

How court staff can and cannot assist with your case

The Court, including the judge, the clerk, and all court staff, ***must remain impartial***. This means that they cannot take sides in any matter coming before the court. They will give the same types of information to persons on both sides of a case, but they cannot provide legal advice. Information you provide to court staff is not confidential. Read below to find out what the court can and cannot provide to you.

What Court Staff CAN DO

We can provide you with information about available low income legal services programs.

We can explain and answer questions about how the court works.

We can provide you general information about court rules, procedures and practices.

We can provide you information from your case file, including information as to when your next court hearing is.

We can provide a copy of the small claims manual and some court forms that are available in the Self Help Legal Center and on the Courts' website. There are instructions on how to complete some, but not all, of the forms.

We can review your papers for completeness by checking for signatures, notarization, correct county name, and correct case number.

What Court Staff CANNOT DO

We cannot provide legal advice or legal interpretations. Only a lawyer can give you legal advice. Staff can answer questions that call for factual information—these are generally questions that start with “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” or “how.” They cannot answer questions that call for an opinion about what you should do—these are generally questions that start with “should,” or “whether.” For example, court staff can explain court rules and procedure, but they cannot suggest which of several available procedures you should follow.

We cannot advise you whether or not you should bring your case to court or give you an opinion about what will happen if you bring your case to court.

We cannot advise you what to say in court.

We cannot let you talk to the judge outside court. We also cannot talk to the judge for you about your case.

We cannot fill out a form for you or tell you what words to use in your court papers.

We cannot sign an order or change an order signed by the judge. We cannot explain the meaning of a court order to you.

We cannot provide any guidance or interpretation of the Parenting Time Guidelines or Child Support Guidelines for you.