Visit **www.selfrepresent.mo.gov** for more information about handling your family matters in Missouri, including:

Litigant Awareness Program

You should determine if your abilities, skills and personal circumstances make it a wise decision to represent yourself in court or not. The program describes the litigation process and discusses the risks and responsibilities of self-representation. The program can be done online and you may print a certificate of completion when you finish. You may have to show the court you have done this to be able to represent yourself in a family court. Contact your circuit court clerk for instructions about how to complete the program in your area. Should you decide to represent yourself, free forms for family court matters are available at **www.selfrepresent.mo.gov**.

Help for Domestic Violence

Domestic violence involves the use of power and control by one person over their intimate partner. This may include physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. If you are experiencing domestic violence, there are resources that can help. Visit the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence at **www.mocadsv.org** or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-7233.

MOCADSV's website has a map of free and confidential services available in your area, which might include different types of shelter; court and legal assistance, such as help with understanding the order of protection process; crisis intervention; *(Continued on back page.)*

support groups; counseling and therapy; support if you need to go to the hospital as a result of domestic abuse or assault; child care; assistance with employment and education; and batterer's intervention programs.

The circuit clerk's office in your county may provide information and assistance to you to seek an order of protection.

Legal Clinics

Legal clinics offer limited legal services. You may need to meet certain income guidelines.

- Pro Se Dissolution Classes: Legal Aid of Western Missouri
  - Kansas City (816) 474-6750
  - Joplin (800) 492-7095
  - Springfield (800) 444-4863
  - St. Joseph (800) 892-2101
  - Warrensburg (660) 747-7101
- Legal Services of Southern Missouri, Access Justice Center, provides pro se litigants with free legal resources and information in family law cases. The Access Justice Center is located on the first floor of the Greene County Courthouse, 1010 N Boonville, Springfield, MO.
- Child and Family Justice Clinic at the University of Missouri School of Law: (573) 882-2371
- Law school libraries can assist in finding legal reference materials (do not provide legal advice).

OSCA • April 2025

Things to Know When in Family Court



www.selfrepresent.mo.gov

Committee on Access to Family Courts
Office of State Courts Administrator
2112 Industrial Drive
P.O. Box 104480
Jefferson City, MO 65110

Your family law matter is important. It can affect your parental, spousal, and property rights and how you parent your children. In 2023, Missouri law changed as to how family law cases are filed with the court. It is important you understand these changes, especially if you are going to represent yourself in family court. Any identifying information, such as social security numbers, credit card numbers, driver's license numbers, passwords, full dates of birth, etc., may no longer be on any document filed in court that the public can see. However, the court will need and will have access to this information. It is important that you know how to redact, that is to remove, this information from documents you may file with the court. In some cases, you will need to file two sets of documents with the court – one with identifying information visible, and one with that information removed. Know also that the court clerks cannot assist you in this process – they are not attorneys and cannot give legal advice.

Do not be discouraged by this – your case and rights are important. There is help available to you, often at little or no cost. You may want to see a lawyer about your case and the filing of documents. The Missouri Bar *Client Resource Guide* and state and local bar associations can help you find a lawyer. Visit **www.selfrepresent.mo.gov** for information about handling your family law matter and to find out how attorneys set their fees. Lawyers want you to be satisfied with their services and expect you to ask about fees when you meet with them. Legal Services and other non-profit organizations provide free and reduced cost legal services to eligible low-income persons, as many attorneys volunteer to donate time to these organizations.

Getting a Lawyer

Before you decide to represent yourself, it is worth seeing if you can find a lawyer to help you. You may be able to get help from a lawyer for free if you meet certain financial criteria. Check with the Legal Services office in your area to find out whether you qualify. Non-profit organizations (local court, churches, social services agencies) and law school clinics also may provide free help. If you don't qualify for free legal services, you may want to contact a lawyer to see if options are available that will allow you to afford hiring counsel. Look to the resources in this brochure to explore these options.

- **Legal Services of Missouri** offers free legal services in some family law cases, particularly when domestic abuse is involved, if you meet certain income guidelines. Find the Legal Services office that covers your county on the web at **www.lsmo.org**.

  Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
  - St. Louis: (314) 534-4200
  - Hannibal: (800) 767-2018
  - Union: (636) 583-7877

  Legal Services of Southern Missouri
  - Springfield/West Plains: (800) 444-4863
  - Rolla: (800) 444-4863 or (573) 341-3655
  - Charleston/Cape Girardeau: (800) 444-4863 or (573) 651-4806

  Legal Aid of Western Missouri
  - Kansas City: (816) 474-6750
  - Joplin: (800) 492-7095
  - St. Joseph: (800) 892-2101
  - Warrensburg: (660) 747-7101, ext 3101

  Mid-Missouri Legal Services
  - Columbia: (800) 568-4931
  - Jefferson City: (888) 476-4545

- **Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry** located at Saint Louis University Law School: (314) 977-3993

- **The Samaritan Center** in Jefferson City serves mid-Missouri residents. For more information, visit **www.midmosamaritan.org** or call (573) 634-7776.

- **Missouri Bar at www.mobar.org**
  - **LawyerSearch** is an online list of lawyers who have indicated they currently are accepting clients.
  - The **Official Missouri Directory of Lawyers** makes it possible for citizens to check whether a lawyer is in good standing.

- **Missouri.FreeLegalAnswers.org** is a free service for low-income Missouri residents who think they cannot afford a lawyer to get answers about non-criminal problems from volunteer lawyers. Learn more about how this service works by visiting their FAQ page at MissouriLawyersHelp.org/missouri-freelegalanswers-org-frequently-asked-questions.

Bar Association Lawyer Referral Services

It always is worthwhile to talk with a lawyer. Contact the following bar associations to obtain lawyer referrals:

- **www.bamsl.org**
  (314) 421-4134 or (833) 743-8212
  St. Louis Metropolitan Bar Lawyer Referral Service offers referrals in the St. Louis area.

- **www.springfieldbar.com**
  (417) 831-2783 Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association offers referrals in the Springfield/southwest Missouri area.