

# Task Force on Self- Represented Litigants

Implementation of the Statewide  
Action Plan for Serving Self-  
Represented Litigants

**Final Report**

October 2014

# Key Findings

- Self Help Centers are best way for courts to address issue
- Imperative for courts to have well-designed strategies to manage cases with SRLs
- Partnerships are critical

*Statewide Action Plan for Serving Self-Represented Litigants*

*Approved by Judicial Council February 2004*

# Unity of Interest

- Courts need to resolve cases involving self-represented litigants as efficiently and fairly as possible
- The public wants to have lawful resolutions of their disputes in a timely manner
- Providing assistance to self-represented litigants is necessary to serve everyone's best interests

# Recommendation 1

## Self-Help Centers

- Over 1.2 Million Californians Served Each Year
- Available in All California Courts

- Hispanic/Latino – 47%
- White – 31%
- African-American – 14%
- Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American – 8%

- 75% report income from employment
- 81% of those earn less than \$3,000/mo

# Self-Help Center Workshop



# Recommendation 2

## Statewide Support

- Training, listservs, bank of resources developed for the courts
- Self-Help website
- HotDocs programs to help litigants fill in forms
- More services for representation when needed
  - Pro Bono Toolkit
  - Limited Scope Representation
  - Shriver pilot projects
  - Equal Access grants

# Recommendation 3

## Allocation of Existing Resources

- Rule 10.960 adopted saying self help is a core function of the courts
- Guidelines for Self-Help Centers adopted

# Recommendation 4

## Judicial Branch Education

- Extensive curriculum, online study
- Specialized benchguide
- Incorporated into curriculum such as New Judge Orientation
- On-going information on the law for court staff



# Recommendation 5

## Public and Intergovernmental Education & Outreach

- Courts provide information re: services
- Statewide referrals and information
- Legislative reports

# Recommendation 6

## Facilities

- Self Help Centers and services part of court facilities design
- Research shows centers much more effective when located in courthouse
- Outreach locations very helpful

# Recommendation 7

## Fiscal Impact

### Expanded state funding

- 1997 - \$0
- Currently - \$11.2 M
- If Fully Funded - \$44M

Justicecorps and  
other grants

**Courts save \$4.35 for every \$1 spent on  
workshops for self-represented litigants.**

*(The Benefits and Costs of Programs to Assist Self-Represented Litigants,  
J. Greacen, May 2009)*

# Ongoing Work

*(Assigned to PAF)*

- Continue to Implement the Action Plan & Coordinate Statewide Response
- Develop More resources
  - for restoration and begin to address full need of \$44 million
  - to help litigants settle cases
  - to help prepare and explain orders

# Ongoing Work

*(Assigned to PAF)*

- Modernize business processes to recognize that most civil litigants now represent themselves
- Promote effective case management & technology systems to handle SRL cases
  - Including automated reminders
  - HotDocs & Self-Help Center Technology

# Ongoing Work

*(Assigned to PAF)*

- Provide ongoing education for judges and court staff and facilitate sharing of information
- Review and update the *Guidelines for the Operation of Self-Help Centers in California Trial Courts*

# Ongoing Work

## *(Assigned to PAF)*

- Tasks from the Elkins Final Report
  - Work with State Bar to increase representation
    - Equal Access
    - Shriver
    - Pro Bono
    - Limited Scope
  - Expand self-help centers
  - Include settlement services in the management of SRL cases
  - Increase availability of interpreters in all core court services
  - Provide technical assistance to courts on the management of SRL cases