

*Missouri Supreme Court Joint Commission to Review Pro Se Litigation
Report to the Supreme Court of Missouri & the Missouri Bar
(September 2003)*

Joint Commission Specific Recommendations

Recommendation # 1: Pro se litigants in specific types of cases should be required to participate in an education program that describes the risks and responsibilities of proceeding without representation.

Recommendation # 2: Guidelines should be developed for court staff that clearly defines what information is and is not considered legal advice. The guidelines should be made available to each circuit court with the option of also distributing the guidelines to pro se litigants. A curriculum and training program for court staff and advocates who interact or assist pro se litigants should be developed.

Recommendation # 3: The Judicial Education Committee should develop a curriculum and training program for the judiciary on effective court management techniques in cases involving pro se litigants. The curriculum should include education concerning ethical dilemmas created by pro se litigation and should consider the development of standard protocol for handling hearings involving pro se litigants.

Recommendation # 4: An internet based centralized clearinghouse should be developed and maintained to serve as a repository for information concerning all pro se services and programs available statewide.

Recommendation # 5: A pamphlet or brochure should be developed and made available for distribution in each circuit court describing the resources available to educate and inform the pro se litigant of the risks and responsibilities of proceeding without professional legal representation.

Recommendation # 6: The Circuit and Family Courts should strengthen alliances with state and local bar associations throughout Missouri to encourage, promote, and support lawyer referral programs that will link those in need of legal representation to lawyers who are available to provide some services in family law cases at reasonable or reduced fees.

Recommendation # 7: The court system and organized bar should proactively encourage lawyers within the state to offer pro bono services annually and encourage initiatives to provide more sources of pro bono legal assistance.

Recommendation # 8: The Supreme Court of Missouri should develop and approve plain language, standardized forms and instructions that are accepted in all state courts and made available to pro se litigants.

Recommendation #9: The Supreme Court of Missouri should establish a Pro Se Implementation Committee responsible for the implementation of the approved recommendations of the Joint Commission.