

- **A Mandatory Self-Representation Awareness Program**

Information that describes the divorce litigation process and your risks and responsibilities when proceeding without a lawyer is available in different formats throughout the state. You are required to show the court that you have completed this program before your divorce can go forward. The program covers phases of the law suit including: Starting a Case, Filing, Service, Answer, Preparing for the Hearing, and the Final Hearing. Check with your local court to see how you can complete this awareness program in your area.



- **Resources for free legal services available to low income citizens**



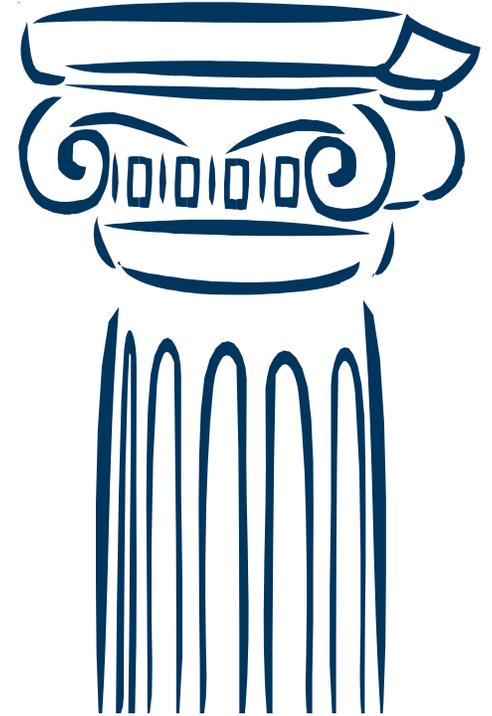
- **Getting a Lawyer**

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. There are also non-profit organizations and law school clinics that 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 help you explore these options.

- **Resources for Domestic Violence**

If you feel you are a victim of domestic violence there are resources that can help.

Accessing Family Courts in Missouri



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

Deciding to represent yourself in a family law matter is an important decision that may involve considerable risk and should not be taken lightly. As a self-represented litigant, you will be held to the same standard as a lawyer. The Committee on Access to Family Courts has developed this brochure to inform you about the resources available online and in your community that can assist you in making an informed decision.

www.selfrepresent.mo.gov

Visit www.selfrepresent.mo.gov to find complete information about representing yourself in family matters in Missouri including:

- **A Self-Representation Self-Assessment**
Taking an assessment of your abilities, skills, and personal circumstances may help you decide if representing yourself is advisable. You can take a brief self-assessment at www.selfrepresent.mo.gov.



- **Free forms for the use of self-represented litigants in Missouri courts**

Available Resources to Find a Lawyer

- **Legal Services of Missouri** offers free legal services in some civil cases, if you meet certain income guidelines. Find the Legal Services office that covers your area of the state on the Web at www.lsmo.org.
- **Not-for-profit organizations** may also be a source to find free legal representation. Ask your local court, churches, law schools, and social services agencies to see if any such resources exist in your area. The Samaritan Center in Jefferson City is an example of such an organization serving mid-Missouri residents. Go to www.midmosamaritan.org for more information.
- **You should not automatically assume that you can't afford a lawyer.** It is always worthwhile to talk with a lawyer first to see what your case might actually cost and whether there are options available to help you afford professional legal representation. State and local bar associations can help you find a lawyer.

- **Bar Association Lawyer Referral Services**
Contact the following bar associations to obtain lawyer referrals:

www.kcmba.org

- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association offers referrals in the Kansas City area.

www.bamsl.org

- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis offers referrals in the St. Louis area.

www.smba.cc/

- Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association offers referrals in the Springfield and southwest Missouri area.

www.mobar.org

- The Missouri Bar offers referrals in the remainder of outstate Missouri.

Other Resources to Find a Lawyer

- **LawyerSearch**, a service of The Missouri Bar, is an online list of lawyers who have indicated that they are currently accepting clients.
- The **Official Missouri Directory of Lawyers** makes it possible for citizens to check a lawyer's standing using the Internet. Access both of these resources at www.mobar.org.