

APPENDIX

Pro Se Litigants

- In Chicago, the Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS) screens, handles, or refers more than 60,000 cases a year. Each member of CARPLS' paid and volunteer staff handles only one or two areas of law, which allows people to become effective screeners quickly. CARPLS has self-help materials in many major areas, and part of its screening is designed to assess whether a caller can or cannot achieve the desired objective by using those materials. CARPLS uses student researchers to compare the names of people who have received self-help packets to electronic court dockets to see whether people have been able to file and win their own cases using CARPLS' materials. CARPLS also refers callers to various help desks for pro se litigants, located in state and federal courts, and to legal aid providers.
- Washington D.C. has established Court-Based Resource Centers located in D.C. Superior Court, which include the Consumer Law Resource Center, Landlord Tenant Resource Center, Probate Resource Center, and Tax Sale Resource Center. In FY 2010-2011, more than 7,200 people were served by these Centers.
- In San Francisco, the Volunteer Legal Services Program's Eviction Defense Services has engaged volunteer attorneys to provide brief advice, and in some cases, full representation, in eviction matters. Volunteer attorneys have been very responsive because the cases require a limited time commitment. The attorneys are trained and then spend a set amount of time in the courthouse providing limited representation to people who are already there for a court-ordered mediation. This project is attractive to transactional attorneys and in-house counsel, because it generally requires negotiation more than litigation skills and there always is a supervising VLSP attorney on-site. VLSP also maintains the Federal Pro Bono Project, which involves placing three individuals (including a staff attorney) in the Federal Courthouse's self help center once a week to provide brief legal advice and referrals to volunteer attorneys.
- The Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASD), an LSC-funded grantee, uses several courthouse-based self-help programs to enhance representation to people of limited means. LASD runs three separate clinics in three different courthouses including a domestic violence clinic, a guardianship clinic, and a housing (eviction prevention) clinic. These clinics, primarily staffed by LASD employees, serve hundreds of people annually.
- The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) has developed a "prescription pad," which lists all the help desks in state and federal courts in Cook County, and describes the types of cases they handle, the degree of help they offer, and their hours of operation. Many local legal aid organizations use the "prescription pad" to make referrals. In 2011, the various help desks in the city collectively helped more than 65,000 people – all of whom were already in court and in desperate need of representation.
- Volunteer Lawyers Network has provided a pro se clinic at the Hennepin County Government Center's Self Help Center in Minneapolis since 1997. What started as a once-a-week service is now available five days a week for four to six hours a day. Clients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis for any issue except family and criminal law. VLN recruits and trains volunteer lawyers from a number of firms and provides onsite staff support, coordination of student volunteers, client screening, forms, and informational materials. Typically, sessions are 15-20 minutes long if other clients are waiting. Spanish and Somali interpreters are available. In some cases, the brief-advice encounter will evolve into full representation of the client, either by the volunteer lawyer or by another lawyer recruited by VLN.