts Self-Help Center. The site is also home to the searchable statewide Guide to Legal Services in Maryland, a statewide legal clinic calendar, and various legal referral sources.

The People's Law Library uses the Drupal open source software and incorporates responsive design to deliver content formatted for whatever device (e.g., smartphone) is used to access the site.

The site has been developed to allow a fully linked, but non-searchable copy to be downloaded to computers without internet access, including those in prison and jail libraries.

The Maryland State Law Library funds one full time staff position, and three annual 10-week fellowships, to maintain and develop the People’s Law Library site and its information, to recruit and manage volunteers, and to train individuals throughout the state on how to use the site.

The Maryland Judicial Branch recently expanded the Self-Help Center in two ways. First, it added virtual delivery of services in family law, expungement, mandamus, and juvenile cases – in effect, expanding the Center to provide remote services for Circuit Court as well as District Court cases and users. The second was to expand the hours of service. Phone and live chat services are now offered from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The District Court hopes to expand the number of District Court walk in self-help centers so that there are walk in facilities in every region of the state. The next two regional centers are planned for the rural Western part of the state and on the Eastern Shore. The judicial branch also plans to incorporate the services of pro bono attorneys, using call center technology to refer screened calls to pro bono attorneys in addition to the Center’s staff lawyers. Finally, the Judiciary recently created the Maryland Law Help app which provides mobile access to many of the services available through its website, as well as buttons that enable users to click to chat or call the Self-Help Center.

The Maryland Courts Self-Help Center does not engage in the same sort of outreach efforts that remote services units in other sites conduct. The Center staff have no relationship with Maryland judges and court staff, other than through the Access to Justice Department of the Administrative Office of the Courts, which is responsible for overseeing their contract. They do not provide training to court staff or other entities. Their own training is provided by Maryland Legal Aid and is not a part of the judicial branch training effort. The Center does use a variety of approaches to publicize services. It makes referrals to social services and makes an effort to remain knowledgeable about other services available to its clients. However, it does not interact with those agencies in a planning or problem solving mode.

Minnesota Courts Self Help Center

In 2007 Minnesota created statewide remote services self help center to provide to all Minnesotans the self help assistance that was available to residents of Hennepin County. The center provides telephone, email, and document review services. It is the most efficient program studied in terms of the number of matters handled per staff member.

The Fourth Judicial District Court in Hennepin County, Minnesota established one of the first self help centers in the country. Over time, it expanded to include two different sites – a family law self center in the Family Justice Center housing the family courtrooms, and a civil self help center in the Hennepin County Government Center – the main courthouse – which provides assistance with all non-family civil matters, including civil harassment orders. The court also created a separate Domestic Abuse Service Center focused exclusively on helping persons with domestic violence protective orders.

Walk in self help centers have since been developed in Ramsey County (St. Paul) and in one county of the Tenth Judicial District (Anoka County). But most of the state of Minnesota is rural and the size of the courts has not supported the establishment of a statewide network of walk in self help centers.²⁰

In 2007, following Alaska’s example, Minnesota established a statewide telephone and email based self help center, drawing on the expertise developed in Hennepin County and located in the Hennepin County Government Center. Every courthouse in Minnesota has a public SRL Workstation and direct phone line connecting court users with the statewide remote self help services. These facilities were also made possible in part with federal IV-D funds and a grant from the State Justice Institute. The statewide center can also be reached from any telephone or email account.

The statewide center provides information on all civil legal subject matters. Half of the inquiries it receives pertain to family law matters. No other topic constitutes more than 5% of its contacts. Topics, other than family law, on which it receives a high number of calls include conciliation court, judgments, landlord-tenant, general civil, orders for protection and civil harassment restraining orders, probate, criminal expungement, criminal, guardianship/conservatorship, name change, forfeiture, car title, traffic, juvenile, and adoption.

The statewide center makes extensive use of the Minnesota Judicial Branch website developed and maintained by the state IT staff. The Minnesota Judicial Branch maintains both the statewide homepage and the Fourth Judicial District Homepage. During 2014, the state homepage had almost 1.2 million visitors. The Fourth Judicial District homepage had almost 1 million visitors. The booklet, “What to Expect as a Self-Represented Plaintiff or Defendant in a Civil Trial (without a Jury)” was downloaded over 100,000 times in that year. The Minnesota

²⁰ Minnesota’s legal aid programs have created a network of law library-based self help centers throughout the state.

State Self Help Center controls the content of most of the “Help Topics” presented on the statewide website.

Minnesota has a unique resource in a non-profit entity named Call for Justice, LLC which trains 211 operators to make appropriate legal referrals; its 22 training sessions have been videotaped so that they can be shown to newly hired 211 staff or used for refresher training. Call for Justice has also developed and maintained a “cheat sheet” listing, describing, and providing contact information for every legal service available in the state by county.

Minnesota has devoted considerable effort to providing forms using a document assembly format. It uses I-CAN!, Pro Bono Net’s LawHelpInteractive, HotDocs, and A2J software to develop and present interviews that users complete to produce court approved forms. I-CAN! is the preferred approach for dissolution cases.²¹ With funding from the Legal Services Corporation and the State Justice Institute, the state has developed a pilot e-filing application for restraining orders.

Today the Minnesota Courts Self Help Center is staffed with four fulltime staff, all of whom are lawyers. The staff provides legal information, not legal advice, following the standard national understanding of the distinction between them, which is codified in Minn. R. Gen. Prac. 110.

The Minnesota Courts Self Help Center provides three types of services – phone, email, and forms review. The telephone service is available from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Friday, except for court holidays. It uses Cisco Agent Desktop call center software²² that costs roughly \$100 per month per staff member in license fees. Total phone service fees (phone and internet costs for the Center and the SRL Workstations located at 87 county courthouses) are about \$1200 per month. The software provides a recorded message for the caller explaining the services provided by the center and the disclaimer that the service does not provide legal advice. It also supports a phone tree to basic legal information by topic. Phone calls are then assigned to the next available staff member. Rarely, staff will prepare a follow up email to provide the information in written as well as oral form. They use a list of standard content maintained in Outlook for constructing follow up emails.

The program does not record the name of the caller or any caller demographic information other than the county in which their case is filed or will be filed, and the subject matter of the

²¹ The Legal Aid Society of Orange County, California, developed I-CAN! and supported its use by other jurisdictions for a number of years. LASOC has recently decided to terminate its support for I-CAN! implementations.

²² At the time of our visit the program was exploring other call center software options.

caller's question. The Center provides the same services to persons from the three counties with local walk-in self help centers as it does to those without such facilities.

The program does not currently have a bilingual staff member, but periodically relies on the bilingual skills of staff located at the walk-in centers, or ATT Language Line, for interpreter services. The local walk in self help centers do recruit and maintain bilingual staff, particularly in Spanish and Somali. The Center will include bilingual capabilities in future job announcements.

The email program responds to questions transmitted by email making use of the same Outlook list of standard answers by topic, if available, for responding to common questions. The staff inform users that they respond to emails within three to four business days. Minnesota legal services, working collaboratively with the court system, have also deployed a statewide email pro bono question-answering service, modeled on one created in Tennessee. Emails are maintained on a central queue which pro bono attorneys access and respond to when they have time available.²³

The third service provided is forms review. A dissolution form can be reviewed through I-CAN! if the user provides the Center staff with the information needed to locate it; comments are then sent to the user by email. If I-CAN! was not used, the customer can send an email with the forms attached for review. Form review can also take place using Team Viewer co-browsing software. The program will not review LegalZoom forms. A form review generally takes 25 to 30 minutes. By contrast, the Family Law Self Help Center at the Family Justice Center in Minneapolis sets one hour interviews for the purpose of reviewing certain family law forms.

Minnesota's call center collects data on the average length of calls, which has now dropped to four minutes. This is the lowest of the eight study sites. The probable explanations for its short call time are:

- the availability of resources to which to refer callers, including the state website, forms, and a sophisticated child support video developed using Camtasia software presenting an enhanced powerpoint broken down into six chapters;
- the availability of standard email follow up messages maintained in Outlook by topic and the rare preparation of such messages as a followup to a phone call;
- the high proportion of calls classified as "simple" under this study's complexity protocol;

²³ www.mnlegaladvice.org

- an explicit policy that the purpose of the program is to provide legal information not general social services information;
- the program’s policy not to provide copies of paper forms, referring callers to local court offices or libraries to obtain them;
- a culture focused on providing an immediate first step in addressing the question posed – knowing that the user has the option to call back for additional assistance, for instance, telling the caller to locate a form and instructions on the website, follow the instructions provided, and call back for further help if needed;
- a sense that we did not perceive in other programs that the staff are helping people who are representing themselves and are therefore responsible for pursuing their own cases; the self help staff exists to provide information but not to assume any part of the responsibility for moving the case forward; and
- the level of experience of the staff.

Data for the services provided over the past seven years by the statewide self help center are shown below. The second table contrasts the self help services provided locally in Hennepin County with those provided statewide during 2014.

Services Provided by Statewide Self Help Center

Year	Emails	Phone calls	Forms Reviews
2008	1074	3487	
2009	1313	10124	
2010	2168	14882	241
2011	3753	17769	1402
2012	4355	18333	1444
2013	3879	18676	1228
2014	3842	18354	1320

Services Provided by Hennepin County and Statewide SHCs

Hennepin County Government Center SHC	Hennepin County Family Justice Center SHC	Statewide SHC
19,950 All walk ins	16,306 of which 13,743 were walk	23,383 of which 18,354 were calls

	ins and 2,563 were calls	3,709 were emails 1,320 were forms reviews
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The statewide self help center maintains close relationships with local court staff. It does not interact with judges to the same extent, although it does provide training for new judges and judges' law clerks in Hennepin County on working with SRLs. The center does not ask callers if they are represented by a lawyer. Nor do they ask if the caller is a lawyer. A lawyer caller will be given the same legal information as any other caller.

One particularly interesting and unique aspect of the Minnesota program is the close interaction between the statewide center and the local self help centers in the Fourth District in Hennepin County. While these different self help staffs work for different employers, they nonetheless serve rotations in each other's programs.

While we were in Minnesota we were also able to observe the operations of the Minnesota Court Payment Center (CPC) call center, a statewide unit assisting callers with questions about traffic or parking citations, including negotiated payment plans. The business hours are Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 4:15 pm with standard shift schedules for breaks and a daily staff meeting from 4:30 – 5 pm. The work at the CPC is operationally centralized, but the seven staff and their supervisor work from home offices throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Call center staff are expected to meet daily productivity metrics including number of calls handled and average call length. At the time of our visit Minnesota's two largest county courts, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, had not yet transitioned their work to the CPC. Since our visit, Ramsey transitioned in July 2015 and Hennepin transitioned in January 2016. The CPC call center uses several systems making the call handling easy for the call center clerk and convenient for the caller. The systems that are integrated include the Courts' case information system (MNCIS), an interactive voice recognition (IVR) system, and an automated call distribution (ACD) application that distributes an incoming call to the next available call center clerk based on who is logged in to the ACD and available to take a call and who has been "idle" the longest. The ACD provides a real-time dashboard that identifies, among other things, who is logged in, how long a call is taking, the number of calls in the queue, how long a call has been waiting to be answered, etc. It also includes an alarm that alerts staff and leadership if the number of calls stacking up in the queue exceeds the set limit. The ACD has a feature that permits a supervisor to log in to and assist with a call, listen to a call for training and coaching purposes or take over a call from the clerk. All calls are recorded. Staff communicate using email or Microsoft Lync (Skype for Business) which provides instant messaging, audio and video calls, and online meetings. The team trains together by selecting classes from a portfolio of

training modules provided by SkillSoft© with shared lessons and discussion occurring in the staff meetings. Once per year the staff from the CPC organization schedules a face-to-face meeting and training session. The court pays for the computer equipment, telephone and headset and reimburses staff for their dial tone and home internet business connectivity; the staff designate a work space in their home and provide office furniture.

Montana Court Help Program and Montana Legal Services Association

www.courts.mt.gov/selfhelp www.mtlsa.org

The Montana Judicial Branch provides self help services in six layers to the various parts of the state, making extensive use of AmeriCorps volunteers. Montana Legal Services Association has organized itself to provide legal aid services remotely through the use of “minicams” on its laptops and through a “telelaw” project in which tablet computers were placed in accessible locations throughout the state to enable clients and potential clients to make face to face remote contact with MLSA lawyers.

Montana was chosen as a project site because of the assistance provided to self-represented litigants from both the Montana court system and the Montana Legal Services Association.

The Montana court system is centrally funded but decentrally managed. Clerks of court are locally elected officials and their offices are county funded. Montana’s self help services program reflects the state judicial branch’s decentralized culture. The Montana Supreme Court initiated a Court Help Program in 2007 through mini-grants awarded to local courts and bars interested in creating programs in their jurisdictions. A number of communities have created self help centers and they vary significantly in their organization, staffing and service approaches.

The current Montana Self Help Assistance landscape consists of a series of six layers of service. The Administrative Office of the Courts has a staff person who is responsible for stimulating and overseeing the statewide process. The Montana Judicial Branch participates in the state’s AmeriCorps program. There are 18 AmeriCorps positions statewide. The judicial branch has eight of the AmeriCorps positions. They are all trained by Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) and supervised by the programs to which they are assigned. The six service layers are:

- A statewide information website and forms development and management program overseen by the Montana State Law Librarian.

- Telephone, email, and in person assistance provided by the Reference Librarian of the State Law Library and an AmeriCorps volunteer located in the State Law Library. These services are available during the hours that these staff are present in the State Law Library. People can email a question using the “ask a librarian” line on the webpage and receive an answer within a few hours.
- Local Self Help Law Centers in Cascade (Great Falls), Flathead (Kalispell), Gallatin (Bozeman), Missoula, and Yellowstone (Billings) Counties. The staffing of these programs, their hours of operation, and their mode of operation all differ from place to place. One or two AmeriCorps volunteers are assigned to each of these programs.
- “Circuit rider” outreach efforts conducted from each of the local Self Help Centers. For instance, someone from the Flathead County program visits other locations in its county and in Lincoln County in the northwest corner of the state once a month. Staff from the Cascade County Self Help Center travel through four northern counties monthly. The hours that self help staff will be present at each courthouse are posted and schedules are placed on the internet.
- “Omniboxes” of forms and instructions are placed in remote courthouses that are not included on the outreach circuit. Clerks of court are instructed in the use of the materials and encouraged to distribute them. The boxes are visited periodically and the forms restocked as needed.
- Court-based computer terminals accessing MontanaLawHelp and the court’s website.

All of the Court Help programs are limited to the provision of legal information, not legal advice. They answer questions concerning all civil case types, principally family, consumer debt, landlord/tenant, name change, guardianship of a minor, and step-parent adoption. Data from the state coordinator shows that Montana’s Court Help Program statewide consisted of 3.25 FTE employees and 8 AmeriCorps volunteers and assisted 16,000 Montanans during the last annual reporting period. 82% of this assistance was provided face to face and 15% was provided by phone.

Montana has an Access to Justice Commission, staffed by an Administrative Office of the Courts employee. The Montana Supreme Court adopted what are considered model rules authorizing limited scope legal practice, but the bar has not yet fully embraced the concept. The state bar referral program does have a separate list of lawyers willing to provide limited scope representation. The state has a modest means panel of lawyers who agree to handle cases screened by MLSA for \$60 per hour and a maximum retainer of \$1500.

Montana Legal Services Association is an example of a statewide legal services organization organized and managed to maximize the reach of its resources to all residents of the state.

While MLSA has offices across the state, it functions as a single law firm for the poor. The intake process is centralized, uses standard intake criteria for the whole state (with the exception of more lenient acceptance criteria for tribal members) and incorporates an online application process; online applications now exceed phone applications. The intake process is completed by a telephone call back, which includes conflicts screening. Cases are assigned to lawyers based on case matter expertise rather than the geographic location of the client.

The program has a long term interest in creating and providing forms for SRLs. It now has a good set of plain English forms and is in the process of enabling their creation using document assembly software. The Montana bar has been somewhat resistant to both MLSA's efforts to develop forms and to the courts' efforts to create self help centers.

While many legal aid cases are given representation, MLSA provides brief "HelpLine" services – by phone or in person – to roughly 5000 persons each year who do not meet MLSA criteria for representation. Sixty thousand persons visit the MontanaLawHelp website each year.

MLSA lawyers all have minicams on their laptops and regularly use them for GoToMeeting sessions with each other and with third parties. MLSA lawyer laptops can also connect to the court system's Polycom videoconferencing system. Montana conducted an experiment with the use of videoconferencing for attorney conferencing and court appearances. The results were negative except for appearances in uncontested cases and for mediation. The Polycom system remains available to MLSA lawyers but they prefer the GoToMeeting process.

Using a Legal Services Corporation Technology Innovation Grant²⁴, MLSA recently conducted a "telelaw" project which involved placing tablet computers in five locations around the state to facilitate secure videoconference communications with MLSA clients across the state. Tablets were located in homeless shelters to connect with veterans, in a housing authority to connect with clients with eviction cases, and in a domestic violence shelter. Only the latter proved successful. Clients had no difficulty using the devices. However, it was difficult to get clients to travel to the sites where the equipment was located and the sites had difficulties with security for the device. Only the DV shelter tablet remains in use. The DV device allows confidential access to MLSA lawyers without disclosing the location of the client.

²⁴ See <http://www.lsc.gov/grants-grantee-resources/our-grant-programs/tig>.

MLSA obtained funding to place dumb terminals in courthouses with an internet connection to MontanaLawHelp to which court staff could send people seeking legal information. The court now owns the computers, but MLSA continues to provide support for them.

MLSA funds a staff person to develop and administer pro bono efforts. One such effort is the planned replication of the Tennessee online pro bono effort in which persons seeking legal information and advice send an email to the program, which is then answered by volunteer lawyers who scan the list of emails and choose which to answer. Questions that have been pending for a long time turn red on the list; MLSA is the backup for questions that remain unanswered.

MLSA has an ingenious outreach program. Its business cards are placed at clerk of court offices, Social Security offices, Libraries, Public Health offices, and lawyers' office waiting rooms. Its earned income tax credit return preparation service is online as Montana Free File and is advertised on TV public service announcements. It distributes bar coasters with "did you know?" legal situations on them. It trains court staff on the services it provides. Its "Legal Tip of the Week" program is sent to all news media in the state, including public access TV stations, and is tweetable.

Orange County, California Self Help Services

The Orange County, California Superior Court is an urban court serving 3 million people with the motto "On line not in line." The court has pioneered a number of electronic services, culminating in the upcoming release of the first Customer Relations Management (CRM) software application in a court.

Orange County, California has a population of over 3 million people. It has more people than four of the states involved in this remote services study (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Utah). As a very large court operating in an era of scarce public resources, Orange County Superior Court has adopted a strategy of converting from a courthouse-centric services delivery system to a distance services delivery model. The court anticipates that in the future the majority of court users will prefer to conduct most of their interactions with the court on-line; that it can use its relationships with its Legal Services Provider Partners to handle a significant portion of needed face-to-face interactions, and that the court's physical, court-based self-help centers will become the provider of last resort – rather than first resort, as at present. The court's motto is "On-line not in line."

The Orange County Superior Court currently delivers remote services through telephone; e-mail; e-filing; its self-help website; an on-line small claims triage application; and videos available on-line. It is planning to add a customer relations management software application to this mix in early 2016. However, the bulk of its interactions with self-represented litigants still take place at its courthouse-based self-help centers.

Several years ago the court had a dedicated call center to handle telephone inquiries primarily relating to criminal and traffic cases. That service fell victim to budget cutting which reduced the court staff from 1900 to 1425 employees (a 25% staff reduction) over a period of 4 years. Today, phones are answered by self-help counter staff when they are not busy serving customers face to face. The court has a toll-free automated information phone line for criminal and traffic customers; only those callers whose cases are on a collection plan are prompted to speak to a collections representative. At the Self-Help Centers, out of state and incarcerated callers requesting procedural assistance and forms are allowed to leave voicemail messages and the staff uses procedural form letters to accompany the form packets which are mailed out. The court estimates that its average call length is 3 to 5 minutes.

A great deal of information is delivered through the court's website, which provides access to forms and self-help form packets. Forms are vetted on the Transcend website to ensure that they are in plain language. The forms process is being integrated with the court's e-filing system to address the needs of self-represented users. An earlier adopter of interview based software to help litigants complete often complicated legal forms, the court began using Ican! – developed by Legal Aid of Orange County (LASOC) as a public service in 2001 and used for the creation of many family law and other forms in 7 states. The court added HotDocs for use in workshops and clinics beginning in 2008 and developed its own "SmartForms" generator with a two year roll-out from 2010-2012 to create document assembly interviews for family law and small claims actions.

Orange County was a pilot county for mandatory e-filing and now requires e-filing for attorneys filing in all probate and civil cases. During the pilot, e-filing became optional for self-represented litigants pursuant to state rules of court, but is encouraged by the self-help center staff. The e-filing system in Orange County currently has fourteen e-filing service providers (thirteen private and LASOC), who can directly file with the court. A clerk reviews and approves the submission before accepting the filing into the case management system. The court does not currently mandate e-filing in family law cases; however, the SmartForms were designed to be e-filed. LASOC is using these forms in its dissolution clinics and e-files directly from their offices. LASOC is also an e-filing vendor for SmartForms. The court will be implementing the Tyler Odyssey case management system for family law and juvenile cases in December 2015

and is currently exploring options for e-filing in these case types. It is possible that one of the court's e-filing vendors will create a niche e-filing service for SRLs when e-filing is introduced for family cases. The statewide judicial branch continues to support local courts in developing and enhancing HotDocs programs. For example, the domestic violence forms are being updated following input from courts, including Orange County. The program includes an enhanced automated "check box" approach to completion of the declarations required to accompany an application for a domestic violence order of protection.

Another on-line tool the court uses is "Pubble" – which uses a Wikipedia approach to answering on-line procedural questions which are general in nature. The program is an automated Q&A application that selects an answer based on key words contained in the question. Staff monitor the application to ensure the relevance of the answers provided. However, Pubble eliminates the need for staff to review and respond to individual email inquiries.

In collaboration with other southern California trial courts, Orange County built and provides an on-line tool to help persons with a small civil claim choose options for how they wish to address it – by preparing a demand letter, by initiating negotiations with the other side (with references to available ADR services), or by filing a small claims complaint.

The court has created a library of videos that it delivers through YouTube. One of the most popular is How to Start Your Own Divorce.

The court uses a predictive dialer application to provide reminder calls about upcoming hearings and appearances for Procedural Assistance Calendar settings.

In December 2015, the court, using a judicial administration intern, the Court distributed surveys to determine the level of interest in remote services from persons attending four court calendars. Of the 63 persons who completed surveys, 81% would have liked to be able to select the date and location of a court-sponsored workshop online, 84% were interested in receiving email updates and video guides, and 86% were interested in being able to manage and track their cases online. Interest was highest among English speakers, persons with higher educational attainment, and persons who had to miss a day of work to attend court. The report found that 92% of the respondents had internet access, though there was a gap of 26% between English- and Spanish-speaking respondents. Spanish-speakers were more likely to use a smartphone to reach the internet and English-speakers to use a tablet.

Orange County's most ambitious undertaking to get customers on-line rather than in line is the implementation of the first court-based Customer Relations Management system, built on the

Microsoft Dynamics platform. Construction of the system has required the hiring of an outside contractor to customize Dynamics to address the court's needs. The CRM system will provide every court customer who chooses to register with her or his personal My Court card. When entered online or swiped at the courthouse, it will provide court staff with a history of the customer's previous interactions with the court. The first phase of this multi-phased project is set to launch in early February 2016 and will allow customers to schedule workshop appointments on-line, view information based videos, and make visits to the self-help centers more efficient since use of the My Court card will give the staff person instantaneous information about the current stage of the case and the next step needed to move the case towards resolution. The Self-Help staff decided to begin the project by developing the family law module since that case type has the most SRLs. A My Case Tracker module will provide case progress information to the customer in the form of a list of the steps required to complete her or his case; each step will be accompanied with a radio button that will turn green when that step has been completed – providing the SRL with an easily accessible picture of the current status of the case. Subsequent phases will be integrated with the case management system to provide litigants with information about filings in their cases. The system's plans also include on-line referrals to LASOC services and expansion to other case types.

The court is dedicated to proactive management of self-represented cases, having the goal of resolving them completely at the first court appearance.²⁵ The Self-Help staff play an integral role both in planning the case management processes and delivering the services that implement them. The court has a highly successful trial readiness conference settlement program involving volunteer attorneys and SHC attorneys to resolve 86% of contested divorce cases. The SHC staff have been involved in developing the court's informal trial process, which accepts all evidence presented by the parties. Judges using this approach are able to conduct up to six SRL family trials per day.

The court is not investing its resources exclusively in remote access technology. It has recently opened a new Superior Court Service Center to serve the 600,000 residents who reside in the southern part of the county. The new Center currently offers a full-time Self-Help Center and part-time filing and payment windows for criminal and traffic cases. As resources permit, it there will have full-time filing windows in all case types. The court also plans to have domestic violence clinics at the Center.

²⁵ The California Judicial Council has adopted Rule 5.83 of the California Rules of Court, Family Centered Case Resolution, implementing AB 939 enacted by the California legislature in 2010. The rule requires California trial courts to proactively manage family law cases.

The court has invested in NEMO Queue – a system that enables persons coming into the court to choose the service s/he wants and puts her or him in queue for that particular service. The software allows supervisors to monitor the wait time for persons seeking each type of service and to transfer staff as needed to meet the demands of the moment.

The court also works closely with justice system partners to engage them and their resources in delivering the best combined services to customers. The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) has a fulltime staff person located in the Lamoreaux Family Courthouse to handle internal child support referrals. DCSS also funds a full-time Assistant Family Law Facilitator who is stationed at the DCSS offices in order to facilitate completion of court forms when the case cannot be handled administratively. The local bar provides volunteer lawyers for settlement calendars.

The court created an Elder Abuse Task Force and, following its recommendation, funded an Elder Abuse Temporary Restraining Order Clinic beginning last year. LASOC contracts with the court to oversee the twice per week clinic for preparing and responding to requests for temporary restraining orders in elder abuse cases and funded LASOC to develop an elder abuse HotDocs module for use in the clinic and available to the public through the court website. Two law schools and a major law firm provide assistance for these clinics.

LASOC also received a grant from the State Bar to develop an incubator program to train recent law graduates who have not found a job requiring a law degree to develop the skills needed for a successful limited scope representation practice.

The Orange County Superior Court holds an annual “academy” for community leaders to familiarize them with the services provided by the court. This past fall, Self-Help did outreach to the private Bar, the LBGT Center of Orange County, and UC Irvine Law School to help coordinate a Name Change and Gender Marker Clinic in order to fill a gap in services. The clinic began in October and was held at the LBGT Center. It is staffed by law students supervised by volunteer attorneys and the Self-Help Center provides information and referrals.

Utah State Courts Self-Help Center

<http://www.utcourts.gov/selfhelp/contact/>
www.utcourts.gov/selfhelp

Utah’s State Court Self-Help Center is the most recent statewide remote services program, providing assistance to persons with any legal issue in any level of court within Utah. Services are provided through telephone, email, and text messaging and help persons use Utah’s OCAP forms document assembly application.

The Self-Help Center is a free service of the Utah State Courts to help people understand their legal rights and responsibilities and to help them resolve legal problems on their own if they cannot afford a lawyer or choose not to hire one.

The Self-Help Center is a virtual center that provides services through a toll-free telephone helpline, email, text and the court's website. The center's staff speak English and Spanish and are able to access court interpreters if someone speaks another language. The center helps people with cases at all court levels—justice, juvenile, district and appellate—and responds to questions about all legal issues.

The Utah State Courts responded to the ever-increasing needs of people without lawyers by establishing the Self-Help Center in 2007. The Judicial Council had established in 2006 a standing committee on resources for self-represented parties whose strategic plan recommended the development of a virtual center. The center began with one staff attorney providing help by phone and email in two pilot judicial districts—one urban and one rural. The initial effort relied on public access computer terminals and dedicated phone lines installed in every courthouse in the pilot districts. This approach was quickly abandoned once it became apparent that SRLs preferred to contact the center from their own phones and computers and at their own convenience.

In 2008 the Judicial Council determined that those pilot efforts warranted continuation and expansion to a statewide effort. Because of the economic downturn, it wasn't until 2012 that the Utah State Legislature enacted a bill with a fiscal note that established the center as a permanent, statewide program of the courts located within the state law library.

The Self Help Center is staffed by a full-time director and five staff attorneys who each work 30 hours per week with benefits. Because of the part-time nature of the employment relationship, the program functions on 4.75 total FTE. The salary is similar to that of entry level court law clerks. Four of the six attorneys speak Spanish and all services are provided immediately in English and Spanish; other language services are available upon request and are provided by court interpreters.

The center is open six hours per day, four days per week. New staff members receive training before they respond directly to incoming contacts. They perform very well after three to six months and reach full capacity after a year's experience, even though training is ongoing.

Training sessions and presentations by other court staff and representatives of government and non-profit agencies around the state occur at weekly staff meetings.

The Utah center provides assistance on all case types in all levels of court in Utah. These calls include some aspects of criminal cases, including traffic offenses, post-conviction relief, expungement, sentence reduction, and appeals. It is center policy not to receive voicemail messages from patrons. Individualized call appointments are rare but do occur. For instance, if a caller needs a language interpreter other than Spanish or needs help completing an online form, then staff will arrange for follow-up telephone appointments. Staff attorneys do not provide users with their direct phone numbers for follow-up calls. Incoming communications are handled by the next available staff member regardless of a staff member's prior personal involvement with a caller. However, if necessary under the circumstances, a staff attorney will follow-up with a patron if the patron needs special help; in addition, staff attorneys discuss communications among themselves to understand the patron's needs from prior contacts with the center.

Center staff do not recite a standard disclaimer message with callers, emailers or texters. The center's webpage does explain what center staff can and cannot do. Staff explain limitations on the service provided – for instance, that they do not provide legal advice – if the issue arises during the course of a communication. The staff use a written information log form on which they record pertinent information during a call, such as the caller's email address. These logs are shredded later. Staff conduct a short Survey Monkey survey at the closure of the communication to collect some data on the user and to record the services provided. Most callers receive a follow up email crafted for that occasion. The program does not, as a matter of policy, maintain standard or "canned" email responses. It emphasizes the need for each email response to address the specific needs of the individual caller. Staff do copy materials from the state website for inclusion in emails, and include links to forms and sections of the website, and to other relevant resources, pertinent to the user's inquiry.

Calls average 15 to 20 minutes in length although individual calls have lasted as long as an hour and a half or two hours. The policy on call length is to take the time you think the person needs. The phone system records the number of calls received. The program misses about 3 calls for every call it answers. The program does not track what percentage of persons who persist in trying to reach the service succeed or fail. However, customer service surveys indicate that most people get through by phone the same day they try calling, or they get through within a day or two.

The program also accepts inquiries by email and text message²⁶ in English and Spanish. All incoming emails and texts are responded to immediately and certainly on the same day. At one time the program accepted live chat, but stopped that service once it found that these conversations became unduly repetitive because patrons were using chat in addition to the other more effective access tools. Email and text offer alternative access points. Some patrons use them if they cannot get through by phone but others prefer to communicate electronically.

The program maintains data on the means by which the service was rendered (e.g., phone, email, text), whether the contact is from a member of the public or a special audience (lawyer, judge, court staff), the Utah judicial district, state or country from which the inquiry originates (8% of calls are from out-of-state and .3% are from a foreign country), the language of the contact (6% are in Spanish and the remainder in English), the name of the staff member who handled the contact, and whether a referral was made to other legal resources (roughly one third get such a referral).

The chart below shows program’s data for services provided over the life of the program.

Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)	Number of Contacts	Average Contacts per Day
2008	830	9
2009	1992	12
2010	3205	16
2011	6135	31
2012	8236	42
2013	15666	80
2014	16383	84
2015	18,173	91

The next chart shows the breakdown of the contacts by method of service for FY2015 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015).

	Calls	Emails	Texts	Total
Contacts	12,202	3,818	1,735	18,173
Average Contacts per day	61	19	9	91

²⁶ Text messages are handled through Google Voice which renders a character-limited version of the text message on a staff member’s computer screen and returns the message to the user’s smartphone as a return text message. The Google Voice application does not accept attachments, such as photographs of documents, attached to or transmitted as text messages.

Judges and court staff contact center staff through their direct email, telephone, or internal Google chat. Staff do provide information to lawyers who contact the center. Staff provide training for court staff and for justice system partner entities upon request. Staff have been actively involved in efforts to institute proactive case management of domestic cases involving self-represented litigants and are currently staffing pro se domestic case calendars in Salt Lake County.

The Self Help Center director communicates regularly with clerks of court and participates in their meetings as appropriate.

Judges and staff have high praise for the Self-Help Center and its staff and note particularly its depth of knowledge of a number of legal processes, for which there is considerable public need.

The Utah center makes use of a number of resources maintained by the Utah judicial branch. The center director works with the State Law Library Director and senior legal counsel for the courts on the drafting of forms and webpage materials. Center staff provide extensive input on (but do not manage) the judicial branch website. The website includes substantive content concerning a wide variety of legal case types and resources. The Utah State Courts also offer an online form production system, OCAP, whose forms process was one of the first document assembly processes implemented by a court system. It is now in its fourth generation, using a HotDocs platform. The system was designed to generate all the forms required for all stages in the court process at the same time. This feature makes it difficult for court users to navigate for the purpose of generating a particular document. The OCAP system is being redesigned to change this feature. Court filing data show that half of all domestic case pleadings were created in OCAP.

The State Law Library, located in the main courthouse of the state in Salt Lake City, trains and supports University of Utah undergraduate interns who help patrons complete OCAP programs and other court forms. The interns meet with patrons in person or by phone. When necessary, a court interpreter participates.

E-filing is mandatory for lawyers. In the future, self-represented litigants who use OCAP will have the option to e-file.

Some judges throughout the state allow persons to appear telephonically for procedural hearings; some evidentiary hearings have been conducted telephonically. Videoconferencing has been used only for criminal proceedings. Utah law allows for informal custody trials.

The court website provides extensive information and forms for all levels of appeals and the appellate courts are embarking on a pilot project to recruit pro bono lawyers to handle prescreened SRL appeals.

The Self-Help Center staff provides as much help as possible and makes appropriate referrals for people who need further legal advice, representation, or help from other sources. Referrals are made to other legal services providers, free legal clinics, and to other government agencies (e.g., the Utah Labor Commission for wage claims) and non-profit social services agencies (e.g., the Moab Valley Multicultural Center). The center maintains active relationships with legal services agencies, the Utah State Bar, other government agencies, and relevant non-profit agencies to assure a referral process that is as seamless as possible for self-represented persons.

The Self-Help Center is a partner with two remote services delivery programs that utilize volunteer lawyers. Utah Legal Services (the state's only Legal Services Corporation grantee) recruits and trains volunteer lawyers in domestic cases and schedules those lawyers to act as lawyers of the day. The Self-Help Center staff work with callers and if the caller needs legal advice, the caller is immediately transferred to the on-call lawyer of the day. The staff also email directly to the volunteer lawyer any relevant case dockets and pleadings. The goal is to expand the Lawyer of the Day program to include all legal matters.

In addition, the center works with a non-profit program, Timpanogos Legal Center, in central Utah, to make appropriate referrals to the program's virtual document preparation clinic. Both of these volunteer lawyer programs aim to provide legal advice and document preparation by remote services delivery and the Self-Help Center is an essential partner in making sure people get to these services.

Business Process Issues

Scope of Remote Service Delivery Programs

Four of the eight sites studied deliver remote services statewide. California's self help services are county-based, but in northern California a single family law facilitator serves self-represented litigants in three counties. In Idaho and Montana, self help services are primarily face-to-face, supplemented with telephone services that are mostly local in nature.

All of the programs studied now provide services to persons for all court levels in the state. Five of the eight programs provide assistance with all civil case types. Utah provides services for criminal as well as civil cases.

Scope of Remote Services Delivery Program

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Geographic reach	Statewide	Three non-adjacent counties	One county	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide
Court level(s)	All	Unified trial court	Unified trial court	All	General and limited jurisdiction	Unified trial court	All	All
Case types	Family, guardianship conservatorship, step parent adoption, forms for probate and appellate practice	Child support, paternity family, DV, civil harassment, small claims, guardianship, name change, expungement	All	All	All	All	Civil matters with an emphasis on family law	All

Remote Services Clientele

A few of the programs screen out represented persons and a few refuse to assist lawyers. The majority of the programs make no such distinctions.

All but one of the programs identify court staff as clients; all but two identify judges as clients. Six of the eight programs have dedicated phone lines reserved for use by judges and court staff.

Remote Services Clientele

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Unrepresented persons								
Screen out represented persons								
Court staff								
Judges								
Attorneys								

Key	Yes	Direct line for judges/staff	No

Goals of Remote Services Delivery Programs

Goals of Remote Service Delivery Programs

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Provide information								
Provide legal advice								
Make referrals								
Spot legal issues								
Spot future issues								
Provide forms								
Fill out forms								
Create individualized filings								
Feedback loop for court operations								
Proactive case management								
SHC training, support, and supervision								

Key	Yes	No

The programs studied have five consistent goals – to spot legal issues (seven of the eight sites), to spot future issues, to make referrals, and to provide information and forms for the issues spotted. Five of the eight will fill out forms for persons who cannot do so themselves. Only two will create individualized forms for self-represented litigants. Five have a goal of providing feedback to improve court operations. Four assist in providing proactive case management to ensure that cases move expeditiously through the court process.

Two of the programs have unique goals. The SHARP program in northern California uses its videoconference program to train, support and supervise its own staff in multiple locations. And Maryland is the only state that provides legal advice through its court-based service

Seven of the eight court-based programs studied follow the standard understanding of the distinction between legal information and legal advice – providing only the former and not the latter. This means that they limit the services rendered to providing general substantive and procedural information. They tell users their options but do not provide strategic or tactical advice. They explain how to bring matters to the attention of the court but do not venture opinions about the efficacy of bringing a matter or the likely outcome of doing so. The standard disclaimer states that the program does not give legal advice, does not treat information provided by the inquirer as confidential, and will provide similar assistance to opposing parties.

Maryland departs from this practice, authorizing its court staff and contractors, when they are lawyers, to provide brief legal advice to persons seeking assistance. They create a lawyer/client relationship for the purpose of the brief interaction, but advise the client that they are not providing representation beyond the immediate interaction. The advice never includes advocacy on behalf of the client in the form of an interaction with the other party, an agency, or a third party. But it may include preparation of a short document for filing with the court. The lawyer will not provide advice to a person requesting assistance if s/he knows of a conflict but the program avoids recording information that would inform a lawyer of the existence of a conflict. In this way, the program is able to provide service to almost every person seeking help, including multiple parties in the same case or matter.

Service Methods Supported

Among the eight sites studied, all of the remote service delivery mechanisms described at the beginning of this guide are in use except for a statewide triaging portal. Telephone services are universally available. They are supplemented by email, text, chat, videoconferencing, and co-browsing in multiple locations. Utah abandoned chat because it found it too burdensome.

Maryland delivers roughly half of its services using chat. Only Utah is currently supporting service delivery through text messaging.

Methods of Remote Service Delivery Used

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Telephone								
Email								
Chat								
Text								
Video								
Small claims triaging application								
Customer Relations Management application								
Co-browsing								
Document review								
Classes/workshops								
Jurisdiction-wide face-to-face								
Some face-to-face								

Key	Yes	Automated response	Internal use only	No	General jurisdiction	Limited jurisdiction

Three sites use co-browsing, in which the service provider – with the user’s permission – assumes control of the user’s computer to show the user how to use a website or form, or, in a few cases, to complete a form for the user.

Six sites have processes for reviewing documents prepared by a user using remote services. Half of the sites provide classes or workshops using remote services.

Video conferencing is used in only two of the sites. Orange County, California has two programs not available elsewhere – a specialized small claims triaging portal and a customer relations management software application.

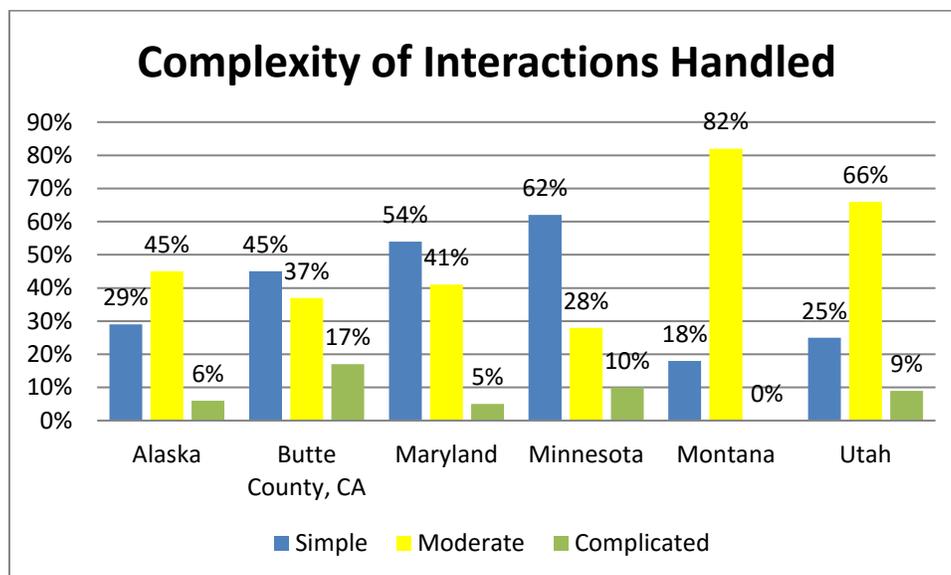
The two California sites provide the option of face-to-face services for all users. Alaska has no face-to-face services. The other sites have some face-to-face services in one or more locations within the state.

Complexity of Interactions Handled

During an early meeting of the site representatives, the study developed a typology for rating the complexity of interactions with SRLs. It consists of three complexity levels:

- Simple -- I did not need detailed knowledge about the case to provide the service requested
- Moderate -- I needed to collect detailed information about the case, but could do so during the interaction and complete the service requested during a single interaction
- Complicated -- Needed more detailed information than I could obtain during the interaction. Not able to complete the service requested during this interaction.

Seven of the eight sites collected data on the complexity of their interactions during the surveying process. Idaho's data is not included in this table because it consisted of feedback to legal services advice as well as Court Assistance Officer assistance. The data for six sites shows a remarkable diversity in the relative complexity of interactions.



Minnesota had the highest percentage of simple matters. Montana had the highest percentage of moderately complex matters (82%); this may be explained by the fact that many of the Montana callers were handled by an AmeriCorps volunteer, who would have had to look up information more than a highly experienced staff member in Alaska (45%) or Minnesota (28%).

However, Utah also had a high percentage of moderately complex calls with its all-lawyer staff (66%), compared to Maryland's all-lawyer staff (41%). Butte County, California (17%) had the highest percentage of complicated matters. Montana reported no complicated matters.

Features of Telephone Services

None of the statewide programs use voicemail and callbacks. They have found that their programs are much more efficient simply answering the calls that they are able to take during regular business hours.

Maryland and Minnesota use recorded messages on their call center software to deliver standard messages on the limitations of services rendered to all callers before they are connected to a staff person. Alaska has staff give the disclaimers at the beginning of each call. Utah, the two California sites, Idaho, and Montana explain the limitations of service as appropriate in the course of providing assistance.

In one of the statewide programs – Alaska – staff give out their direct line phone numbers so that users can reconnect with the same staff person for every call. Three of the four programs that do not have statewide remote services staff use the same system. But the other three statewide systems do not.

Chat, text and email assistance constitute their own follow-up. The Orange County, California use of the Pubble software delivers an automated response to email questions.

All eight programs provide some form of follow-up to telephone calls. Most will send forms and information by mail when necessary; Minnesota does not. The staff of the Utah Self-Help Center construct a unique follow up email for every person assisted. Alaska staff send follow up emails for most calls. Other programs provide email follow –ups when staff deem them needed or appropriate. The Maryland and Minnesota programs use “canned” content, edited as appropriate by staff, to construct follow-up emails. Minnesota sends fewer follow-ups than the other sites – only when the staff deems it necessary.

Seven of the eight programs provide staff with direct electronic access to the register of actions for all cases. They also let self help staff look at case files – electronically if the state has made the transition to electronic documents.

Seven of the eight sites have multilingual staff.

Telephone Service Features

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Use of voicemail and callbacks								
Give out direct phone number so customer can return to same staff member								
Automated disclaimers/service limitations								
Verbal disclaimers/service limitations								
Screening questions	*							
Access to court docket		***						
Access to court documents								
Caller can email/fax/send in documents								
Individualized follow up								
Individualized follow up using canned messages								
Record caller demographics						**		
Record services provided								
Record personal data on caller								
Multilingual personnel								

Key	Yes	Yes – Electronic	One of three sites	No

* marital status, Alaska native identity, member of military

** periodic demographic surveys

*** in one of three locations

Supporting Services

An essential component of remote service delivery is adequate supporting services – websites, forms, videos and other instructional materials, social media and remote interpreter services. These resources are accessed directly by the public. In all eight sites, far more people access the website than contact the self help service program. Websites are also used by remote self help staff to access information to pass on to persons requesting it.

The Alaska Family Law Self Help Center built and maintains the Alaska family law website and develops its own forms. Orange County builds and maintains its own systems. In Idaho, Minnesota, and Utah the state court system develops and maintains websites and forms, with input from the self help programs in their states. In Montana, those are functions of the State Law Library. In Maryland, the Peoples Law Library, which is now a component of the Maryland State Law Library, performs those functions.

Supporting Services

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Website	Blue	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Blue	Brown
Forms	Blue	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Blue	Brown
Multilingual	Yellow	Brown	White	White	Yellow	Brown	White	White
Plain language	Blue	Brown	Brown	Brown	Yellow	Brown	Blue	Brown
Document Assembly	White	Blue	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown
E-filing	White	White	White	White	Brown	Brown	White	White
Glossary	Blue	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	White	Blue
Instructional videos	Blue	Blue	Brown	White	Brown	Brown	Blue	Blue
Interactive education	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	White
Passive education	Blue	Blue	Brown	White	Brown	Brown	Blue	White
Social media	White	White	Brown	White	White	White	Blue	White
ATT Language Line	Blue	White	White	White	Blue	Blue	White	White

Key	Yes- Maintained by Remote Services	Yes – Maintained elsewhere	Partial	No
	Blue	Brown	Yellow	White

Performance Measures and Data Collection

All eight of the programs treat interactions with self-represented persons as anonymous, even though they are not confidential. No program maintains the names and contact information of persons assisted. No program records telephone or videoconference conversations. No program retains emails, chats, or text messages as permanent records. When staff record data during the course of a telephone call, the notes are shredded. The main reason for this practice is to align recordkeeping practices with the legal nature of the relationship – there is no lawyer/client relationship established; consequently there is no reason to maintain information about the caller. A benefit of this practice is to minimize the possibility that self help staff will become embroiled in litigation. A few SRLs are vexatious litigants with a propensity to bring suit not only against the person with whom they initially have a grievance, but also against all persons involved in the legal process when it does not produce the relief sought. If staff do not record personal information about persons assisted, they are usually able to avoid being called to testify about their interactions with those persons because they have no means of recalling what transpired during the interaction.

Orange County, California will represent the opposite perspective when it introduces its Customer Relations Management application in early 2016. That process focuses on maintaining detailed information on each court services user as a valued court customer and maintaining and using multiple forms of contact information to ensure regular communications between the court and each SRL court user. Its system will carefully protect the privacy of that contact information. Statewide triaging portals will enable users to choose anonymity or self-identification. If the portal user wishes to use the portal to establish contact with a service or entity to which s/he is referred by the portals triaging analytics, s/he will have to enter personal information and agree to its disclosure to the referral entity.

Programs typically record information on the numbers of persons served, the method of service, the type of service rendered, and the subject matter/case time for which the service was rendered. Several of the programs conduct surveys at the end of the interaction to record demographic data on the person served; this survey is, of course, voluntary. Maryland collects this demographic information at the beginning of its process. Such surveys are rarely conducted in conjunction with services provided through email, chat or text messaging.

Minnesota no longer collects demographic information on every caller. Instead, it conducts demographic surveys for short periods of time to determine whether its user population is changing over time.

Programs using call center software maintain complete data on the number of calls received, the number of calls answered, average hold time, average call time, and numbers of abandoned calls.

Self help metrics

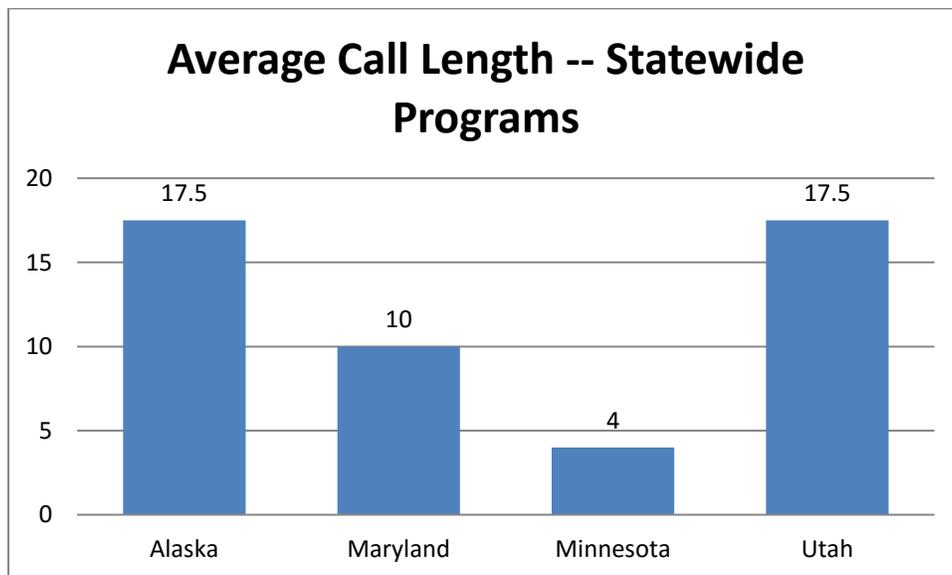
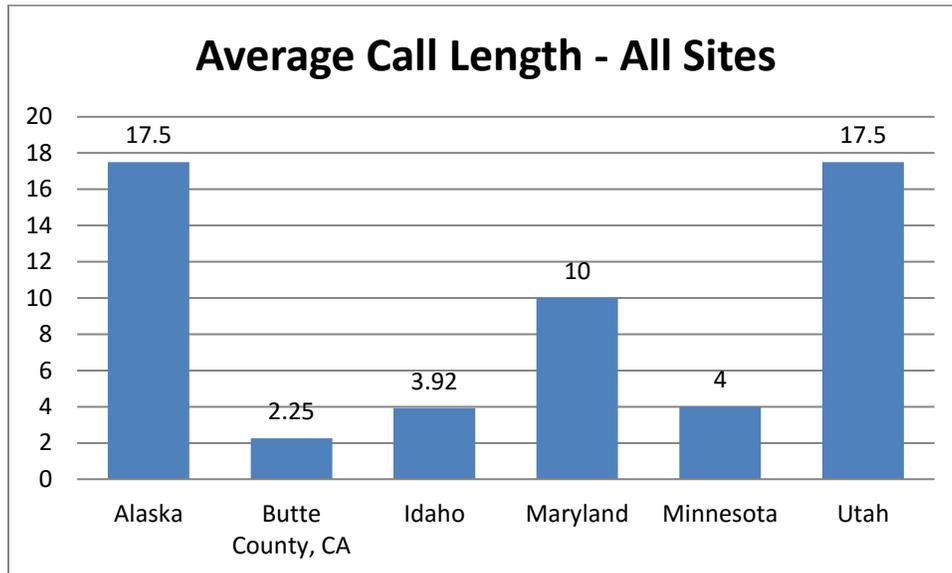
	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Number of calls								
Number of calls not answered								
Caller demographics								
Services provided								
Referrals made								
Referral sources								
Caller success with the issue raised in the call								
Mini studies of operations								

Key	Yes	Child Support/Paternity Only	No

Average Interaction Time

The average length of telephone calls varies greatly from program to program. The following chart shows the data collected during this study. The data for Maryland, Minnesota and Butte County, California are from their call center software. The data for Alaska and Utah is derived from program director estimates that telephone calls in their state average between 15 and 20 minutes. The data for Idaho was based on a sample of calls in one county over the course of a week. We do not have reliable average call time estimates for the other programs. We present two tables for this information – one for the six sites for which we have information and the other limited to the four statewide programs.

Based on the SurveyMonkey feedback survey data, it appears that chat responses in Maryland take roughly half the time to complete as telephone calls. We do not have any comparative data for the time to respond to email messages.



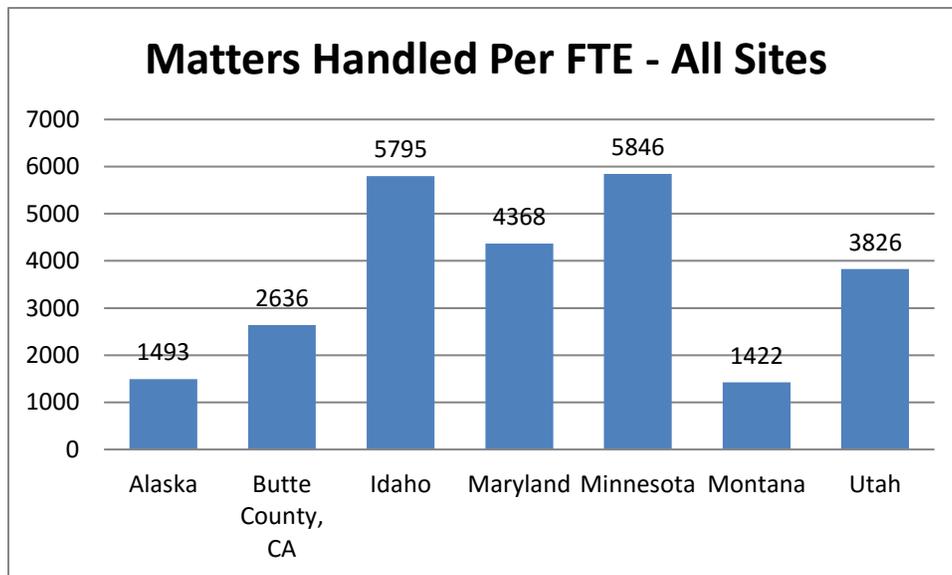
The time to provide specific services also varies from place to place to an inexplicable degree. The Hennepin Family Law Self Help Center, a walk-in self help center, sets aside one hour appointments for the purpose of conducting a document review in a family case. The Minnesota Self Help Center conducts document reviews, including reviews in family cases, in an

average of 25 to 30 minutes. The Orange County, California Self Help Center conducts walk in document reviews in 15 minutes.

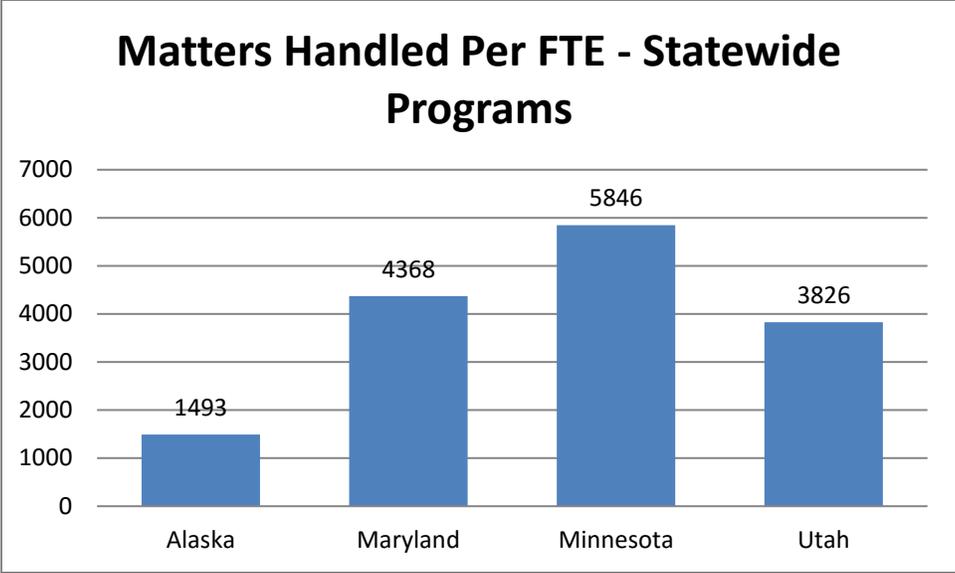
Interactions per FTE

The relative productivity of the remote services programs also varies greatly, to some extent as the converse of the average time spent per call.

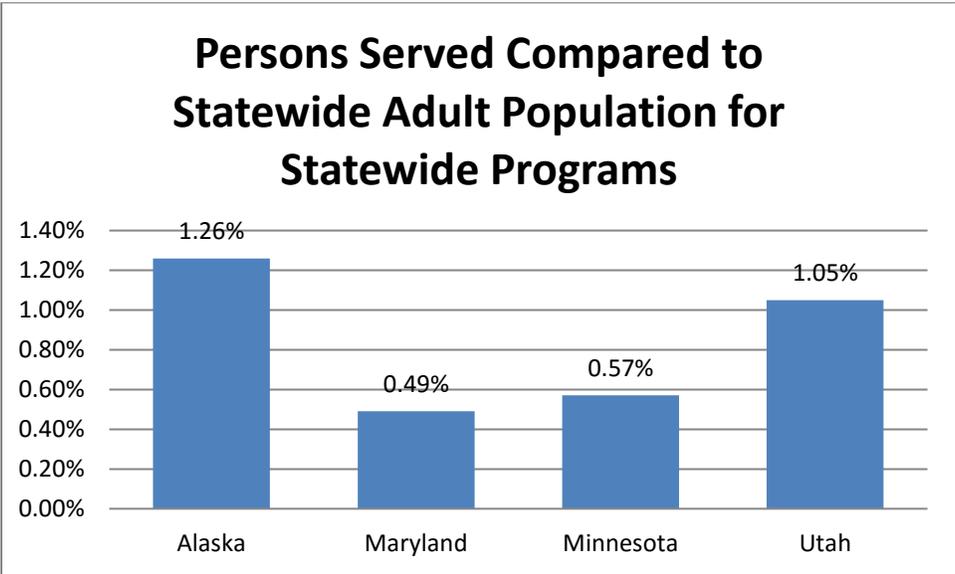
The contrast between Montana and most of the other states shows the productivity advantage of remote services delivery. The bulk of Montana’s self help services are delivered face to face, and often by sending staff to remote locations for that purpose. Minnesota is able to deliver over three times as much service per FTE through the use of its highly efficient remote services program. Idaho has a primarily face to face program similar to Montana’s but its data shows a much higher level of productivity. The study was not able to determine the reason for the dramatic difference between those two states. The Alaska program is anomalous. It conducts all of its services by telephone and has the longest average time per call. It also devotes the most resources to website and forms development and maintenance and to outreach and inreach activities.



The next table provides the matters handled per FTE data only for the four statewide programs.



The final table shows the extraordinary reach of each of the four statewide programs by comparing the number of persons served with the adult population of the state. It is not accurate to state that Alaska serves over 1% of the state’s population annually, because it serves some persons more than once. But it is a fair measure of the statewide impact of the program to compare it with the size of the adult population. The impact is almost as large for Utah. While the numbers for Maryland and Minnesota are only half as large, they still represent a very significant impact for their states’ much larger populations.



Multilingual Issues

In Montana, language issues are inconsequential because only 2% of the population is not fluent in English. Orange County, California presents the opposite extreme, with an automated traffic court information website translated into a half dozen languages. Several sites (Alaska, Orange County, California and Utah) focus on recruiting a multilingual staff and using interpreters for additional languages. Others use court interpreters and ATT Language Line to ensure that they are communicating effectively with non-English speaking SRLs. In Minnesota, the statewide self help center relies on local court staff in Hennepin County to provide interpreter services, if available; otherwise, it uses ATT Language Line. Orange County has special ASL carts with specialized equipment (including video screens) for use with persons requiring American Sign Language.

Multilingual outreach is an important component of the remote services programs in Alaska and Utah – connecting persons with language challenges with local resources who can help them prepare forms, understand instructions and procedural information, and navigate an English language court system.

Staff Development

The consensus among remote services program directors is that it takes a year of training and experience for a staff member to become fully competent in the job. Programs typically recruit persons with experience – either as lawyers or as court staff members. They provide them basic training in the operation of their service delivery system and its technology. They require them to review and master the court rules, court process diagrams, website materials, document repositories, “canned” responses libraries, and other program materials. They have them “shadow” experienced staff – observing them answering calls, emails, and chats for several weeks – encouraging them to ask questions about the thought process the service provider followed in obtaining information from the inquirer and in choosing how to respond. The next step is closely supervised handling of calls – with each call observed by the supervisor or an experienced staff person and detailed feedback on the new staff member’s performance. Programs generally do not allow a new staff person to handle calls without supervision for the first month. The process from that point until full competence involves the new staff person’s regularly seeking help on issues they have not yet mastered, supplemented by periodic supervisor observation and critiquing of performance.

The length of time required for full mastery depends to a significant degree on the subject matter scope of the service rendered. Alaska confines its service to family law and guardianship. Maryland provides legal advice – which requires additional training – but initially limited its services to the subject matters handled in the limited jurisdiction court. Utah covers all legal subject matters in all courts of the state.

The exception to this extended training program is in the SHARP program in northern California. That program uses its W drive materials to provide step by step guidance on the handling of typical calls – decision trees specifying the information to obtain and provide at each step in the process. With the use of these tools, the supervisor is comfortable allowing a new staff person to begin working independently after two weeks of training and familiarization.

Training for remote services staff

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Distinction between legal information and legal advice								
Website navigation								
Forms								
Court procedures								
Court rules								
Use of plain language								
When teaching about appropriate use of legal jargon is important								
Customer service approach to control a call								
Dealing with difficult people								
Avoiding ex parte communications with judges								
Working with court staff remotely								

Collaborative Relationships – Referrals and Outreach

This table documents the entities with which each of the study sites maintains an ongoing relationship.

Referrals

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
“Hot” referrals – connecting customer with specific individual								
Lawyer referral service								
Modest means panel								
Unbundled services lawyers								
Legal aid								
Domestic violence services								
Military resources								
Tribal/native resources								
Local community organizations								
Senior Centers								
Individual volunteers								
Non-English speaker organizations								
American Sign Language resources								
Libraries								

Key	Yes	No

Outreach activities have multiple goals. The most lofty goal is to create an environment in which all justice entities, including legal aid and the private bar, work cooperatively to create a network of coordinated service delivery that achieves the goal of 100% access for persons with civil legal problems. A component of that goal is to enlist the help of outside entities in providing additional assistance to self-represented persons whose needs cannot be met completely by the remote services program. Additional components of that goal are to ensure that the services of all programs are coordinated, and that referrals between programs are appropriate, so that resources available for access to civil justice are maximized. A final goal of outreach is to create and nurture positive interpersonal relationships with the leadership of outside entities to ensure that self help services continue to be viewed favorably within the community.

A significant outreach relationship is with the local bar. The eight sites differ significantly in their relationships with the bar. Several (Alaska, Idaho, and Utah) include lawyers as part of their customer base, taking calls from them and helping them navigate the court system. Maryland and Minnesota are at the opposite end of the spectrum – refusing to take calls from lawyers or, in the case of Maryland, from persons represented by lawyers.

Several of the states involved in this study have developed significant limited scope representation programs with their local bars – a major resource for self-represented litigants. Alaska, Idaho and Montana are examples of programs that can refer SRLs to lawyer referral sources of lawyers willing to provide limited scope services. Maryland just recently enacted ethical rules allowing limited scope representation. The Utah State Bar is updating its online lawyer referral directory with a goal of better highlighting those lawyers who offer limited scope representation. In addition, the establishment of a limited scope representation section of the bar is anticipated soon.

All eight of the study sites engage in significant outreach efforts to other justice entities such as legal services programs, governmental entities, such as child support enforcement, social security, housing agencies and other public benefits administrators, domestic violence and homeless advocates, and other organizations that can serve as intermediaries with SRLs needing additional assistance to be able to use the courts and SRL remote services, such as the tribal entities of Alaska and the multicultural resource center in Moab, Utah. Most of the programs have sophisticated processes for publicizing the availability of its services, including relationships with news media and the use of social media. Montana Legal Services Association has the most creative approaches with its bar coasters and its Legal Tip of the Week.

Outreach

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Formal outreach strategy								
Press packet								
Flyer describing SRL services								
Partnership with court public information officer								
Use of radio								
Participation on community boards and committees								
Bar								
Legal Aid								
Libraries								
Clergy								
Service clubs								
Chambers of Commerce								
AARP								
Aging network								
Disability network								
Health care providers								
School counselors/nurses								
Multi-cultural community leaders								
Tax and accounting services								
Parent resources								
Mental health resources								
Drug and alcohol treatment								
Suicide hotline								
Public assistance								
Child support enforcement agency								

Outreach continued

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Unemployment agency								
Department of Motor Vehicles								

Key	Yes	Conducted at court level, not self help staff level	No

Collaborative Relationships – Inreach

Self help programs also have an important mission of communicating the needs of self-represented litigants within the court system to ensure that they encounter a welcoming and accommodating environment within the courthouse and the courtroom. The directors of statewide self help programs can identify processes that are particularly onerous for SRLs and work with judges, lawyers, and other court staff to develop more effective alternatives.

The Alaska Family Law Self Help Center has an elaborate network of internal judicial branch relationships. The Self Help Center Director spends 30% of time training judges, court staff and outside entities on how to deal with self-represented litigants, serves as a member of the senior staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts, staffs the Access to Justice Commission, and has been a driving force for simplification of court processes for self-represented litigants and the institution of proactive caseload management to ensure that SRLs not only get access into the court system, but get continuing assistance in moving their cases to completion within the system.

Most of the eight remote services sites maintain very close relationships with the staff of the local courts they serve – to make sure that the remote services program is addressing the needs of the local courts, that local court staff are making appropriate referrals to the remote services program, and to improve the overall environment for self-represented litigants throughout the jurisdiction. This is less true in Maryland, where the remote services program is contracted to legal services; in Maryland feedback to the court system is mediated through the court administrator responsible for the legal services contract.

The descriptions of individual programs and services characteristics spreadsheets for each of the programs detail the internal relationships that the eight sites have created within their own jurisdictions.

Inreach

	Alaska	CA SHARP	CA Orange	Idaho CAO	Maryland	Minnesota	Montana	Utah
Provide SRL training to judges								
Provide SRL training to court staff								
Provide SRL training to 3 rd party providers								
Director is member of senior court staff								
Participation on rules committees								
Participation on forms committees								
Participation on Access to Justice Commission								
In communication stream with court executives, clerks and court IT								
Help design court process simplification, proactive case management, wording of court notices								

Key	Yes	No

Planning for Remote Services Delivery

The Public Welfare Foundation has funded a major effort, called the Justice For All Project, housed at the National Center for State Courts and co-directed by the National Center's Vice President for Research and Technology and the Self-Represented Litigation Network Coordinator, to support strategic planning to implement the 2015 "100% Access to Justice" resolution of the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators.²⁷ The Justice for All Project is developing strategic planning tools that are directly applicable to the subject of providing remote services for self-represented litigants. Those tools can be found on the www.srln.org website.

²⁷ See footnote 1.