



**The Sixth Judicial Circuit
Pasco and Pinellas Counties
Summary of Court's Efforts to Address Access to Civil Justice**

1. The primary mission/role, goals and objectives of the court.

In addition to the statewide mission established by the Florida Supreme Court (“The mission of the judicial branch is to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes”), the Sixth Judicial Circuit has adopted a fourth prong that states: “Provide meaningful, proactive solutions to chronic social, human and legal problems of those who come before the court in cases and disputes that lend themselves to such approaches.”

The Sixth Circuit has also adopted a specific mission for its case management element, which includes services to unrepresented litigants. The case management mission includes, “Case Managers will ensure equal access to the Courts by providing procedural and other information to the litigants and the public.”

2. The areas of law in which individuals most frequently seek assistance (i.e., family law, injunctions, probate, guardianship, landlord-tenant, real property/mortgage foreclosure, contract and indebtedness, small claims, appeals, etc.). Please provide statistics, if available. Otherwise, please estimate based on your experience.

Dissolutions, paternity, child support, temporary custody (Section 751); domestic, repeat, dating, stalking and sexual violence injunctions; probate and guardianship; landlord-tenant; foreclosures; quitclaim deeds, small claims, county civil matters; expungements; slander/libel matters.

Please see Appendix 1 for statistics related to the programs and initiatives the Sixth Circuit has adopted to assist unrepresented litigants.

3. Your suggestions on ways to expand and/or improve the delivery of affordable legal services to the disadvantaged, low-income, and moderate-income Floridians.

Increase the threshold of income for eligibility for free and low cost legal services.

4. Other than legal representation, the types of assistance that you believe would be the most helpful in assisting individuals in accessing the civil justice system (i.e., standard forms for more case types, simplified forms, simplified rules of court procedure,

enhanced use of technology, training of employees on assisting self-represented litigants, etc.).

All of the above suggestions would be beneficial. Also, add court resources in the form of case managers and “concierge” type staff to guide litigants through the process.

5. Initiatives, programs, or activities that the court has implemented to assist individuals in accessing the civil justice system.

Self Help Centers (in conjunction with Clerks of Court)

Courts Information and Resource Centers

Law Library

Foreclosure Case Managers and Senior Judges

Family Case Managers

Unified Family Court Case Managers

Domestic Violence Case Managers

Guardianship monitoring staff

Alternative Dispute Resolution, including Automatic Referral to Mediation for Family

Post Judgment and Temporary Matters

Child Support Hearing Officers and staff

General Magistrates and staff

Evening Civil Traffic Infraction Hearings

Circuit website’s page for Self Representation:

<http://www.jud6.org/GeneralPublic/RepresentingYourselfInCourt.html>

6. Resources the court requires in order to better assist individuals in accessing the civil justice system.

We need more case managers and other administrative staff to guide litigants through the system and keep cases moving. We need more case managers to find related family/juvenile cases so that families can have more matters addressed with each court visit and in most instances, before the same judicial officer. We need a case management system (technology) that facilitates and supports various kinds of processes and allows for differentiated case management.



Appendix 1

Statistics for Court Programs and Initiatives:

Resource	Activity
Courts Information and Resource Centers	Courts Information and Resource Centers case managers fielded 23,199 calls primarily from unrepresented litigants in domestic relations cases in Pinellas County in 2013.
Courts Information and Resource Centers	Self-represented litigants acquired 2,223 domestic relations forms packages from the Courts Information and Resource Center in Pasco County in 2013.
Law Library	In 2014, the law library served an average of 137 walk-in patrons and 29 phone inquiries per week. The general public, which includes litigants, represented 78% of patrons served.
Foreclosure Case Managers and Senior Judges	Foreclosure case managers scheduled 16,539 cases for hearing before senior judges in 2013, many of which involved unrepresented parties.
Family Case Managers	Family case managers reviewed 3,827 domestic relations cases, primarily for unrepresented litigants, to determine readiness for hearing in 2013.
Family Case Managers	Family case managers calendared 1,595 case management conferences, primarily for unrepresented litigants in 2013.
Unified Family Court Case Managers	Unified Family Court Case Managers made referrals to community resources for litigants in 272 hearings in 2013.
Domestic Violence Case Managers	Domestic violence case managers handled 5,248 injunctions for protection in domestic, repeat, dating, sexual, and stalking cases in 2013, many of which involved unrepresented litigants.
Guardianship monitoring staff	The court's guardianship monitors investigated 45 cases in 2013. Monitors investigate the well-being of the ward and the responsible distribution of the ward's assets upon order of the court.
Alternative Dispute Resolution, including Automatic Referral to Mediation for Family	The mediation staff processed 5,925 court orders or referral to mediation, many of which involved unrepresented litigants.
Child Support Hearing Officers and staff	The Child Support Hearing Officers held 7,387 hearings in 2013, many of which involved unrepresented litigants. Their assistants are called upon to assist unrepresented parties with procedural information on a daily basis.

General Magistrates and staff	Family General Magistrates conducted 5,283 hearings in 2013, many of which involved unrepresented parties. Their assistants are called upon to assisted unrepresented litigants with procedural information on a daily basis.
Evening Civil Traffic Infraction Hearings	The Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officers held 285 traffic infraction sessions in 2013, most of which involved unrepresented litigants. The civil traffic infraction calendars are held in the evenings as a convenience to litigants.
Sixth Judicial Circuit website: www.jud6.org ; Representing Yourself in Court page	The Representing Yourself in Court page received 19,922 views in 2013, and is consistently in the top five most frequent searches on our website.