



SERVING SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

Judicial Council of Georgia/
Administrative Office of
the Courts

Access to Justice
Committee

Every year, more than a million people represent themselves in Georgia courts. Because they are unfamiliar with the legal system, they often ask questions of you, our court staff. It is important that you give them accurate legal information without giving them legal advice.

HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

YOU CAN provide legal information

- You may explain and answer questions about how the court works.
- You may provide them with the phone number for the local lawyer referral service, law library, self-help center or other appropriate referral.
- You may give them general information about court rules, procedures and practices.
- You may provide court schedules and information on how to get a case scheduled.
- You may provide them information from their own case files.
- You may provide them with court-approved forms and court-approved instructions.
- You may answer general questions about court deadlines and how to compute them.

YOU CANNOT provide legal advice

- Do not tell them whether their case should be filed in your court.
- Do not tell them what words to use in their court papers (but you can follow a judge's direction to check the papers for completeness).
- Do not tell them what to say in court.
- Do not give an opinion about what will happen if they bring their case to court.
- Do not talk to the judge for them or otherwise intercede with a judge on their behalf.
- Do not tell them how to complete the forms you provide.
- Do not tell them their specific deadline or relevant statute of limitations.

CONSIDER:

- Legal information explains the law and the legal system in general terms. It is not case-specific.
- Legal advice applies the law to a particular situation. It recommends the best course of action for that situation to achieve that person's goals.
- Note: Courts should consider issuing a standing order authorizing court personnel in the jurisdiction to rely on, distribute or otherwise display the attached "Serving Self-Represented Litigants Counter Card."

WHEN TAKING ACTION