

# The Genesis: Why create the Self-Service Center?

*Revised October 7, 2003*

1. Experiences in this Court before the Self-Service Center:
  - More than 80,000 self-represented litigants in 1995, up from 45,000 in 1991
  - 6 out of 10 divorce related cases involve no lawyer on either side
  - It takes 20-30 minutes to help just one self-represented litigant file Domestic Relations (Divorce, Paternity, Child Custody, Child Support & Parenting Time (Visitation)) papers, due to unfamiliarity, confusion, and improper paperwork
  - More than 250 people each day asked judges' staff for help
  - Hearings postponed due to lack of preparation or missing information from self-represented litigants
  - More than 5,000 calls per month from self-represented litigants asked for procedural information, each call taking at least 10 - 12 minutes
  - Administrative staff estimated that assistance for self-represented litigants took more than 80% of their time
  - Self-represented litigants brought incomplete, inaccurate, and in some situations, completely wrong "do-it yourself" kits to court only to be told they cannot be used due to legal constraints

2. In 1991, the American Bar Association commissioned a study of self-represented litigants.

The study was conducted in this Court, and here are some of the findings:

- Persons with incomes less than **\$50,000** are more likely to represent themselves
- About 20% of the self-represented litigants say they can afford a lawyer but they do not want one
- Self-represented litigants are reasonably well educated, with most having some college background
- Persons who represented themselves in court are more likely to do so again
- Cases in which litigants represent themselves are likely to be completed in less time than cases involving attorneys
- Self-represented persons are more likely to be satisfied with the judicial process than those who are represented by lawyers
- Almost 75% of those who represented themselves in court said that they would do the same thing again
- Self-represented litigants are less likely to receive marital counseling or dispute resolution services
- Self-represented litigants are less likely to receive advice about the tax consequences of their divorce

# The Services: What is available through the Self-Service Center?

*Revised November 14, 2006*

## 1. Court Information

- ▶ Locations and hours of operation for all Superior Court locations in the County
- ▶ Explanation of different courts (Justice of the Peace, Municipal, and Federal)
- ▶ Tips on how to represent your self in Court
- ▶ Explanation of most Court processes in Family Court (Domestic Violence, Divorce, Paternity, Child Custody, Child Support, Parenting Time (Visitation)) cases
- ▶ Explanation of most Court processes in Probate (Guardianship, Conservatorship, Transfer of Property When a Person Dies) cases

## 2. Court Forms & Instructions

- ▶ More than **1450** forms & instructions packaged in packets by process (E.g. Packets needed to get a divorce when children are part of the marriage)
  - ▶ Family Court (Divorce, Paternity, Child Custody, Child Support, Parenting Time (Visitation), Enforcements, Modifications)
  - ▶ Probate (Guardianship, Conservatorship, Transfer of Property When a Person Dies)
  - ▶ Domestic Violence
  - ▶ Juvenile (Dependency, Guardianship, Emancipation)
  - ▶ Property Tax Valuation Small Claims Appeal
  - ▶ Name Change
  - ▶ Justice Court (Small Claims, Civil, Forcible Detainer)
- ▶ All documents available in Spanish (Added January 1, 2002)

## 3. Professional Service Provider Rosters

- ▶ Lists of lawyers and mediators who are willing to help people who represent themselves in Court
- ▶ Lawyers on the roster are willing to provide “unbundled legal services,” which means charging for a specific process or advice, not full representation
- ▶ Fees of professionals on the rosters are determined by each professional, the Court is **not** involved in the setting of fees
- ▶ Customers can find out specific information about each roster participant:
  - ▶ Where he or she is located
  - ▶ Hours of operation
  - ▶ Languages spoken
  - ▶ Fees charged
  - ▶ How payment is accepted
  - ▶ Years of experience
  - ▶ Training
  - ▶ Areas of law in which the provider has experience

# The Delivery Systems: How do you access the Self-Service Center?

Revised October 3, 2005

## 1. Courthouse Locations

- ▶ Downtown Phoenix - 101 W. Jefferson, 1st Floor, 7:30 am - 5:30 pm, Monday - Friday  
(Opened Oct. 5, 1995)  
*Serves more than 90 citizens per day*
- ▶ Mesa - 222 E. Javelina, Law Library 1st Floor, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday  
(Opened May 1, 1996)  
*Serves more than 50 citizens per day*
- ▶ Surprise - 14264 W. Tierra Buena Lane, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday  
(Opened July 22, 2002)  
*Serves more than 8 citizens per day*
- ▶ Northeast Phoenix - 18380 N. 40<sup>th</sup> Street, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday  
(Opened September 14, 2005)  
*Serves more than 8 citizens per day*

### Provides:

- ▶ Forms and instructions needed for most court processes in Family Court and Probate cases
- ▶ Lists of professionals in the community who can help you represent yourself, including lawyers and mediators
- ▶ Space for legal research and forms completion, plus phones and a children's area with TV/VCR
- ▶ All documents are also available in Spanish at all locations (Added January 1, 2002)

## 2. Automated Telephone System

(602-506-SELF) (Opened October 9, 1995)

- ▶ Accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Need a touch-tone phone)
- ▶ Serves more than 120 calls simultaneously
- ▶ Contains more than 6 hours of information
- ▶ *Currently serving more than 700 citizen inquiries per week*

### Provides information about:

- ▶ Hours and locations of all Superior Court locations
- ▶ Other courts in Maricopa County
- ▶ How to represent yourself in Court
- ▶ Professionals in the community who can help you represent yourself
- ▶ Services in the community that are available to you
- ▶ Court processes in Family Court (Divorce, Paternity, Child Custody, Child Support, Parenting Time (Visitation)) cases including Domestic Violence
- ▶ Court processes in Probate (Guardianship, Conservatorship, Transfer of Property When a Person Dies) cases
- ▶ Forms you need for court processes in Family Court and Probate cases (What forms are needed, Where to get them, and Where to File them)

## 3. Internet

(<http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/ssc>) (Opened September 14, 1995)

- ▶ Accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Need a Computer with Internet access)
- ▶ Serves Internet users around the world
- ▶ Searchable by key word or phrase
- ▶ *Currently serving more than 750 users per day*

### Provides:

- ▶ Forms and instructions in Microsoft Word '97 – 2000 format that can be

downloaded

- ▶ Forms and instructions in PDF (Portable Document Format) that can be downloaded
- ▶ Professional Roster Sort Program
  - Allows user to narrow search of professional rosters by;
    - ▶ The area of Maricopa County in which the help is needed,
    - ▶ The type of professional needed – lawyer or mediator,
      - ▶ The area of law the issue involves.
- ▶ Information about Court processes in most Family Court and Probate cases
- ▶ Links to related Government, Legal and Community websites (Added May 24, 2001)
- ▶ All documents are also available in Spanish in both electronic formats (Added January 1, 2002)

## The Collaborative Partners: Who made the Self-Service Center possible?

*Revised April 9, 2001*

Access to court services is dependent upon the development of a judicial system integrated within the community it serves, with linkages for litigants not only to court services, but to individuals and community-based agencies that can meet litigants' related social, financial, and other needs. The litigant who recognizes that these services exist in the community today, and that he or she can choose to access these services, is the litigant who will have the best opportunity to resolve any particular judicial matter in the most integrated manner possible.

In order to create a program that was truly integrated with the community, the Court enlisted the help of more than 200 people, from various organizations. Here are some of the organizations that were, and continue to be, involved in the Self-Service Center program:

- Clerk of Court for the Superior Court of Arizona, Maricopa County
- Administrative Office of the Courts, Arizona Supreme Court
- Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Child Support Enforcement
- State Bar of Arizona
- Maricopa County Bar Association
- Community Legal Services
- Community Information & Referral Services
- Business Communication Technology, Maricopa County
- Domestic Violence community