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Increasing Access To Justice: Odyssey Guide and File

Santa Clara County Superior Court's new Guide and File program helps self-represented litigants complete legal documents at home

SAN JOSÉ, California (April 23, 2019): In September of 2018, as part of the Santa Clara County Superior Court's ongoing effort to increase access to justice, the Superior Court began its offering of the Odyssey Guide and File system, an online program which helps self-represented litigants through the process of generating and completing court forms. Guide and File electronically assists litigants who want to submit legal documents in various Family and Civil law cases with the help of a simple and intuitive "interview-like" process.

From the initiation of this program, across several counties in California, there has been a steady increase in the number of people making use of this valuable service. Between the months of August 2018 and January 2019 over three thousand interviews have been completed, over 20K documents created, and over 700 document packets have been E-Filed (which means that none of these litigants had to step foot in the courthouse to complete &/or file their documents).

"This is part of an ongoing effort to reach out to our users in a way that makes navigating the court system both accessible and easy to understand," said Chief Executive Officer Rebecca Fleming. "We understand that people in Silicon Valley rely upon information presented electronically and through our efforts to modernize the court we have begun to offer a level of assistance that was not previously available to the public."

For those who do not have access to a computer, the court has installed multiple computers in the Self Help Center for the public to use and to access the Guide and File program. Once a litigant answers a series of easy-to-understand questions, the program completes the appropriate forms using the answers provided. These forms can either be E-filed (for courts that have activated that feature) or printed and filed at the clerk's office.

The Santa Clara Superior Court is in the process of integrating Guide and File into the court's E-filing system. As a result, within the year, self-represented litigants in Santa Clara County will be able to file many of their court forms without having to come to the courthouse. This program will significantly increase access to justice for the litigants who find it hard or impossible to come to the courthouse in person.

"Beginning or moving a case forward can be a daunting task for anyone; this is a customer-focused change intended to eliminate confusion and offer information in a format that is useful and convenient to the public who use the system," commented Presiding Judge Deborah Ryan

Superior Court of California
County of Santa Clara



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http://www.scscourt.org/self_help/complete_forms_at_home.shtml

Case types offered as of December 12th, 2018:

Start a Divorce, Legal Separation, or Nullity	Respond to a Divorce, Legal Separation, or Nullity
Amend a Divorce, Legal Separation, or Nullity	Income and Expense Declaration
Start a Custody Case	Child Custody and Visitation *Must have an open case
Child Support *Must have an open case	Domestic Violence Restraining Order Request
Elder or Dependent Adult Abuse Restraining Order Request	Civil Harassment Restraining Order Request
Request a Guardianship	Request a Limited Conservatorship
Eviction/Unlawful Detainer Answer	Small Claims

Litigants will continue to have the option of document review in the Self Help Center, prior to filing, on a walk-in basis in workshops or by appointment. For questions about Small Claims forms please call the Small Claims Advisor line at 408-882-2929.

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