

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
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NEWS RELEASE



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PRESIDING JUDGE ERIC C. TAYLOR ANNOUNCES PILOT PROGRAM WITH BAR ASSOCIATIONS TO HELP SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS FINALIZE DISSOLUTION AND PARENTAGE ACTIONS

Parents and couples with pending divorce and paternity cases without attorneys will get some much-needed help from volunteer attorneys to finalize the paperwork necessary to obtain a judgment with a new "Judgment Assistance Day" pilot program, Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor announced today.

"With the help of the Family Law sections of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) and the Beverly Hills Bar Association (BHBA), the Court is offering a pilot program at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse to help self-represented litigants (SRLs) prepare the crucial last document to conclude their dissolution or parentage actions," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "I would like to thank Assistant Supervising Family Law Judge Amy M. Pellman for developing this program, and to thank Family Law Supervising Judge Lawrence P. Riff for his support of this effort. This program would not be possible without all the pro bono attorneys who will help these litigants obtain their judgments, which also will assist the Court to resolve these cases."

Before COVID-19, the Court's self-help unit had a SRL expedited judgment program to complete judgments in cases with settlement agreements, which has been

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JUDGMENT ASSISTANCE DAY 2-2-2-2

temporarily discontinued due to the pandemic. Even with the program, many SRLs failed to prepare the crucial last document to conclude their settled or contested dissolution or parentage actions. These documents are routine and simple to prepare if the case has been adjudicated and the issues are not complex. However, without any guidance to help them finish the forms, the parties never completed the documents and judicial officers were forced to continue "Entry of Judgment" dates multiple times.

Ron Reitshtein of Youngman Reitshtein, PLC and Carrie Holmes of Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law, co-chairs of the Family Law Section of the BHBA, said, "As a proud justice partner of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, the Family Law Section of the Beverly Hills Bar Association is incredibly excited to support and participate in the Self-Represented Litigant Judgment Assistance Day Program. We actively engage with the Family Law community at large through pro bono and other volunteer opportunities. Helping SRLs and the Court to bring finality to cases that are lingering due to technical deficiencies is the perfect opportunity for our members to put their knowledge to power. We thank the Court for this opportunity to help."

Attorney Paula Kane, Chair of LACBA's Family Law Section, said, "The Family Law Section of the LACBA is honored to partner with the Superior Court to establish the Self-Represented Litigant Judgment Assistance Day Program at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, which will provide a great service to parties who can be overwhelmed by the paperwork and procedure necessary to finalize their case. In addition to freeing up court time, a benefit to all, the program is also a terrific opportunity for our section members to work hand-in-hand with the Family Law judges and judicial assistants toward the common goal of providing legal access to all. I have no doubt the program will be a role model for Family Law courts in other jurisdictions."

Judge Pellman organized "Judgment Assistance Day" based on smaller programs that have been successful in the Court's districts outside of downtown Los Angeles.

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JUDGMENT ASSISTANCE DAY

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The Court will launch the small pilot program for two months, beginning on April 30 with the first "Judgment Assistance Day" in Department 87, Judge Pellman presiding, and Department 83, Judge Joseph Lipner presiding. Beginning in June, the program hopes to expand to all 15 trial court departments with half the courts participating in odd months and the other half in even months. This program will take place in the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, 111 N. Hill St., Los Angeles.

The courts will identify the cases ready for judgments, and then send them electronically to the pro bono groups who will disperse the cases to the volunteer attorneys. The cases will be delivered back to the courts for the court signature on "Judgment Assistance Day" which will be the fourth Friday of every month.

"The Court will continue to seek ways to help Angelenos and our communities resolve their disputes and move forward with their lives," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "We are fortunate in Los Angeles County to have creative, dedicated jurists and attorneys working together to help people who can't afford legal representation while resolving vexing delays that clog court dockets in the nation's largest trial court."

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