

# Resources for Self-Represented Litigants in the Maryland Courts



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# Contributors

MARYLAND JUDICIARY  
ACCESS TO JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

CONFERENCE OF MARYLAND COURT  
LAW LIBRARY DIRECTORS

MARYLAND JUDICIARY  
DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY SERVICES

MARYLAND STATE LAW LIBRARY

Maryland Judiciary  
Access to Justice Department  
2001 E/F Commerce Park Drive  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410.260.1258

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a steady increase in the number of individuals who appear without counsel in the Maryland Courts. In FY17, 80% of litigants in domestic cases were unrepresented at the time the answer was filed. In most civil cases in District Court, at least one party, and often both parties, are unrepresented. The Maryland Judiciary has responded to the unique needs of the unrepresented by creating a strong network of diverse, integrated services to aid litigants in navigating the courts. These resources include self-help centers, law libraries, videos, webinars, the Maryland Law Help App, form finders, and more.

## SELF-HELP CENTERS

Beginning in the early 1990's, the courts opened walk-in self-help centers for unrepresented Marylanders involved in family law matters. In 2009, the first District Court Self-Help Resource Center opened, offering walk-in assistance in civil District Court matters. Recognizing that not all individuals can access walk-in centers, the Judiciary launched remote self-help services in 2011.

Maryland self-help centers are staffed by a combination of contractual providers<sup>1</sup>, pro bono attorneys, and court employees.

The Maryland Courts operate three types of self-help centers:

**DISTRICT COURT SELF-HELP RESOURCE CENTERS** (“DCSHRCs”) provide walk-in assistance in civil District Court matters, including landlord-tenant, small claims, return of property, expungement, and domestic violence. All self-represented individuals may use the DCSHRCs, regardless of income.

**THE MARYLAND COURTS SELF-HELP CENTER** (“MCSHC”) provides assistance to self-represented litigants remotely, via phone, live chat, and email. Attorneys provide assistance in all civil case types including housing and foreclosure, family law, consumer, domestic

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<sup>1</sup> In FY17, the DCSHRCs and MCSHC were operated via a contract with Maryland Legal Aid. One chief attorney, employed by Maryland Legal Aid, directed both programs. Since that time, the contract has been assumed by the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Maryland Legal Aid. MCSHC staffing and leadership remained the same through this transition.

violence, and expungement. The MCSHC is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and serves all self-represented individuals, regardless of income.

**FAMILY LAW SELF-HELP CENTERS** (“FLSHCs”) provide walk-in assistance to self-represented litigants in family law matters throughout Maryland. The Department of Juvenile and Family Services, a division of the Administrative Office of the Courts, provides jurisdictional grants to local circuit courts to cover operating costs of the FLSHCs.

## LAW LIBRARIES

Maryland court law libraries provide access to legal information, create educational opportunities, and operate programs providing legal help to the public. Law libraries guide users to online resources, sample forms and print material, and offer assistance by professional law librarians who identify issues, relevant print, electronic, and human resources, and refer litigants to organizations that provide legal help. In Maryland, nine law libraries, including the Maryland State Law Library, are staffed by professional law librarians:

Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Public Law Library

Baltimore City Bar Library

Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library

Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library

Charles County Public Law Library

Circuit Court for Howard County Law Library

Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library

Maryland State Law Library

Circuit Court for Prince George's County Law Library

The directors of these nine libraries form the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (“CMCLLD”).

## OTHER RESOURCES

### VIDEOS

The *My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland* video library helps self-represented litigants unravel complex legal principles and procedures. Titles are provided in three general areas: Getting Legal Help, Researching Your Case, and Specific Legal Topics & Procedures. Each area includes a variety of different titles including, *Should I Represent Myself?*, *How to Research the Law*, and *Service of Process*. The videos run for approximately 10-minutes and are closed captioned in

English and Spanish. Each video has a webpage that includes tip sheets, transcripts (English and Spanish), forms and additional resources that are associated with each topic. These and other videos are also accessible on the Maryland Courts YouTube channel.

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## WEBINARS

In FY16, MCSHC staff began offering online classes (webinars) for self-represented litigants on two topics: *Filing Your Case in the District Court of Maryland (“Complaint”)* and *Filing for Absolute Divorce in Maryland (“Absolute Divorce”)*. The classes occur on the last Wednesday of each month. More recently, Center staff have begun offering two additional webinars: *Rent Court for Tenants* and *Rent Court for Landlords*. The Complaint webinar has been recorded and is now available on demand.

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## MARYLAND LAW HELP APP (“APP”)

The Maryland Law Help App (“App”), launched in FY16, connects self-represented litigants to the myriad of web-enabled resources from the Maryland Courts. Litigants may click to chat with an attorney at a self-help center, access the People’s Law Library for legal information, or find out how to request an interpreter. The App is available for Apple and Android smartphones and tablets, and is available at no cost to users.

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## FORM FINDERS

The court provides forms for individuals who do not have a lawyer and need to file papers on their own. Two easy to use tools are available on the Judiciary’s web page that help individuals find the forms they need.

The **FAMILY LAW FORM FINDER** assists individuals who are unsure about which form they need in domestic cases by asking a series of questions about the litigant’s case. Once the questions are complete, the Form Finder provides links to all needed forms and relevant brochures. The Form Finder covers the following areas: divorce, custody, visitation, child support, alimony, name change, and contempt.

The **DISTRICT COURT FORM FINDER** helps users identify which District Court form they need. It covers landlord-tenant matters, return of property (replevin and detinue), peace and protective orders, and small claims.

## PROGRAMS

### DISTRICT COURT SELF-HELP RESOURCE CENTERS (“DCSHRCs”)

Building on the success of the Judiciary’s family law self-help centers, the first District Court Self-Help Resource Center opened as a pilot in Glen Burnie in 2009. It offered walk-in assistance in landlord-tenant, small claims, return of property, and domestic violence matters. In FY17, there were three DCSHRCs:

- Glen Burnie
- Upper Marlboro
- Salisbury

Now in its eighth year, the Glen Burnie DCSHRC is staffed by three attorneys and an administrative assistant. Together they serve the large numbers of self-represented litigants who appear for the high volume civil dockets. The Glen Burnie DCSHRC is currently the second busiest center. In FY17, 77% of cases were housing matters and small and large claims.

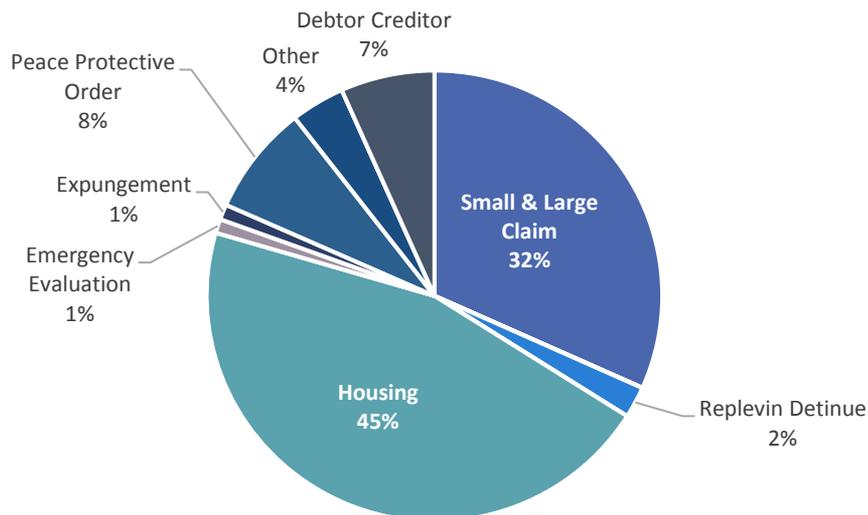


Figure 1. DCSHRC—Glen Burnie Case Types—FY17

Attorneys in Glen Burnie began advising litigants on expungement and sealing of criminal records in January 2017. They assisted 50 litigants with expungement in the final five months of the fiscal year.

The Upper Marlboro DCSHRC opened in FY15 and is the highest volume center. Staffed by three attorneys and an administrative assistant, in FY17, staff assisted 6,764 litigants, an increase of 20% over FY16.

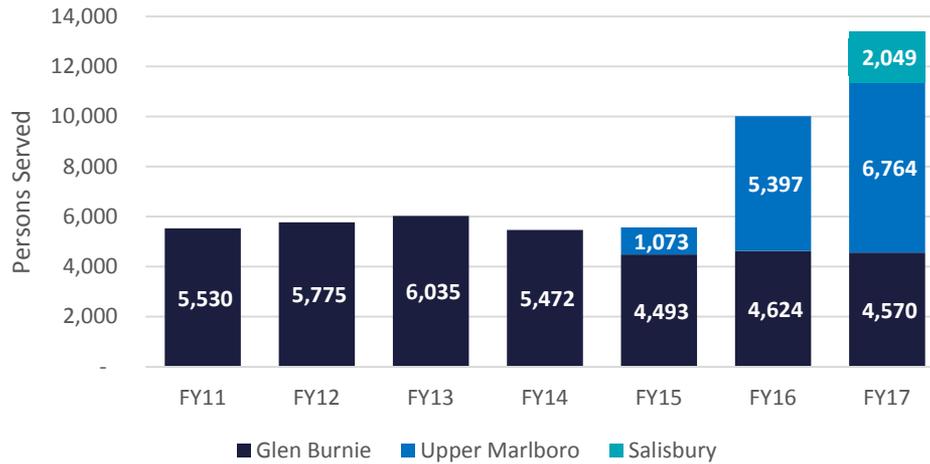


Figure 2. DCSHRC—Total Volume by Location

In March 2017, the Upper Marlboro DCSHRC assisted a record breaking 681 litigants, the highest number of walk-in visitors in one month at that time. Volume remained high throughout the rest of the Spring and early Summer.

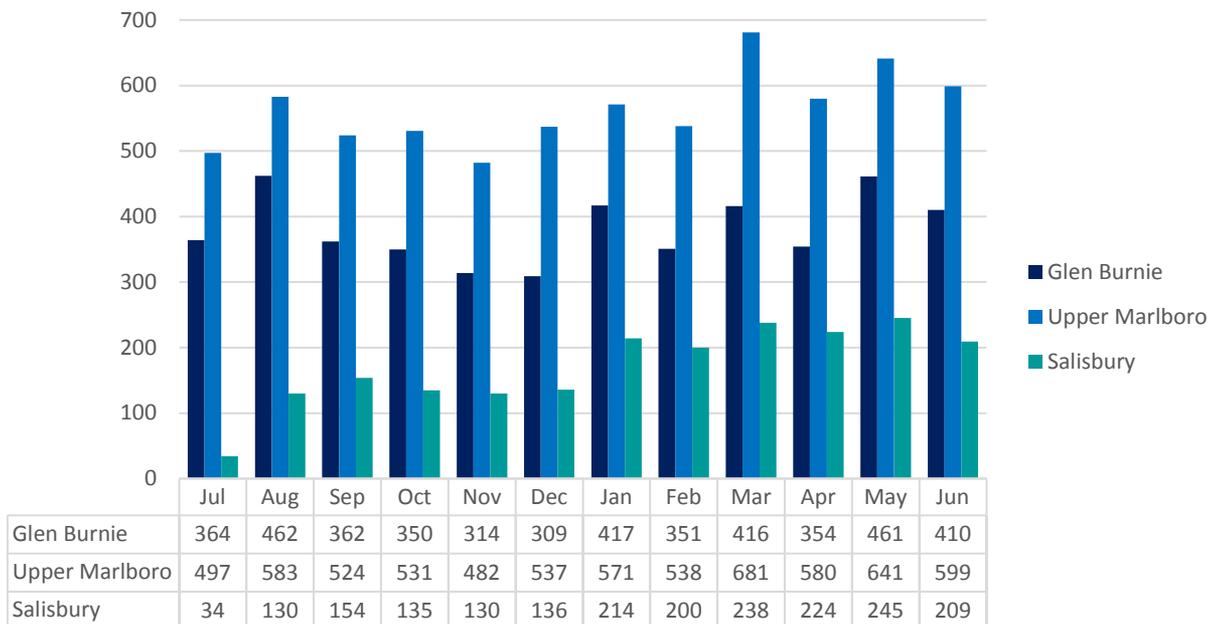


Figure 3. DCSHRC—Monthly Volume by Location—FY17

More than half of users at the Upper Marlboro DCSHRC received assistance with small and large claims. In FY17, the Upper Marlboro location was unable to assist visitors with expungement matters as that location had only two private offices and one open cubicle for the three attorneys.

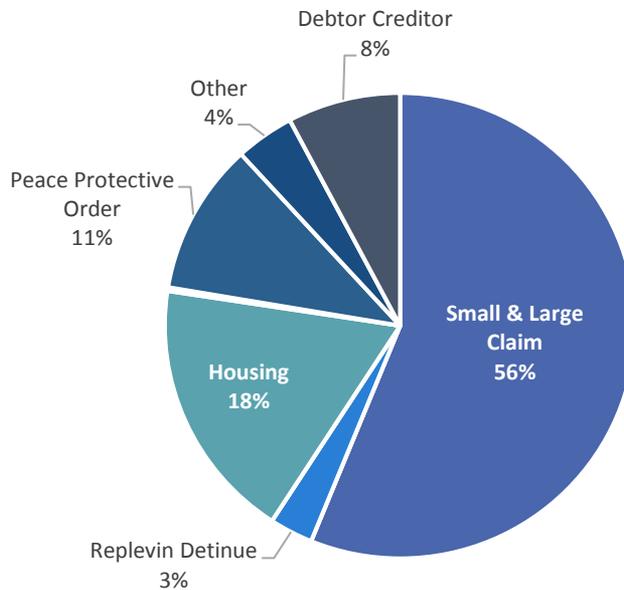


Figure 4. DCSHRC—Upper Marlboro Case Types—FY17

After an early Spring renovation, the Upper Marlboro DCSHRC added two private offices. The addition of a fourth work space permitted the vendor to develop a pro bono component called Justice for Lunch. The Justice for Lunch project connects litigants at the DCSHRC with pro bono attorneys who provide assistance with expungement of criminal records.

DCSHRC staff have partnered with the local Standing Committee on Pro Bono, the Office of the Public Defender, and Community Legal Services of Prince George’s County on this project.

The Salisbury DCSHRC opened in July 2016, serving unrepresented litigants on the lower Eastern Shore. A grand opening was held in September 2016.

The Salisbury location is staffed by two attorneys and an administrative assistant. They offer walk-in help in landlord-tenant, small claims, return of property, domestic violence and expungement matters.

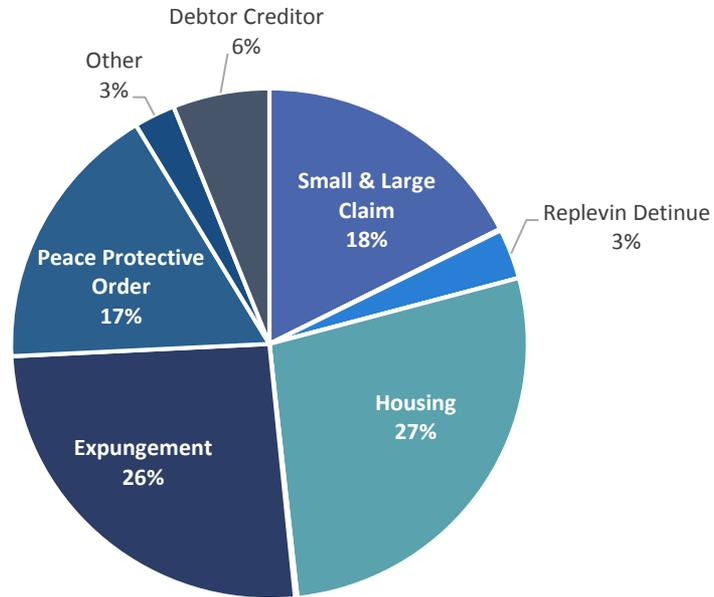


Figure 5. DCSHRC—Salisbury Case Types — FY17

In FY17, the Salisbury location assisted 2,049 litigants with expungement and housing matters, as well as small claims, large claims, and peace and protective orders.

Together, the three DCSHRC locations served 5,597 litigants with small and large claims in FY17. This number represents nearly half of the total caseload for the three centers.

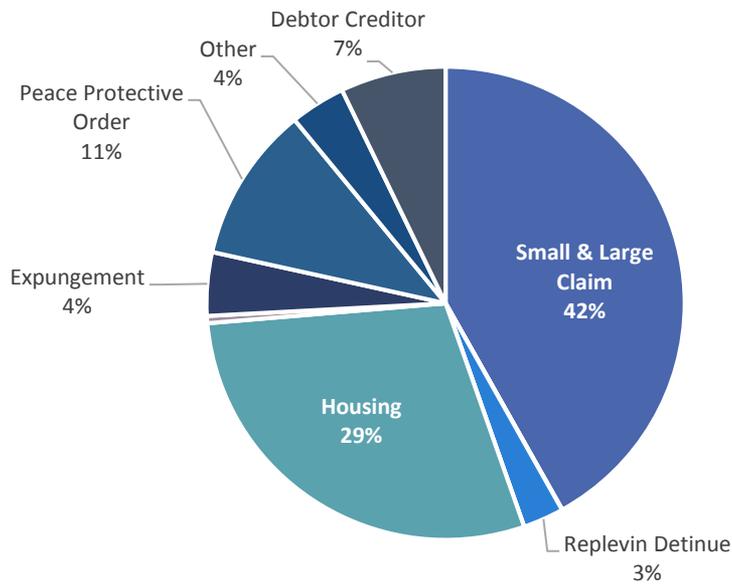


Figure 6. DCSHRC—Case Types—FY17

The next most popular case type was housing matters, including general landlord-tenant disputes, failure to pay rent, tenant holding over, breach of lease, and wrongful detainer. Of the landlord-tenant matters, 45% of visitors were unrepresented “mom and pop” landlords, and 55% were tenants.

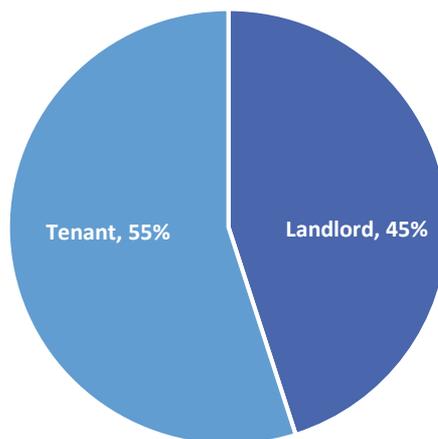


Figure 7. DCSHRC—Landlord-Tenant Breakdown—FY17

In FY17, most DCSHRC users were women (55%) between the ages of 30 and 49 (41%). The majority of litigants spoke English, but the three centers used Language Line to assist litigants who spoke Spanish, French, Korean, Vietnamese, Urdu, Hindi, Farsi, Yoruba, Amharic and more. Language Line is a telephonic interpretation vendor that provides phone-based interpreter services in more than 240 languages.

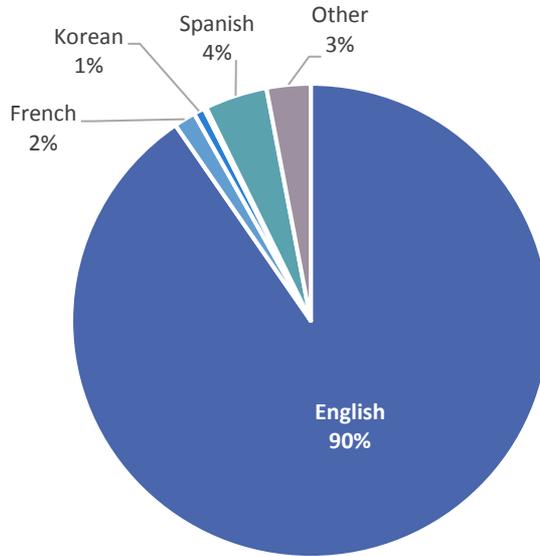


Figure 8. DCSHRC—Language—FY17

A typical meeting at a DCSHRC took 16 - 30 minutes in FY17.

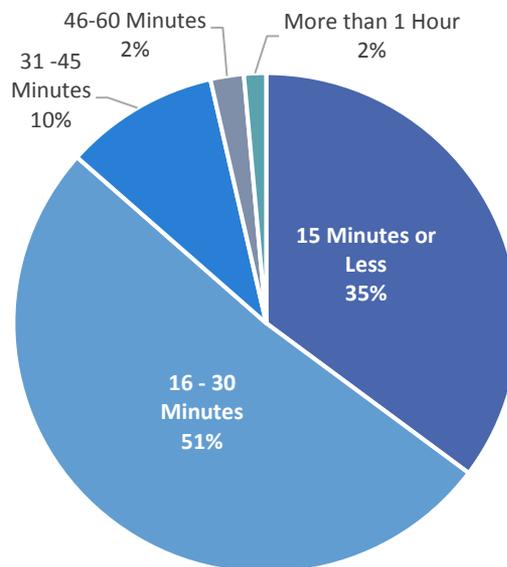


Figure 9. DCSHRC—Average Engagement Length of Time for Services—FY17

## THE MARYLAND COURTS SELF-HELP CENTER (“MCSHC”)

Remote services launched in the Fall of 2011 at the Glen Burnie DCSHRC. Attorneys initially provided help with civil District Court matters, via email, live chat, and phone. In 2015, the MCSHC launched, providing assistance with all civil case types. The MCSHC also expanded the hours of operation at that time and now offers assistance from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m., Monday – Friday.

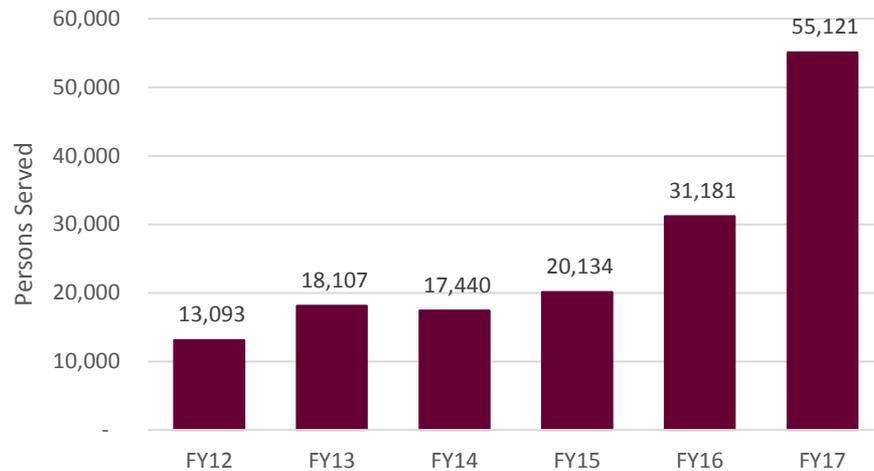


Figure 10. MCSHC—Total Served by Fiscal Year

Remote services have proven to be an effective and efficient way to eliminate barriers to accessing civil legal help. Since 2015, demand for remote services has continued to climb.

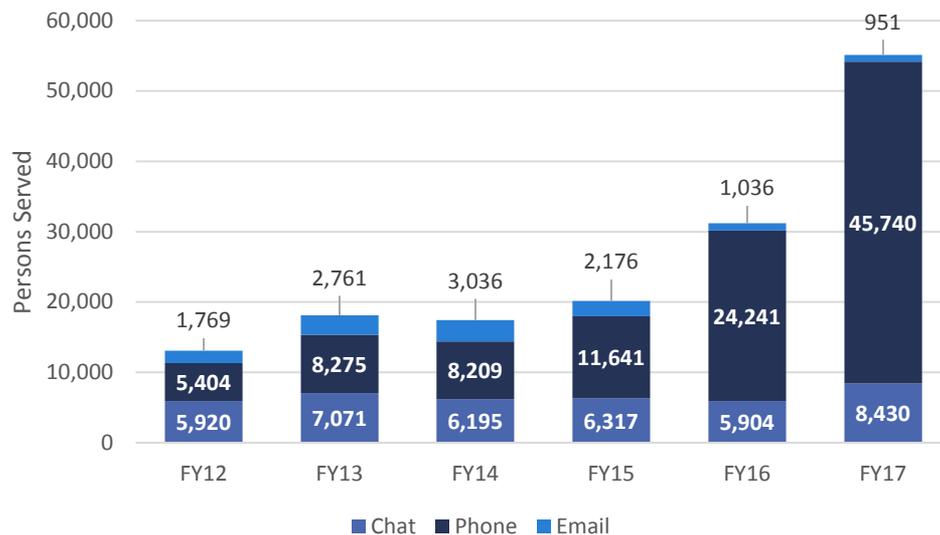


Figure 11. MCSHC—Total Served via Phone, Chat & Email—FY12 – FY17

Attorneys at the MCSHC assisted an average of 3,811 litigants per month via phone in FY17.

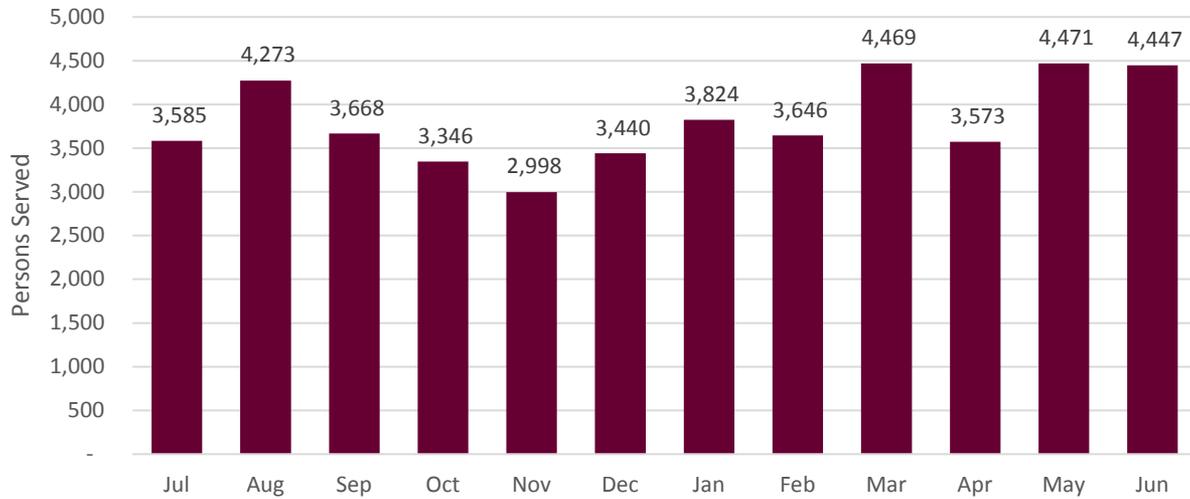


Figure 12. MCSHC—Total Served via Phone—FY17

In FY17, Access to Justice Department staff worked with court administrators, clerks, and legal services providers to add the MCSHC chat button to Circuit Court and legal services provider webpages.



Figure 13. MCSHC—Chat Button on the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County’s Web Page.

Increased prevalence of the chat button may have contributed to the increase in monthly chat volume that occurred beginning in January 2017. Staff assisted a total of 8,430 litigants via chat in FY17, a 30% increase over FY16.

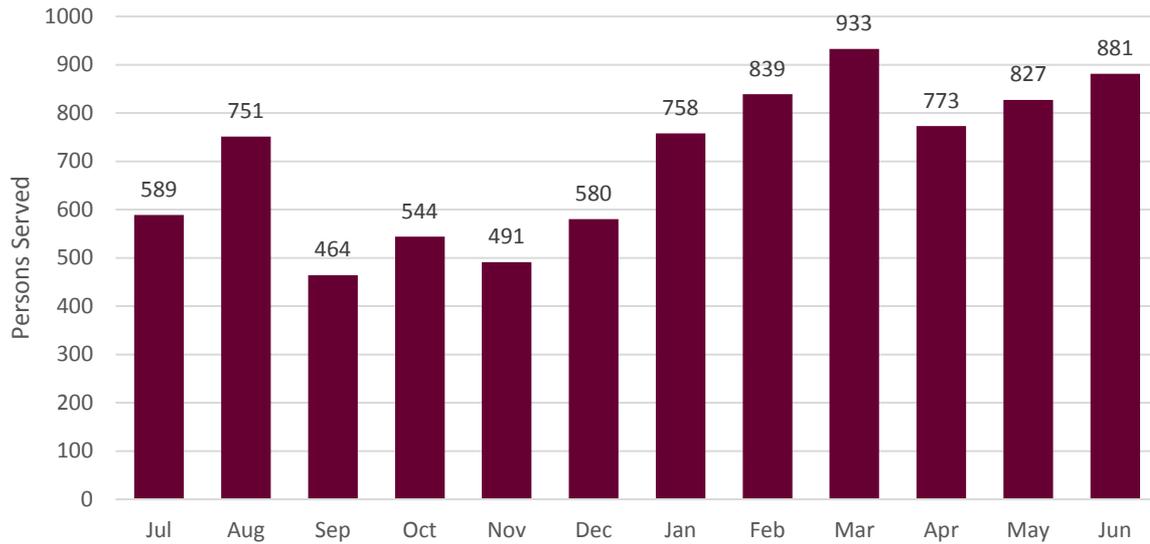


Figure 14. MCSHC—Total Served via Chat—FY17

Remote services are provided via phone, chat, and email, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. The Access to Justice Department tracks hourly call and chat volume to evaluate the value of offering extended hours. Demand for phone services in the evening hours has remained high and typically increases in the spring and summer months.

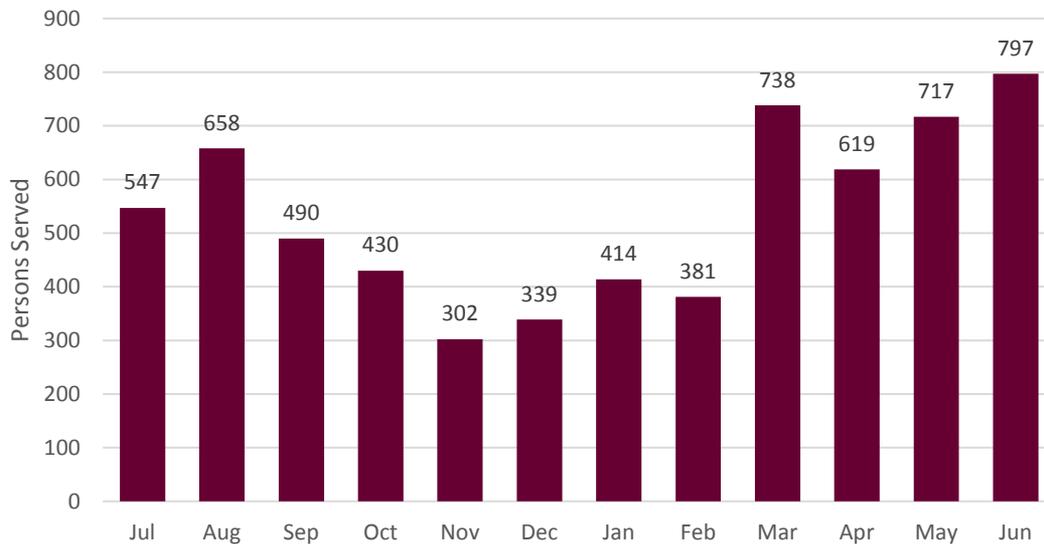


Figure 15. MCSHC—Call Volume 4 – 8 p.m.—FY17

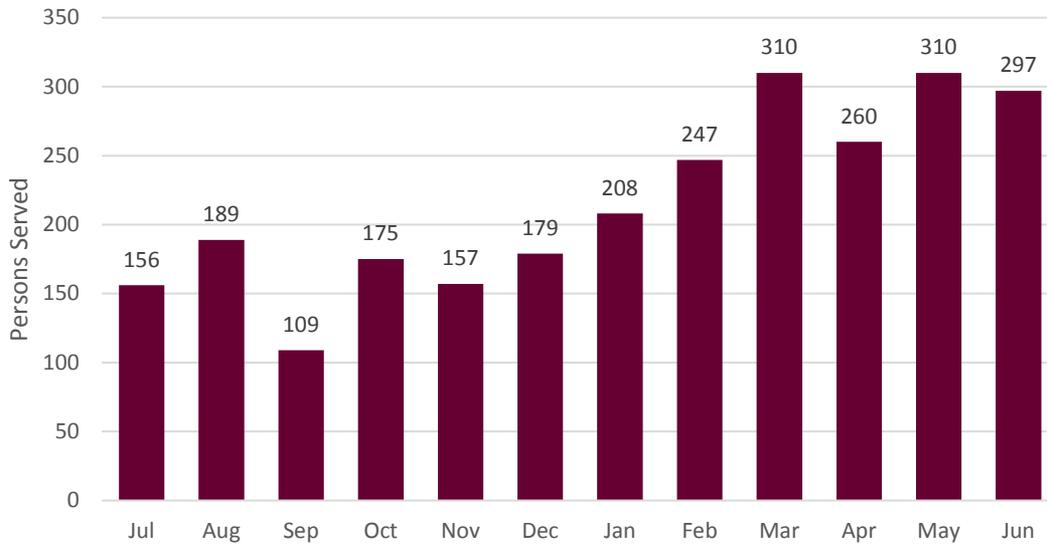


Figure 16. MCSHC—Chat Volume 4 – 8 p.m.—FY17

Each phone call lasted an average of 10 minutes and 21 seconds in FY17. Chats took an average of 17 minutes and 8 seconds. MCSHC attorneys are able to work on more than one chat at a time.

Attorneys at the MCSHC provide remote assistance for self-represented litigants in all civil case types, including foreclosure, housing, family law, landlord-tenant, small claims and more.

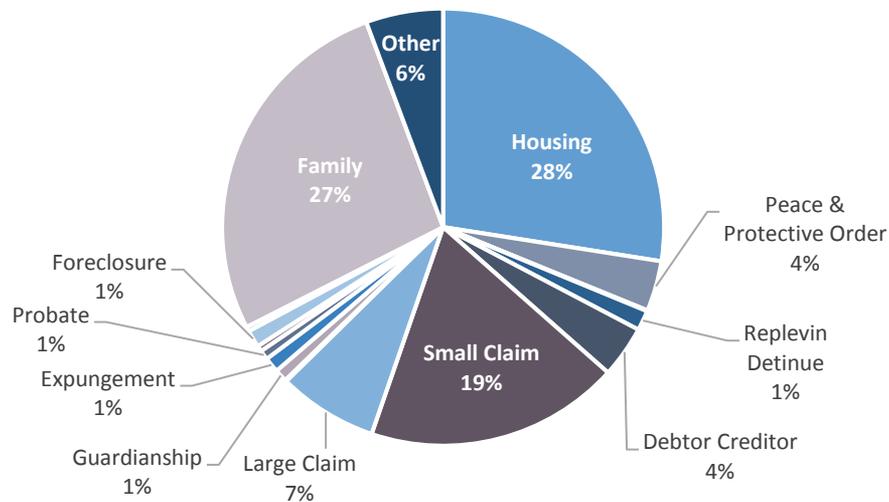


Figure 17. MCSHC—Case Types, Phone—FY17

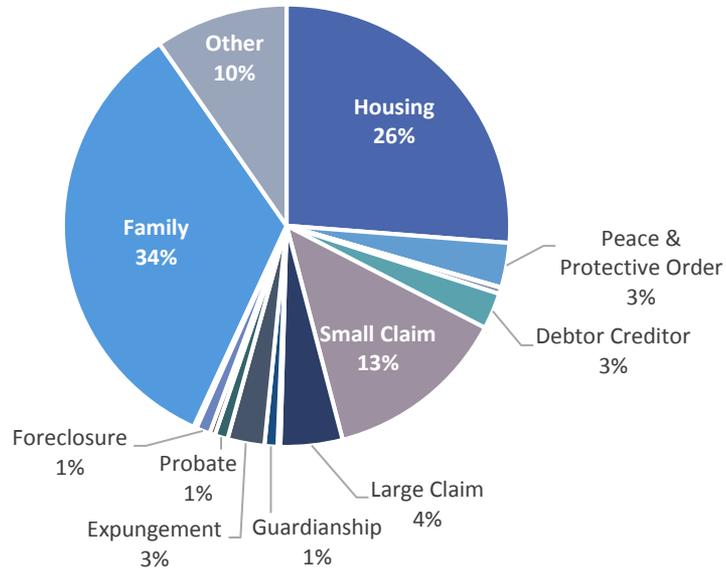


Figure 18. MCSHC—Case Types, Chat—FY17

In FY17, MCSHC attorneys assisted litigants from all 23 Maryland Counties and Baltimore City. The majority of MCSHC users are women between the ages of 30 and 49.

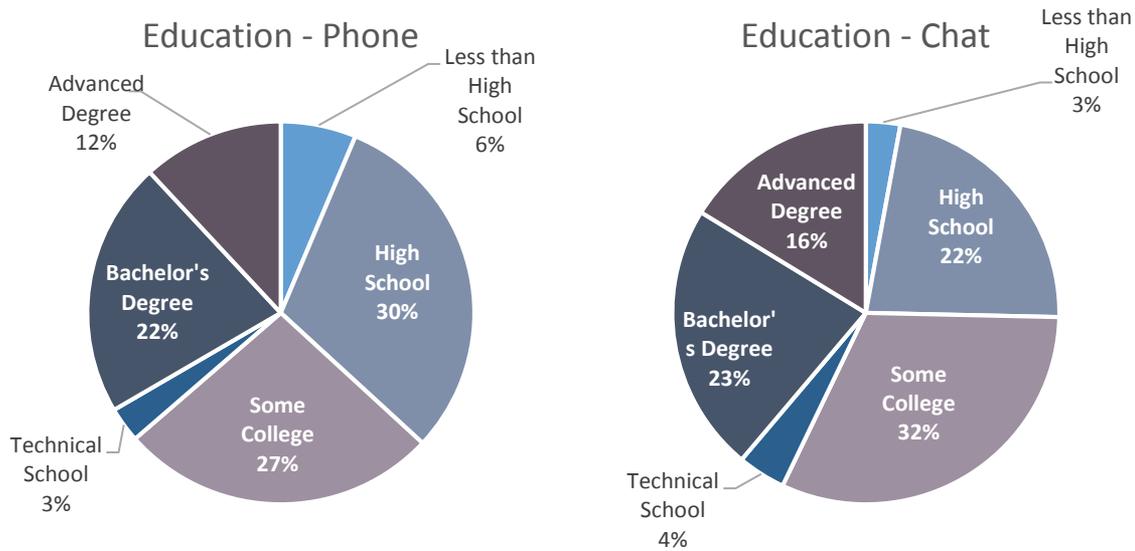


Figure 19. MCSHC—Education – FY17

Chat users report slightly higher levels of education than phone users.

Attorneys at the MCSHC are able to assist self-represented litigants with Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”). In FY16, Access to Justice Department staff evaluated data which indicated that 50% of LEP callers spoke Spanish. This resulted in adding a Spanish language queue to the phones to serve Spanish speakers more effectively. Callers are directed in Spanish to press 4 to hear menu options in Spanish, and attorneys know in advance to dial Language Line.

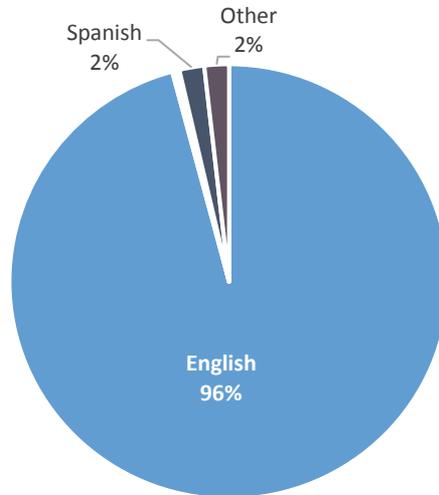


Figure 20. MCSHC—Language—Phone—FY17

Remote services help the public access civil legal help. The majority of individuals who receive service through the MCSHC report a low or moderate income.

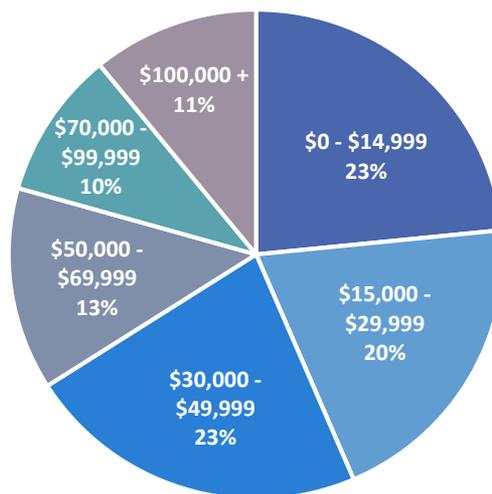


Figure 21. MCSHC—Income—FY17

In FY17, a family of four qualified for free legal services under the Maryland Legal Services Corporation's ("MLSC") income eligibility guidelines if they earned an annual household income of \$54,631 or less. (See MLSC Client Income Eligibility Guidelines at <https://mlsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2017-MLSC-Income-Guidelines-Final.pdf>) More than 66% of MCSHC users report an annual household income under \$50,000.

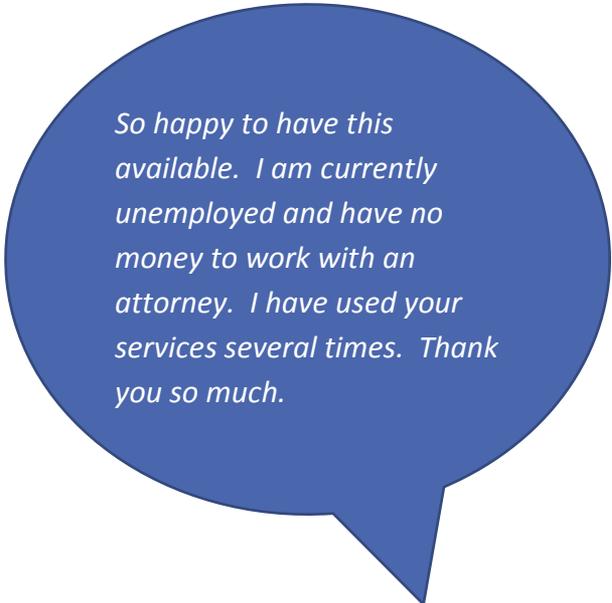
In August 2016, an optional satisfaction survey was added to the live chat service. Users are prompted to take a brief survey at the completion of services. Responses have been overwhelmingly positive. Ninety percent of chat users say they would recommend the service to a friend.



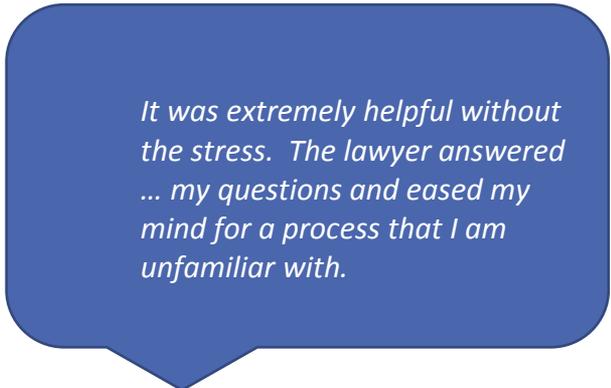
*This website is an asset to all Maryland residents.*



*It was fast, convenient and GREAT information.*



*So happy to have this available. I am currently unemployed and have no money to work with an attorney. I have used your services several times. Thank you so much.*



*It was extremely helpful without the stress. The lawyer answered ... my questions and eased my mind for a process that I am unfamiliar with.*

## FAMILY LAW SELF-HELP CENTERS (“FLSHCS”)

Family Law Self-Help Centers operated in 24 jurisdictions statewide and served 53,163 individuals in FY17. Most FLSHCs assist walk-in litigants only, although some provide remote assistance via phone.

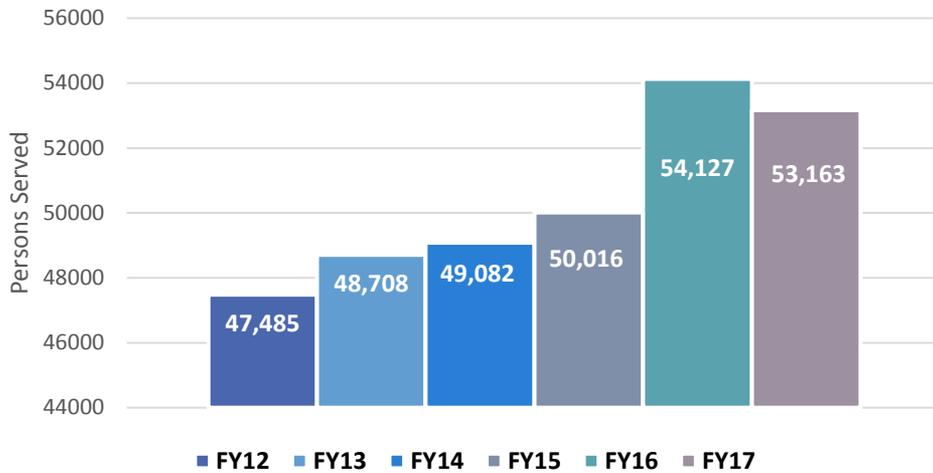


Figure 22. FLSHC—Total Persons Served by Fiscal Year—FY12 – FY17

Although Garrett County does not have a self-help center or program, the family support services coordinator serves all individuals seeking assistance.

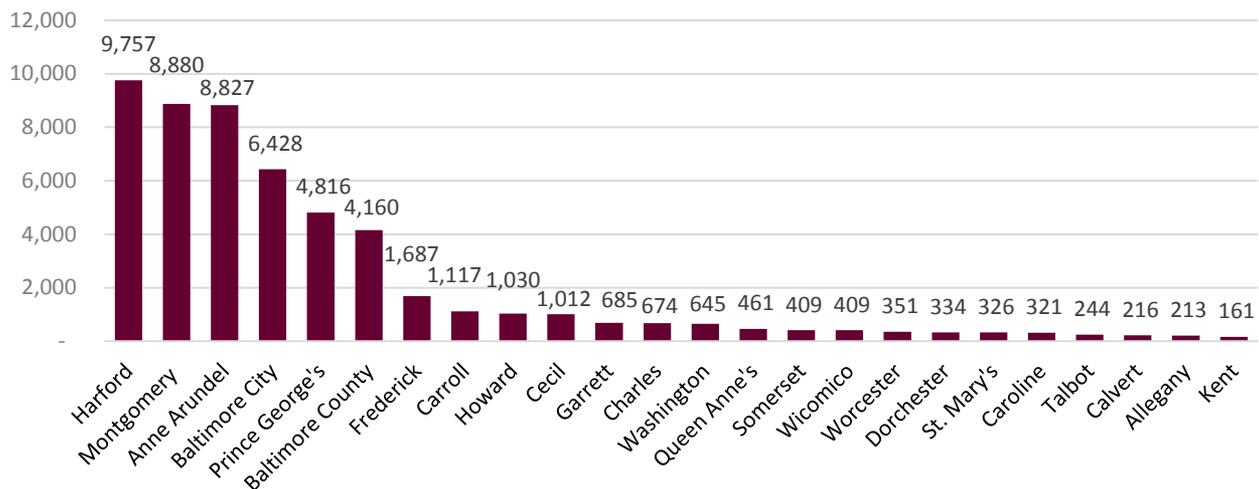


Figure 23. FLSHC—Persons Served by County—FY17

FLSHCs provide assistance with custody, divorce, child support, visitation, domestic violence, name change, alimony, paternity, guardianship for adults and children, adoption and juvenile expungement.

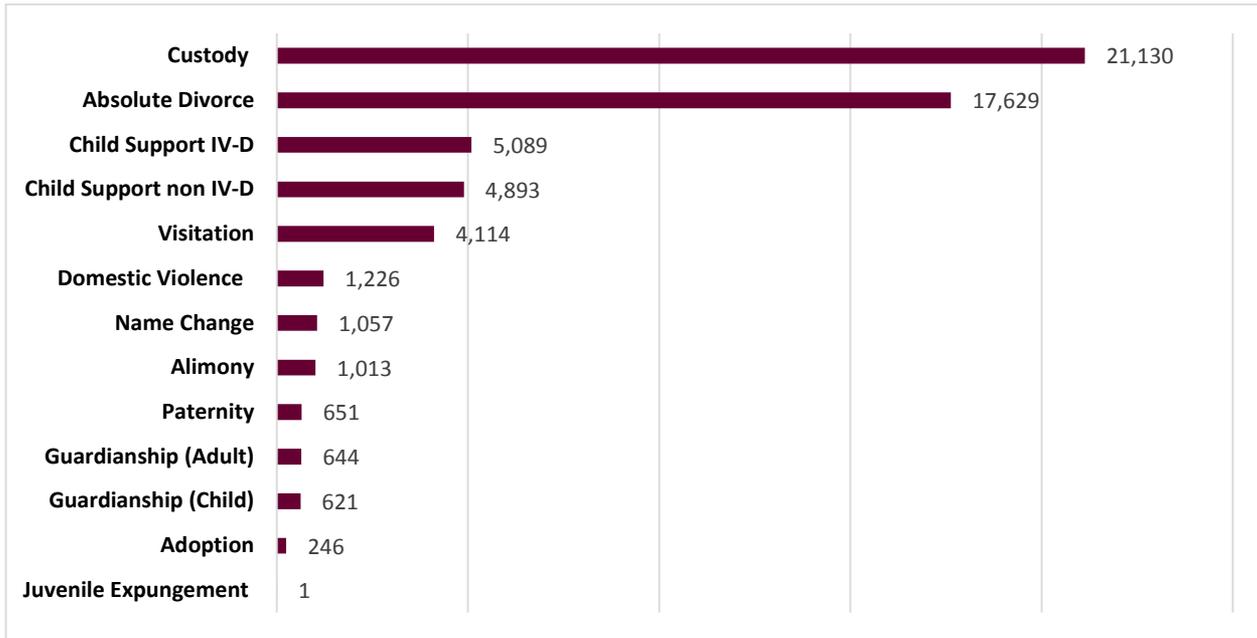


Figure 24. FLSHC—Case Types—FY17

Much like the MCSHC, the majority of individuals who seek help at FLSHCs report a low or moderate income. More than 76% of FLSHC users report an annual income of under \$50,000, rendering a family of four eligible for low-cost legal help under the MLSC guidelines.

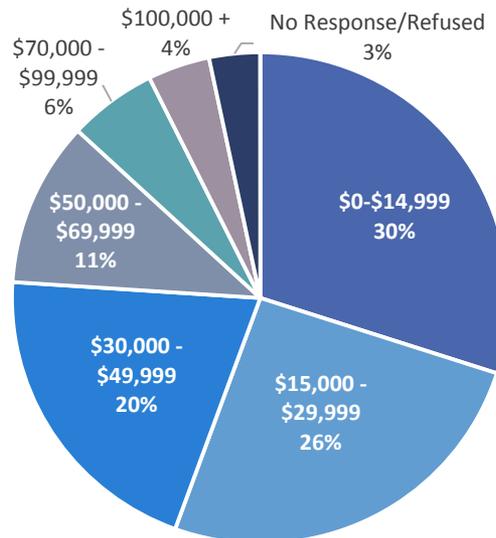


Figure 25. FLSHC—Income—FY17

In FY17, 10% of FLSHC users spoke Spanish and another 4% identified as not primary English speakers.

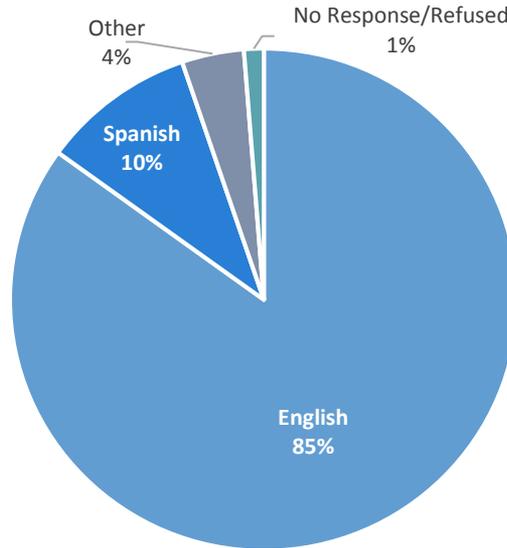


Figure 26. FLSHC—Language—FY17

## LAW LIBRARIES

In FY17, the nine staffed law libraries, including the Maryland State Law Library, assisted 106,046 visitors with 53,519 questions, an average of over 200 questions per day.

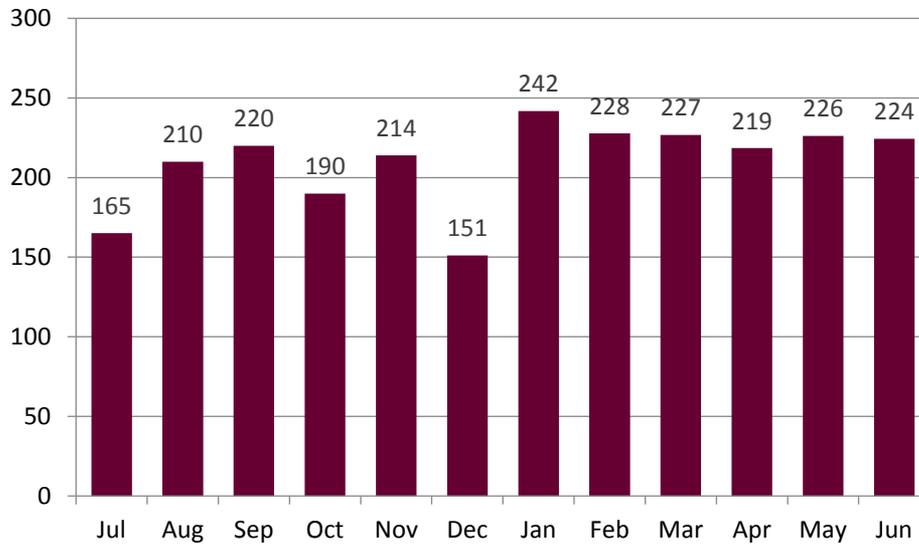


Figure 27. CMCLLD—Average Number of Questions Per Day—FY17

Patron inquiries range from brief directional questions to lengthy research queries. Staff provided assistance through provision of informational materials, instructional assistance, and evaluation of resources.

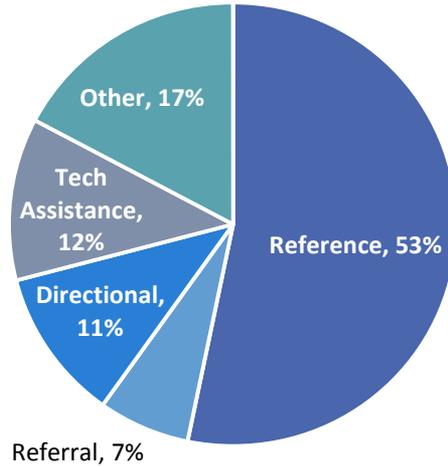


Figure 28. CMCLD—Transaction Types—FY17

Together, the nine staffed law libraries had more than 1.5 million web hits and 171,000 catalog searches.

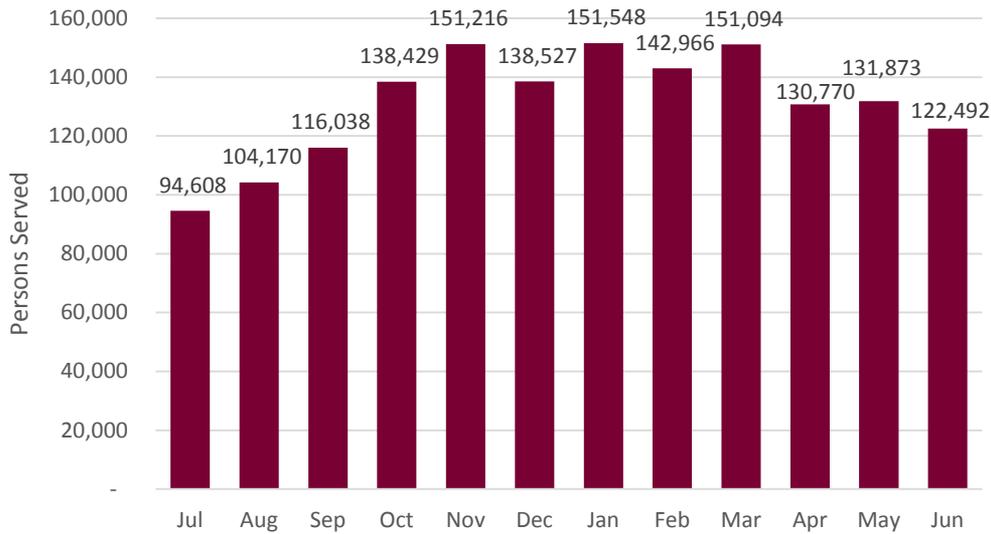


Figure 29. CMCLD—Web Hits—FY17

Law libraries serve self-represented litigants by helping them locate legal information, resources, and local referrals. The library provides access to self-help programs such as the *Lawyer in the Library* and specialized clinics such as the *Foreclosure Brief Advice Clinic*, a

partnership with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyer’s Service. In FY17, lawyers served 1,622 self-represented litigants at library-based self-help clinics.

Most law library users are non-attorneys and use the library in-person.

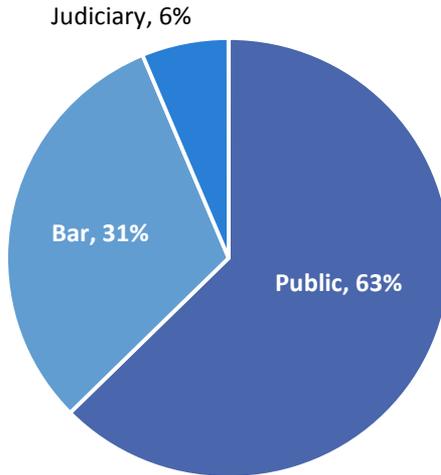


Figure 30. CMCLLD—Users—FY17

Most questions are civil in nature.

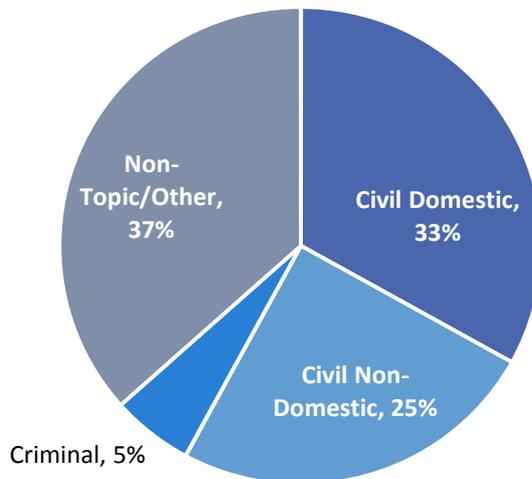


Figure 31. CMCLLD—Question Types—FY17

The Maryland State Law Library received 8,966 requests for assistance in FY17. Reference services were provided through in-person visits, telephone, email, regular mail, and chat.

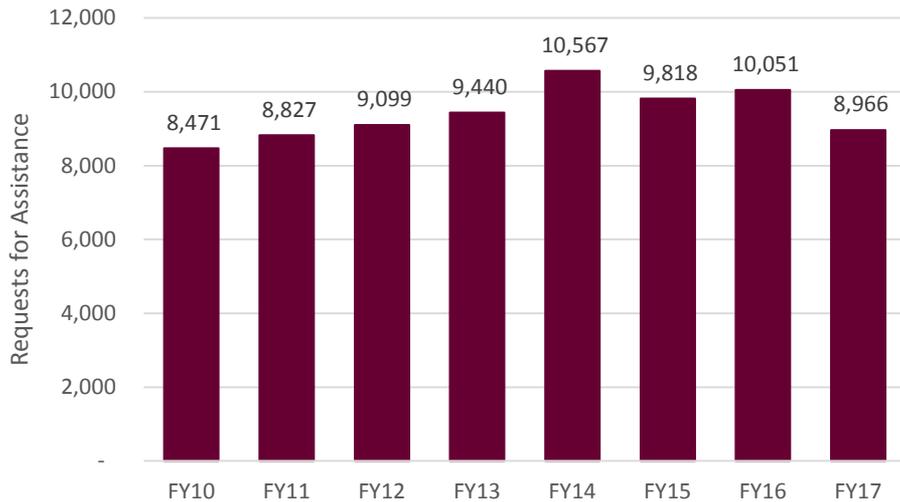


Figure 32. Maryland State Law Library—Requests for Assistance

The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library and Howard County Library partner with local bar associations to provide *Lawyer in the Library* programs that connect unrepresented litigants with pro bono lawyers for advice in civil and family law matters. In FY17, pro bono lawyers assisted 1,622 litigants with civil legal matters via these programs at public library branches.

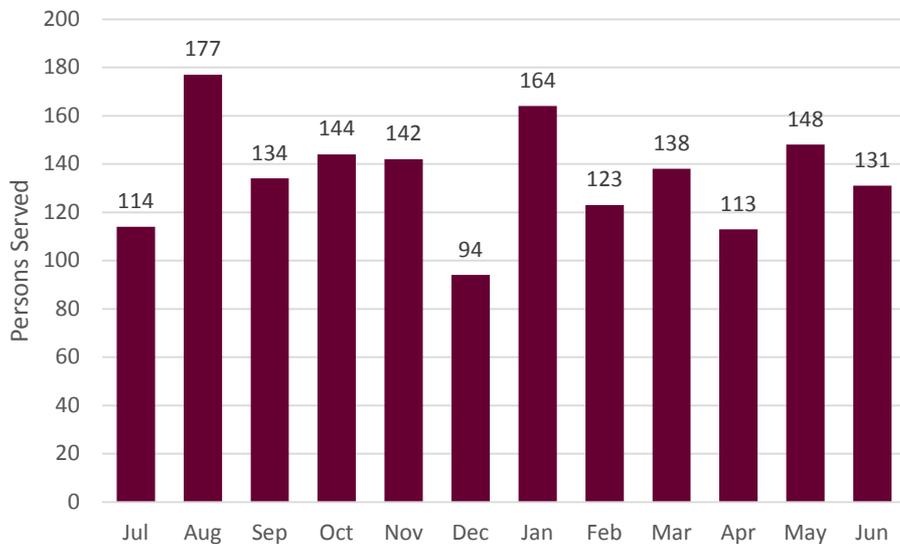


Figure 33. Number of Litigants Assisted via Lawyer in the Library Programs—FY17

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## THE PEOPLE’S LAW LIBRARY

The People’s Law Library (“PLL”), a legal information resource managed by the Maryland State Law Library, grew considerably in FY17. In August 2016, there were 239,669 unique page views, an all-time high.

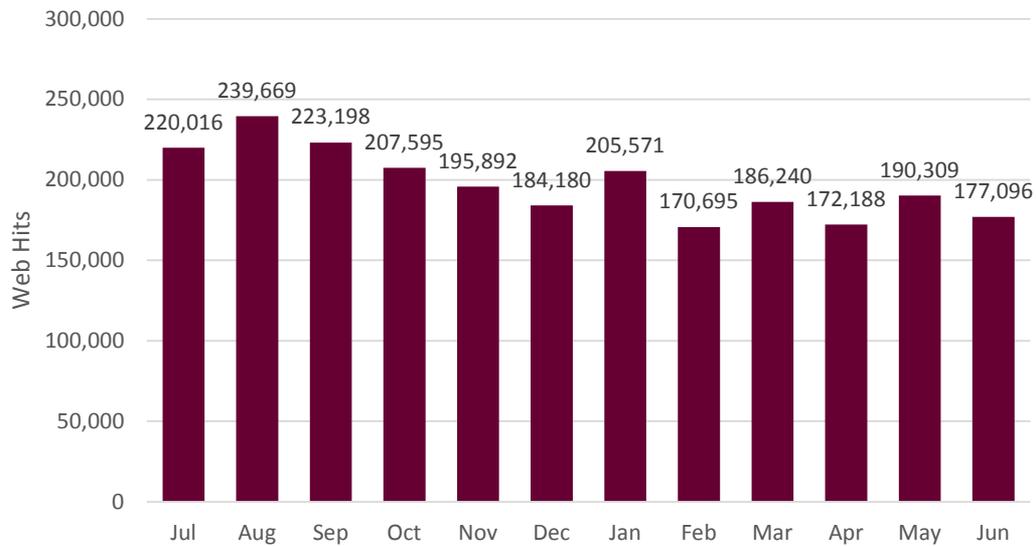


Figure 34. PLL—Web Hits—FY17

PLL marked its 20-year anniversary in FY17, and celebrated by increasing content in languages other than English. A new cloud-based translation management system was implemented allowing English articles to be translated into Spanish, French, Korean and Chinese. Translation of articles into Spanish continued, focusing on employment law and Power of Attorney.

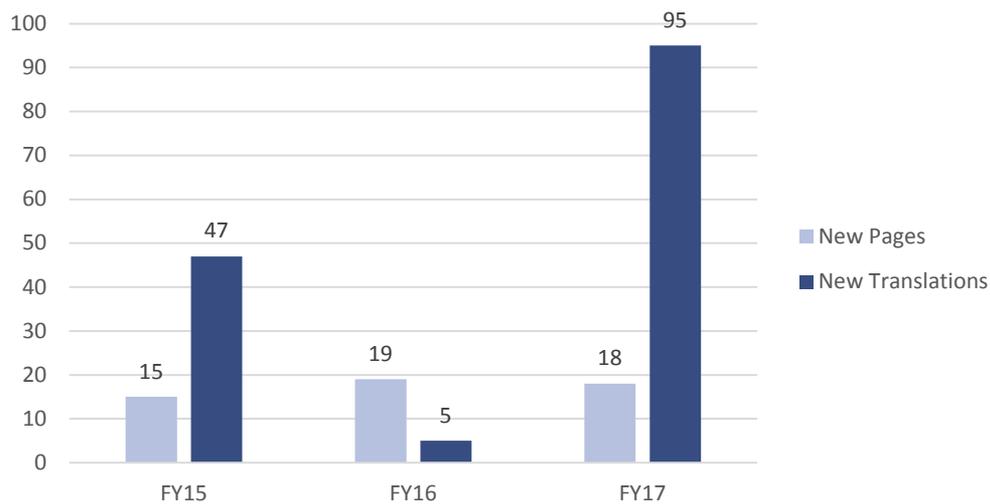


Figure 35. PLL—New Pages and New Translations by Fiscal Year

Eighteen new English pages were added to the 483 instructional and substantive law articles, including:

- Legal Issues When Your Child Turns 18
- Buying or Selling a Used Car In Maryland: Private Sale
- Co-Signing a Loan: Risks and Benefits
- Funeral Scams and Bad Faith Options to Watch Out For
- Changing the Sex Listed on Your Maryland Birth Certificate
- Access to Court Records: Requests and Motions
- Unrelated Business Income Tax
- Limited Representation and Limited Appearances
- Fundraising in Maryland? What You Need to Know about Filing Requirements in Maryland
- Forming a Limited Liability Company (LLC) in the State of Maryland
- How to Form a Benefit Corporation in Maryland

PLL went “behind bars,” sending content bundled in HTML files on flash drives into the Eastern Correctional Institution for use by facility residents. PLL staff followed up with a presentation at the Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association (MLA/DLA) Annual Conference on the role of libraries in re-entry, spreading information to the wider library community about the availability of the PLL in HTML format for other facilities.

PLL partnered with the Circuit Court for Frederick County, the Frederick County Circuit Court Law Library, the Bar Association of Frederick County, and the Maryland State Bar Association Section on Delivery of Legal Services to publish the Maryland Custody & Divorce Client Notebook, [www.peoples-law.org/workbook](http://www.peoples-law.org/workbook).

#### What is this Project?

The *Maryland Custody & Divorce Client Notebook* helps clients to navigate a family law case from start to finish, with the help of an attorney (or attorneys) from self-help, legal services, pro bono, or the paid private bar. The notebook itself helps clients keep papers and evidence with them, and in one place. Inside, the “Topic of Dispute” chart is the heart of the tool, helping clients to identify and understand the key issues and evidence that will make or break their case. A calendar and journal help the client record facts and gather evidence even before they find a lawyer. And the other sections help a lawyer (or the client, if no lawyer is involved) to navigate a settlement or a trial.

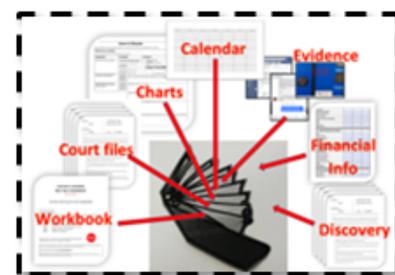


Figure 36. PLL—Workbook—FY17

The workbook helps clients navigate a family law case from start to finish by keeping papers and evidence organized in a single location, providing a calendar and journal to aid in organization, and flagging key issues that may arise in the case.

## VIDEOS

In FY14, the Judiciary launched a series of videos for unrepresented litigants. The video library now includes 21 titles on a variety of substantive and procedural topics.

Six new titles were added to the video library in FY17, including three guardianship videos that use a live-action format which were developed in collaboration with the Maryland Judicial Council's Domestic Law Committee and the Circuit Court for Montgomery County's Family Division. The *Overview of Maryland Courts* video was modified and re-released in FY17.

|                                   |                                 |                                    |  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
|                                   |                                 |                                    | Adult Guardianship: Introduction to Adult Guardianship   |
|                                   |                                 | Expungement                        | Adult Guardianship: The Role of Guardian of the Property |
| Should I Represent Myself?        |                                 | Mediation                          | Adult Guardianship: The Role of Guardian of the Person   |
| Hiring & Working with Your Lawyer |                                 | Before Court: Tips                 | Need an Interpreter?                                     |
| Defending a Small Claim           | Can't Afford Appellate Costs?   | How to Research the Law            | Overview of Maryland Courts                              |
| Service of Process                | Can't Afford Court Filing Fees? | What is the Law?                   | The Foreclosure Process                                  |
| Day of Court: Tips                | Bringing a Small Claim          | Finding Legal Help in a Civil Case | Foreclosure Mediation                                    |
| <b>FY14</b>                       | <b>FY15</b>                     | <b>FY16</b>                        | <b>FY17</b>  |

Figure 37. Video Titles by Fiscal Year

The Access to Justice Department partnered with local nonprofit legal services providers to develop scripts for substantive video titles. In FY17, staff continued working with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service on the foreclosure video series, and began working with Maryland Legal Aid to develop scripts for three forthcoming videos on rent court.

In FY17, online users viewed the *My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland* series of videos 14,282 times.

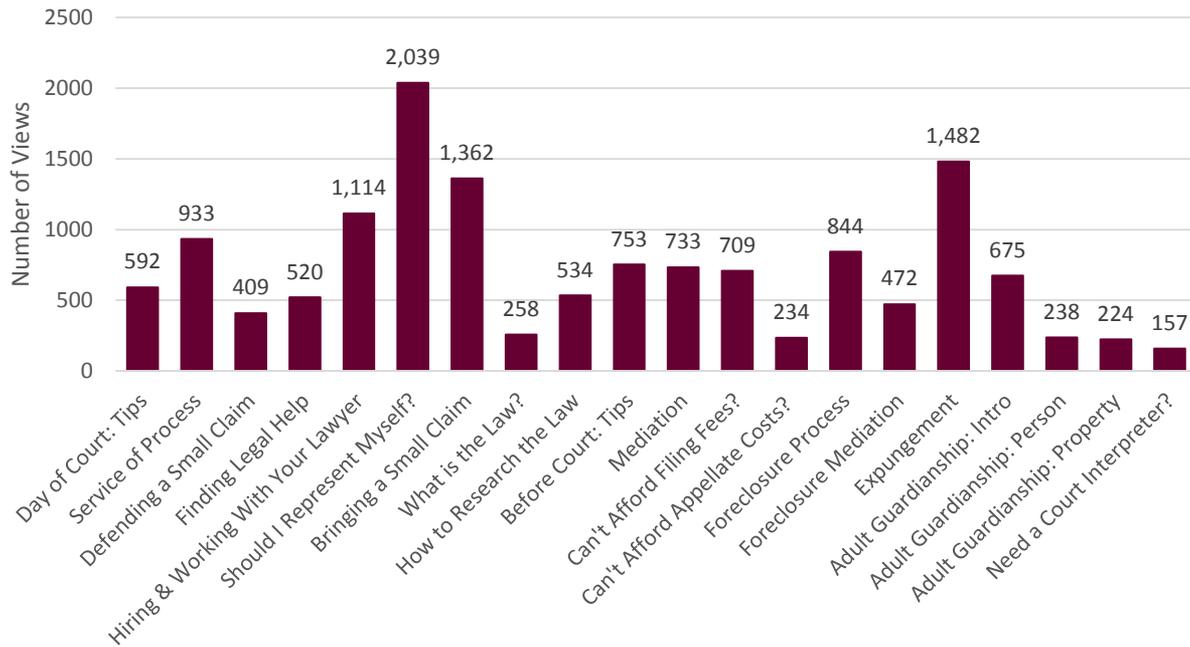


Figure 38. Videos—Number of Views—FY17

## WEBINARS

In FY17, the MCSHC offered a total of 12 live webinars—six on *Filing Your Case in the District Court of Maryland* (“Complaint”) and six on *Filing for Absolute Divorce in Maryland* (“Absolute Divorce”).

Each hour-long webinar is taught by a staff attorney at the MCSHC and provides practical information on which form(s) should be used to file a case, how the form should be completed, fees/costs, common problems and when to consult with a lawyer. Fifty-seven litigants participated in the webinars.



Figure 39. Webinar Attendees—Absolute Divorce—FY17

Attendance for the *Absolute Divorce* webinar continues to increase. Over time, interest in the *Complaint* webinar declined. Staff responded by recording the webinar and offering it on-demand. In the last 3 months of FY17, 65 individuals played the *Complaint* webinar and 17 completed the on-demand course.

In July 2017 staff began offering two new webinars, *Filing a Failure to Pay Rent Case?* and *Facing Eviction for Failure to Pay Rent?* A webinar on post-judgment collection is planned for 2018.

## MARYLAND LAW HELP APP

The App provides access to the many programs and services available to the self-represented in one place. There were more than 2,000 downloads of the App in FY17.

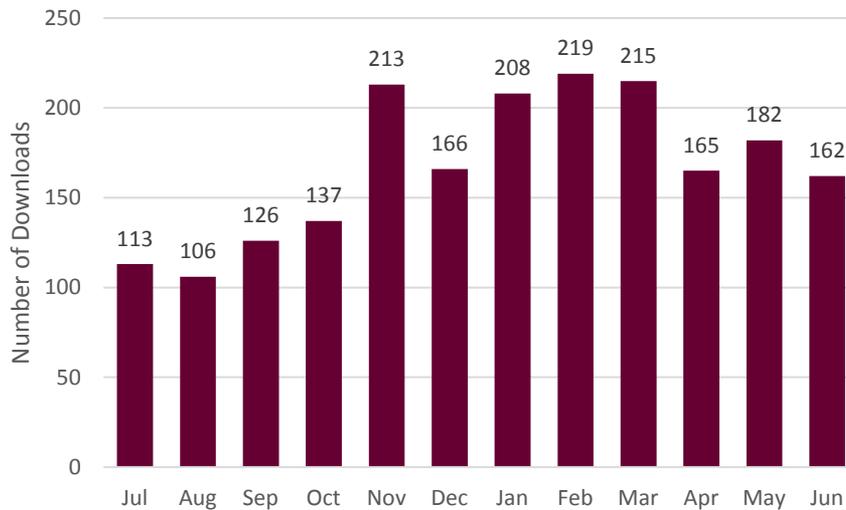


Figure 40. App Downloads—FY17

## FORM FINDERS

Form finders are web-enabled decision trees that walk users through a series of questions to guide them to the right forms. In FY17, there were 42,543 web hits on the Family Law Forms Finder page and 14,652 on the District Court Forms Finder page.

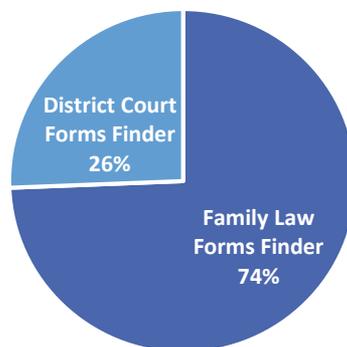


Figure 41. Forms Finder Views—FY17

## Court Forms Finder

Need help finding the right forms?

The interactive tools below guide you through a series of questions to help determine which court forms you need. The tools help you identify, select, and print forms.

- **District Court** forms (civil, criminal, DV/protective order, traffic citation, etc.)
- **Family Law** forms (adoption, child custody, child support, divorce, marriage, protective order, guardianship, etc.)
- Are you looking for forms in other Maryland courts? Do you already know which forms you need? You should go to the **Court Forms Page**.



Family Law Forms Finder



District Court Forms Finder



Court Forms Page

Figure 42. Forms Finder Web Page

## REFERRAL PADS

Recognizing that unrepresented individuals may not understand why their case was dismissed, how to collect on a judgment, or how to gain access to their children when an order is issued, the Judiciary developed a referral pad in FY17. Written guidance, much like doctors use when discharging patients, may help self-represented litigants obtain better results when they arrive at a self-help center or law library for advice or assistance. Referral pads permit judges to link self-represented litigants, who may be distressed, have low literacy, low legal literacy, or Limited English Proficiency to resources from the bench.

## COSTS/FUNDING

### SELF-HELP CENTERS

#### MARYLAND COURTS SELF-HELP CENTER

Remote services are provided at the MCSHC via funding from the District Court of Maryland and the Administrative Office of the Courts. Expenditures for the MCSHC totaled \$1.2 million in FY17.

#### DISTRICT COURT SELF-HELP RESOURCE CENTERS

The DCSHRCs are funded by the District Court of Maryland. Total costs were \$1.1 million in FY17.

#### FAMILY LAW SELF-HELP CENTERS

The FLSHCs are funded by grants to local courts via the Department of Juvenile and Family Services. Statewide, \$1.6 million in grant funds were spent in FY17 on FLSHCs.

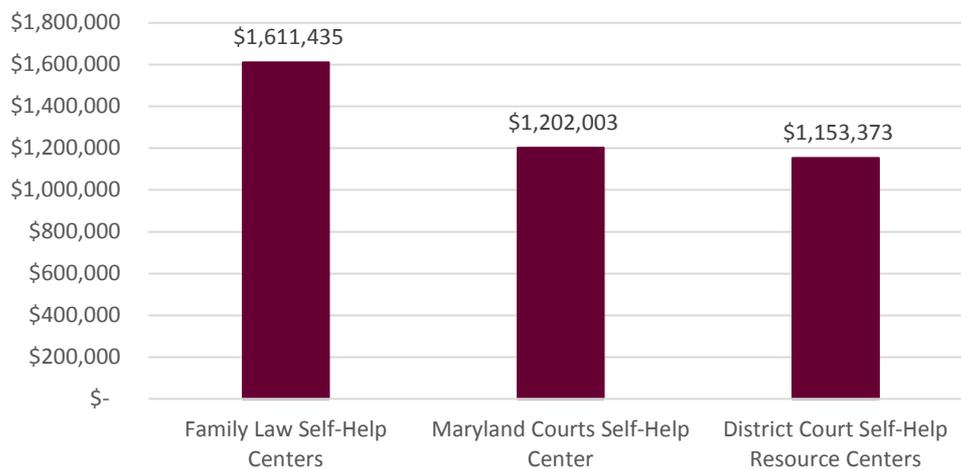


Figure 43. Self-Help Center Expenditures—FY17

Two counties do not budget funds to support self-help centers. The local bar offers pro bono help in Calvert County. In Garrett County, the family support services coordinator assists unrepresented litigants, spending approximately 75% of his time doing so. Charles and Carroll county also partner with local pro bono attorneys to provide help to unrepresented litigants; the funds those counties budget for self-help support their Family Law for the People Seminars.

# LAW LIBRARIES

## MARYLAND STATE LAW LIBRARY

In FY17, the Maryland State Law Library budget was \$2.7 million, excluding funds budgeted for the Maryland Code volumes and database access for judges.

## CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARIES

There is no uniform funding method for Maryland Circuit Court law libraries. They are funded by a combination of county budget appropriation, membership dues, appearance fees, criminal fines and forfeitures, and miscellaneous sources, such as copy and printing fees.

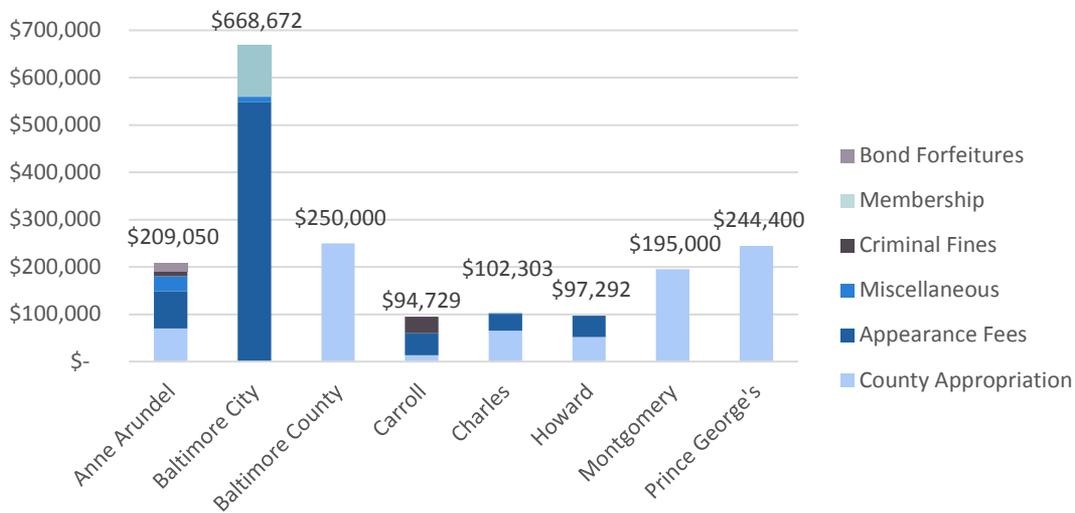


Figure 44. CMCLLD—Funding Sources—FY17

Expenditures totaled \$1.8 million for Circuit Court law libraries.

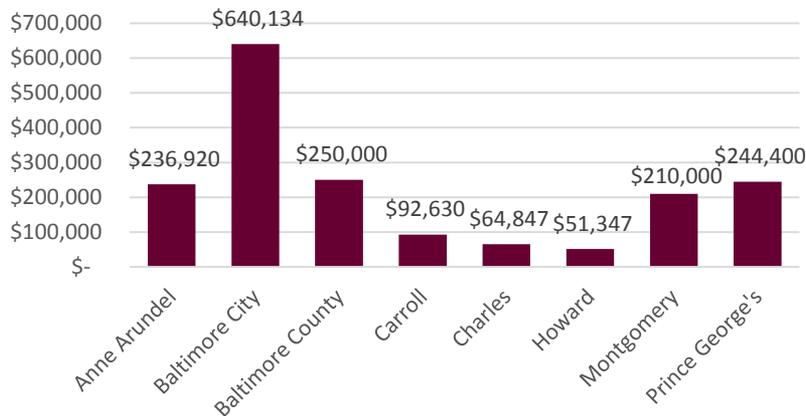


Figure 45. Law Library Expenditures—FY17

## IMPROVEMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Each year, program staff make improvements to operations, efficiency, and accessibility of programs to aid self-represented litigants in navigating the courts fairly. Below is an overview of improvements and achievements that occurred in FY17.

### SELF-HELP CENTERS

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#### BROWN AWARD – MERITORIOUS RECOGNITION

The Maryland Courts Self-Help Centers were awarded “Meritorious Recognition” by the ABA’s Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services as part of the 2017 Louis M. Brown Award for Legal Access. The Brown Award is given annually to programs and projects that advance access to legal services for those of moderate means in ways that are exemplary and replicable. The award and recognition were presented in Miami at the ABA’s mid-year meeting in February 2017.

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#### OUTREACH AND MARKETING

In FY16, the Judiciary adopted a targeted outreach and marketing plan to increase awareness of resources for self-represented litigants and to increase the number of individuals taking advantage of these resources. Objectives included promoting self-help center programs and services and the App through traditional and social media coverage, driving traffic to the [mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov) webpage where programs and services are highlighted, promotion via paid advertising, and collaboration with community and faith-based organizations, state agencies, and nonprofit partners.

**MASS TRANSIT ADVERTISING.** A transit advertising campaign launched on June 26<sup>th</sup> to promote the opening of the newest DCSHRC in Baltimore City. It ran in the Baltimore City and Baltimore County market for 12 weeks.

**MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATION ADVERTISING.** In October 2016, static images advertising the App, the DCSHRCs, MCSHC, and FLSHCs were placed on the electronic queuing system at Motor Vehicle Administration (“MVA”) locations statewide. A 30-second commercial was produced by the Office of Communications and Public Affairs and airs on MVN, the Motor Vehicle Network, which also plays at MVA locations statewide.

**COURT TV.** The 30-second spots produced for use on MVA’s Motor Vehicle Network were also embedded in the self-help videos that run on court monitors to let court users know about resources that are available to them.

**CHAT BUTTON.** The chat button was updated with a high resolution image that is easier to use on flyers and other promotional materials. Program staff reached out to legal services providers statewide and to all Circuit Court locations to facilitate placing the chat button on their websites.

**WEBSITE.** Access to Justice Department staff worked with the Office of Communications and Public Affairs to revamp the Self-Help page on [mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov) to make it easier for litigants to identify the programs and services that best meet their needs. A link to the webinar page was added as well as a satisfaction survey that permits self-help center users to leave feedback about their experience using Maryland Courts Self-Help Centers.

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## EXPANSION

The DCSHRC in Salisbury opened in July 2016, and a grand opening took place in September. The grand opening was covered by local TV station WMDTV in Salisbury.

Preparations began to open the next DCSHRC in Baltimore City. The Judiciary renegotiated the contract with Maryland Legal Aid to provide staffing for the new center. Staff were moved and a build out was completed to house the new center, which opened in July 2017. A grand opening was held in September 2017.

District Court intends to continue expanding walk-in DCSHRCs into Western Maryland and in Catonsville, where a new District Court location is expected to open in March 2019.

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## FAMILY LAW NOTEBOOK PROJECT

In FY17, the People’s Law Library and the Frederick County Pro Se Clinic collaborated with the support of the Department of Juvenile and Family Services to create a notebook for unrepresented litigants. The notebook helps litigants organize case documents more effectively to present their case to the court. Family services and legal services staff were trained on helping litigants use the notebook. The notebooks are in use at self-help centers in 12 counties statewide. Although the notebook initially requires self-help center staff to spend more time with each litigant, it ultimately results in fewer individuals returning to self-help centers with additional needs.

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## FAMILY LAW FOR THE PEOPLE

Through a partnership between the Family Section of the Maryland State Bar Association and the Department of Juvenile and Family Services, the Family Law for the People Initiative launched in FY17. This program offers seminars, taught by trained attorneys, to educate litigants about the court process and law around family law cases. In FY17, 32 seminars were held across the state, assisting 270 attendees.

## LAW LIBRARIES

In FY17, the CMCLLD created a brochure called *Finding Maryland Law* and distributed it to clerk's offices and public libraries statewide.

The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library partnered with their FLSHC to create online guides on topics such as mutual consent divorce and separation agreements.

The Baltimore County Circuit Court completed a reorganization of its website. The Circuit Court Librarian worked on the redesign with an eye to accessibility for self-represented litigants.

Montgomery County and Prince George's Circuit Court law libraries created free, open forums for the public and courthouse staff on topics relating to everyday law, facilitated by judges, magistrates, and attorneys.

The Circuit Court for Prince George's County Law Library launched *Judiciary Project: A Courthouse Experience*, a program for faculty and students from Prince George's County Schools. This program allows students to gain a firsthand experience of the judicial system, by observing a trial, speaking with a Circuit Court judge and participating in question and answer sessions.

Montgomery County Circuit Court law librarians created a clear, easy-to-understand "How to File..." guide for self-represented litigants on the topic of mutual consent divorce. A name change guide is in development. Law librarians also gave public programs on legal trailblazers, such as Vivian Simpson, and expanded content for self-represented litigants on their website.

The Charles County Law Library provided an overview of law library services for local public library staff, participated in monthly sessions of "Family Law for the People" and taught legal research classes for inmates at the Charles County Detention Center.

## FUTURE INITIATIVES

Ensuring access to justice for self-represented litigants is part of the Maryland Judiciary's strategic plan. This year's figures reflect increasing demand for services and program staff are working to create services to meet future needs.

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### PRO BONO

The Upper Marlboro DCSHRC is piloting a pro bono project that connects volunteer attorneys with pro bono opportunities. Called "Justice for Lunch," this project will connect members of the Prince George's County Bar Association, the local pro bono committee, the Public Defender's Office and the nonprofit provider, Community Legal Services of Prince George's County with litigants at the Upper Marlboro DCSHRC. Volunteers will provide help with expungement and shielding of criminal records.

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### SKYPE

Access to Justice Department program staff is exploring the use of Skype to assist self-represented litigants who need walk-in assistance in a jurisdiction that may not have the volume to support a full walk-in center.

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### LIBRARY KIOSKS

The Access to Justice Department and Maryland State Law Library are exploring new ways to serve individuals who do not have access to a public law library for legal research. Kiosks in Circuit Court libraries or other public areas would feature a computer with internet access, telephone and printer to link individuals to the MCSHC, the People's Law Library, the State Law Library website, online court forms, online books from Nolo Press (written specifically for self-represented litigants), and related web pages.



Figure 46. Maryland State Law Library Kiosk

# APPENDIX

## FAMILY LAW SELF-HELP CENTERS

### Allegany County

Courthouse Annex  
59 Prospect Square  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
Tuesdays 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Contact: Allegany Law Foundation, 301-722-3390

### Anne Arundel County

Circuit Court Law Library  
8 Church Circle, Suite 303 (main entry floor)  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
Daily 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: Erin McCarthy, 410-222-1153

### Baltimore City

Courthouse East  
111 N. Calvert Street, Room 114  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Sign-up for the morning session begins at 8:30 a.m.  
Sign-up for the afternoon session begins at 1:00 p.m.

### Baltimore County

Circuit Court  
401 Bosley Ave., Room 101, First Floor  
Towson, MD 21204  
Mondays: 8:30 a.m. - noon & 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Tuesdays: 8:30 a.m. - noon & 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Wednesdays: 8:30 a.m. - noon & 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Thursdays: 8:30 a.m. - noon & 1 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
Fridays: 8:30 a.m. - noon & 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Self Help Workshop last Tuesday of the month 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

### Calvert County

175 Main Street, 2nd Floor  
Prince Frederick, MD 20678  
Sign-up in room C213; Clinic in room B205  
Wednesdays 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
Contact: Rose Naughton, 410-535-1600 x 2516

### Caroline County

Circuit Court  
109 Market St., Room 200  
Denton, MD 21629  
Mondays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Caroline Public Library  
100 Market Street, 2nd Floor  
Denton, MD 21629  
Third Thursday of the month, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

### Carroll County

Courthouse Annex  
55 North Court Street, Suite 208  
Westminster, MD 21157  
Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
Thursdays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Powell Welliver, 410-386-2751

### Cecil County

Circuit Court for Cecil County  
129 East Main Street, Room 205  
Elkton, MD 21921  
Mondays 11:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m.  
Tuesdays 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.  
Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Thursdays 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Fridays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Nolanda Kirby, 410- 996-1157

### Charles County

Circuit Court  
200 Charles Street  
La Plata, MD 20646  
Family: Tuesdays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Civil and Family: first and third Wednesday 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Juliana Davis, 301- 932-3278

## Dorchester County

Dorchester County Circuit Court  
206 High Street, Room 204  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
Mondays 12:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Jessica Milligan, 410-228-1395

## Frederick County

Circuit Court  
100 West Patrick Street, Lower Level  
Frederick, MD 21701  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Contact: B. Lynn Macpherson, 301-600-2023

Help for Spanish Speakers  
Frederick Community College  
7932 Oppussumtown Pike  
Frederick, MD 21702  
Third Wednesday of the month 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Family Law for the People Seminars  
C. Burr Artz Public Library  
110 East Patrick Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
Second Tuesday of the month 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Register: 301-600-2023

## Garrett County

Circuit Court  
203 S. 4th Street  
Oakland, MD 21550  
Daily 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Randy Whitaker, 301- 334-7602

## Harford County

Circuit Court  
20 W Courtland St., Level A  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Contact: Ann Cogan, 410-638-4916

## Howard County

Howard County Circuit Court  
8360 Court Avenue, Rm 401C  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
Mondays, Wednesdays and first and third Fridays,  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Sandy Brewer, 410-313-2135

50+ Center at East Columbia Branch Library  
6600 Cradelrock Way  
Columbia, MD 21045  
Second and third Tuesday 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Self-Help Workshop  
Miller Branch Library  
9421 Frederick Road  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
Quarterly 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
Register: 410-313-2135

## Kent County

Kent County Circuit Court  
103 N. Cross Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Chestertown, MD 21620  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.  
Contact: Marina Fevola, 410-810-1059

## Montgomery County

Montgomery County Circuit Court  
50 Maryland Avenue  
South Tower, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Room 1500  
Rockville, MD 20850  
Daily: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Evening Hours on Tuesdays: 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Contact: Madeline Jones, 240-777-9061

## Prince George's County

Family Division Information Center—No legal advice  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
14735 Main Street, Room 1420  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
Daily 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Paralegal Unit—No legal advice  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
14735 Main Street, Room 1420  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
Daily 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Family Law Clinic  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
14735 Main Street, Room M2435  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
Monday – Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and  
Friday 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Assistance is available in English and Spanish  
Contact: Community Legal Services

Family Law Orientation  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
14735 Main Street, Room 1420  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Register: 301-780-8000

Spanish Speaking Attorney  
Langley Park Multi-Service Center  
1401 University Blvd East, Suite G-1  
Hyattsville, MD 20783  
Bi-Monthly 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Register: 301-952-4840

### Queen Anne's County

Circuit Court  
100 Court House Square  
Centreville, MD 21617  
Monday, from 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Tuesday – Friday, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Kathryn St. Landreau 410-758-1773 x 6

Kent Island Public Library  
200 Library Circle  
Stevensville, MD 21666  
First and second Thursday of the month, 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Centerville Public Library  
121 S. Commerce Street  
Centreville, MD 21671  
Third and fourth Thursday of the month, 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

### Somerset County

Somerset County Circuit Court Annex  
11774 Somerset Avenue  
Princess Anne, MD 21853  
Fridays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Karen Brimer, 410-621-7582

### St. Mary's County

Circuit Court  
41605 Courthouse Drive  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
First and last Friday of the month at 10:00 a.m.

Lexington Park Public Library  
21677 Franklin Delano Roosevelt Blvd.  
Lexington Park, MD 20650  
Two Wednesdays of the month 3:30pm - 5:30pm  
Contact: Clair Langeluttig, 301-475-7844 x 4121

### Talbot County

11 North Washington St., Suite 16  
Easton, MD 21601  
Mondays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Barbara Mitchell, 410-770-6806

### Washington County

Washington County Circuit Court  
24 Summit Avenue, Room 229  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
Contact: Amie Spigler, 240-313-2580

### Wicomico County

101 North Division Street  
Salisbury, MD 21803  
Mondays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Contact: Lauren Cooper, 410-548-7107

### Worcester County

Circuit Court for Worcester County  
One West Market Street, Room 101  
Snow Hill, MD 21863  
Mondays 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Contact: Anne Turner, 410-632-5638

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## DISTRICT COURT SELF-HELP RESOURCE CENTERS

### Glen Burnie

District Court Self-Help Resource Center  
George M. Taylor Multi-Service Center  
7500 Gov. Ritchie Highway, Room 205  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

### Salisbury

District Court for Wicomico County  
201 Baptist Street, Room 2248A  
Salisbury, MD 21801

### Upper Marlboro

District Court Self-Help Resource Center  
District Court Bourne Wing, Room 069B  
14735 Main Street  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

### Baltimore City

District Court Self-Help Resource Center  
District Court for Baltimore City, Civil Division  
501 East Fayette Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202

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## MARYLAND COURTS SELF-HELP CENTER—PHONE, CHAT, EMAIL

### Phone

410-260-1392  
8:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
Monday-Friday

### Live Chat

<http://www.mdcourts.gov/selfhelp/mcshc.html>  
8:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
Monday-Friday

Leave Feedback: <http://mdcourts.gov/selfhelp>

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## LAW LIBRARY LOCATIONS

### Maryland State Law Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
361 Rowe Blvd  
Annapolis MD 21401  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.;  
Tuesday, Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.;  
Saturday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Contact: 410-260-1430

### Allegany County Circuit Court Law Library

Open to the public, not staffed  
30 Washington Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 301-777-5925

### Anne Arundel County Public Law Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
Anne Arundel County Circuit Court  
8 Church Circle, Room 303  
Annapolis MD 21401  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410-222-1387

### Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
County Courts Building  
401 Bosley Avenue  
Towson, MD 21204  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 887-3086

### Baltimore Bar Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
Mitchell Courthouse  
100 N. Calvert St, Room 618  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Monday - Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.; Friday,  
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00  
p.m. Summer hours in July and August.  
Contact: 410-727-0280

### Calvert County Law Library

Open to the public, not staffed  
175 Main Street  
Prince Frederick, MD 20678  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Contact: 410-535-1600 ext. 2730

### Caroline County Law Library

Open to the public, not staffed  
109 Market Street  
Denton, MD 21629  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., by  
appointment or prior arrangement; contact by  
phone to inquire.  
Contact: 410-479-2303

### Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
Circuit Court for Carroll County  
200 Willis Street  
Westminster, MD 21157  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410-386-2672

### Cecil County Circuit Court Law Library

Not open to the public.  
Cecil County Circuit Courthouse  
129 E. Main Street, 2nd Floor  
Elkton, MD 21921  
Contact: 410- 996-5325

### Charles County Public Law Library

Open to the public, full-time staff  
200 Charles Street  
La Plata, MD 20646  
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 301- 932-3322

### Dorchester County Law Library

Open to the public, not staffed.  
206 High Street  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 228-6300

### **Frederick County Law Library**

Open to the Public, part-time staff  
100 West Patrick Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 301- 600-1993

### **Garrett County Law Library**

Not open to the public.  
203 South 4th Street  
Oakland, MD 21550  
Contact: 301- 334-1934

### **Harford County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
20 West Courtland Street  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 638-3467

### **Howard County Public Law Library**

Open to the public, full-time staff.  
8360 Court Avenue  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 313-2135

### **Kent County Public Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
103 North Cross Street  
Chestertown, MD 21620  
Contact: 410- 778-7440

### **Montgomery County Law Library**

Open to the public, full-time staff.  
50 Maryland Ave Room N-3420  
Rockville, MD 20850  
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
Contact: 240- 777-9120

### **Prince George's County Law Library**

Open to the public, full-time staff.  
14375 Main Street, Room M1400  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 301- 952-3438

### **Queen Anne's County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
100 Courthouse Square  
Centreville, MD 21617  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 758-0216

### **Somerset County Law Library**

Open to the public, staffed.  
30512 Prince William Street  
Princess Anne, MD 21853  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 621-7581

### **St. Mary's County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
41605 Court House Drive  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 301- 475-7844 x4165

### **Talbot County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
11 N. Washington Street  
Easton, MD 21601  
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410 - 770-6801

### **Washington County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
24 Summit Avenue, Room 116  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 240- 313-2570

### **Wicomico County Law Library**

Not open to the public.  
P.O. Box 4074  
Salisbury, MD 21803  
Contact: 410- 749-6513

### **Worcester County Law Library**

Open to the public, not staffed.  
1 West Market Street, Courthouse Room 228  
Snow Hill, MD 21863  
Monday - Friday, 8:30a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: 410- 632-0600

MARYLAND



JUDICIARY