

SELF-HELP LEGAL ASSISTANT

DEFINITION

Under general supervision, performs advanced specialized clerical and legal services for self-represented litigants regarding Court processes pertaining to case types assisted by the Self-Help Center / Family Law Facilitator's Office, assists the Family Law Facilitator with a variety of paraprofessional legal duties, and performs other duties as required.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The Self-Help Legal Assistant classification is differentiated from a Self-Help Legal Clerk in that the former possesses advanced knowledge and understanding of the Self-Help Center / Family Law Facilitator's legal practice areas and performs the more difficult or complex assignments which includes working independently with minimal supervision.

TYPICAL TASKS

- Assist self-represented litigants from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with routine completion of legal forms, procedural assistance, and providing legal information materials and court forms in case types served by the Self-Help Center / Family Law Facilitator's Office
- At the direction of the Family Law Facilitator, provide self-represented litigants with information about all appropriate legal options
- Collect information from self-represented litigants and review legal documents and forms for completeness and procedural compliance with code requirements
- Identify non-routine cases and ask for specific direction from supervising attorney and prepare legal documents and/or explain legal options to self-represented litigants in accordance with those directions
- Explain legal procedure and process to self-represented litigants one-on-one and in group/workshop settings on a variety of legal topics appropriate to the Self-Help Center
- Prepare child support and spousal support calculations based upon statutory guidelines
- Assist self-represented litigants to prepare orders after hearings, Judgments and other legal documents conforming to clerk's case summary notes and/or the judicial officer's ruling
- Provide self-represented litigants with appropriate referrals to legal and social service agencies
- Make phone calls, gather materials and prepare forms and flyers
- Assist the Family Law Facilitator with a variety of paraprofessional legal duties
- May lead the work of interns and the Self-Help Legal Clerk, including training and instruction in work procedures
- Work independently in our walk-in clinics providing check-in, triage and substantive legal assistance

- Answer legal and procedural questions received by telephone from self-represented litigants
- Assist the Family Law Facilitator in reviewing changes in legislation and case law
- Examine, review and analyze local rules and forms for compliance with statutes, codes, rules and policies
- Prepare reports, memoranda and performs special studies
- Maintain statistics and prepares periodic reports
- As assigned and under direction, perform community outreach activities to inform the public and other community agencies of the self-help services offered by the Court
- Assist with interviewing for new staff positions
- Maximize delivery of self-help legal services through the use of email, remote video conferencing, online document preparation programs and other technology
- Conduct legal research using legal databases and books
- Draft instructions using plain English for self-represented litigants
- Handle routine correspondence and related clerical tasks independently

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Knowledge of:

- Rules, statutes and case authority applicable to areas of law served by the Self-Help Center / Family Law Facilitator's Office
- California Court procedures, rules of evidence and burden of proof issues
- Legal terminology
- Methods and techniques of effective interviewing, often when relations may be strained
- Legal forms and the content required for filing cases in the area of work
- Proper telephone etiquette
- Effective customer service practices and techniques
- Correct English usage including spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Standard office equipment and personal computers
- Computer applications related to the work
- Record keeping, report preparation and filing methods
- Editing and proofreading techniques
- Business arithmetic, including percentages and decimals
- Principles of public speaking

Ability to:

- Effectively communicate in writing, in person, by telephone and remote video conferencing with self-represented litigants and other agencies
- Prioritize, maintain and coordinate a heavy workload
- Understand specialized legal information and procedures and communicate them to self-represented litigants in an impartial and straightforward manner
- Perform actions that require high attention to detail both in review of legal documents and application of code, rule and specific procedural requirements

- Operate a computer and use standard business software and a variety of computer software programs and databases related to area of assignment
- Work and adapt to an environment that includes frequent interruptions, simultaneous attention to multiple tasks and meeting legally established deadlines
- Use tact, diplomacy and compassion when dealing with sensitive situations and upset customers
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with all those encountered in the course of work
- Follow oral and written directions
- Assist the most difficult self-represented litigants with complex legal issue(s)
- Use interviewing skills and effective mediation techniques to obtain accurate, useful information from Court customers to identify their problems/needs and develop appropriate next steps
- Support the Family Law Facilitator in the administration of a variety of tasks
- Analyze factual and legal claims and issues
- Maintain and ensure the integrity of sensitive and confidential information

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Strength, dexterity, coordination and vision to use a keyboard and video display terminal on a daily basis. Hearing sufficient to communicate effectively. Dexterity and coordination to handle files and single pieces of paper. Occasional lifting of objects weighing up to 15 lbs. by reaching overhead, pushing, pulling, kneeling or stooping. Moving from place to place within an office. Remain in a stationary position for prolonged periods of time.

EXPERIENCE/EDUCATION

- 1) Graduation from college with an Associate's Degree in any field AND two years of general clerical or legal secretarial experience. Experience may be substituted for the educational requirement on a year-for-year basis up to two years. **OR**
- 2) Paralegal Certificate from an approved program AND two years of general clerical or legal secretarial experience. Experience may be substituted for the educational requirement on a year-for-year basis up to two years. **OR**
- 3) Three years of Court clerical experience involving document processing.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Possession of a valid Class "C" California driver's license.
- Travel within the county is required.