

# Superior Court of California, County of Placer

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**Job Title:** Self-Help Attorney  
**Unit:** Confidential  
**Represented:** No, At-will  
**Reports to:** Family Law Facilitator

**UMC:** 2010a  
**Job Category:** Operations  
**FLSA Status:** Exempt  
**Adopted:** 01-23-19

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## **DEFINITION**

Under the general direction of the Family Law Facilitator, the incumbent will assist in the administration, development and day-to-day operation of the Court's Self Help Center; to provide legal services to litigants not represented by counsel; to facilitate and expedite civil, probate, and family law proceedings; to perform related duties as assigned. This position provides direct services to self-represented litigants.

## **DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS**

The *Self-Help Attorney* is responsible for providing support in the overall management and operation of the Self-Help Program. The incumbent in this class assists in the supervisory responsibilities for the paraprofessional staff, clerical support, and interns/volunteers with the Self-Help Center.

The Self-Help Attorney is distinguished from the Family Law Facilitator by the scope of overall responsibility for the Self-Help program mandated by Government Code and the court-wide litigant assistance programs.

## **JUDGMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Incumbents work under direction to perform most duties independently based on general policies, procedures and standards. However, incumbents sometimes to frequently make decisions that may have multiple alternative solutions and may involve the occasional development of new techniques and procedures. Priorities are established by immediate user and department needs and can change frequently. Incumbents do not typically supervise other employees in the Self-Help Division but may have lead responsibility.

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

Duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assist in monitoring and evaluating the work of subordinate staff; coach paralegal and clerical staff in providing and limiting legal information; research and address legal questions posed by other court staff and supervisors; assist in recruiting, training and supervising interns/volunteers.
- Mediate complex family matters such as parentage, child support, temporary or permanent spousal support and divorce issues including property division; and draft clear and legally adequate written agreements.
- Develop and provide direct services to litigants referred by the Court or seeking assistance, including:
  - Meet with litigants to mediate issues of child support, spousal support, property control and division, and maintenance of health insurance.
  - Prepare support calculations using commonly used software and online resources.
  - Prepare formal orders and judgments consistent with the Court's announced order in cases where both parties are unrepresented.
- Provide educational materials to parents concerning the process of authenticating parentage and establishing, modifying, and enforcing child and spousal support in the courts.
- Conducts workshops for unrepresented litigants.
- Provides direct one-on-one legal assistance to self-represented litigants in family law, civil, and probate cases.
- Distribute necessary court forms and voluntary declarations of paternity; provide assistance in completing forms.

- Prepare correct and accurate child and spousal support calculations using commonly available software programs and online resources.
- Assists in the development and implementation of operational policies and procedures.
- Assists in the planning, implementation, and administration of program activities and evaluates effectiveness of services.
- Participates in court and community activities and committees.
- Identifies community resources helpful to the administration of the self-help center and resources that will meet the legal and non-legal needs of self-represented litigants.
- Provide referrals to the Department of Child Support Services and other community agencies and resources that provide services for parents and children.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

## **EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS**

### **Knowledge Of:**

- Family Law matters including mediation techniques and approaches, and domestic violence;
- General civil procedure and the mechanics and dynamics of civil litigation, including but not limited to: rules of jurisdiction and venue, pre-filing requirements, statutes of limitation, pleading and demurrers, service of process and defaults, discovery methods and discovery disputes, summary judgment, trial and pretrial procedures, and provisional remedies such as preliminary injunctions;
- Small Claims Court rules and procedures;
- Unlawful Detainer rules and procedures;
- Probate rules and procedures, including estates, trusts, guardianships and conservatorships;
- Litigant assistance program requirements and policies, including legal aid and legal assistance service requirements;
- Provisions of civil, probate and family law, legal processes and rules of court;
- Family Law resources, referral services and support software programs;
- Principles, practices, methods and materials of legal research and analysis;
- Legal terms, procedures, forms and documents;
- Government Code and other statutes related to Court process and rules of Court;
- Relevant federal and state laws and regulations related to assigned case types;
- Trial and hearing procedures, and rules of evidence;
- Relevant State and local court forms;
- Child support law and the operations of the uniform state child support guidelines; child support establishment and enforcement process under Title IV-D of the federal Social Security Act;
- Program and policy development and implementation;
- Basic understanding of law and psychological issues related to domestic violence, addiction, trauma, and mental illness; and
- Principles and practices of employee supervision, including staff training and development.

### **Abilities To:**

- Read and understand complex legal information, procedures and forms;
- Analyze a variety of information, relate it to the law and reach decisions;
- Effectively explain complex legal issues and procedures to self-represented litigants who may have little or no knowledge of the law;
- Prepare concise, 'Plain English' written instructions and materials for litigants;
- Effectively assist self-represented parties to reach agreements in contested matters;
- Effectively use relevant computer applications and word processing software;
- Interpret and apply statistical information related to the program;
- Set priorities and complete projects in a timely manner;
- Communicate effectively both orally and in written form;
- Remain patient, calm and professional while working with individuals who are in highly stressful situations;

- Adapt quickly to changes in policies, procedures, assignments and work locations;
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with the judicial officers, court staff, public and private agencies;
- Work independently and use independent judgment;
- Analyze situations and resolve problems;
- Efficiently use relevant computer programs and word processing software;
- Make oral presentations to groups; develop, coordinate and conduct workshops;
- Maintain confidential information when required by legal or ethical standards;
- Provide for intern and/or staff training and development; communicate effectively orally and in writing;
- Read, write, and speak standard English and use correct English grammar, spelling; and
- Identify the need for and recommend changes to work operations.

**Minimum Qualifications:**

Graduation from an accredited law school and a member of the California State Bar in good standing;

**AND**

One (1) year in the practice of law, which shall include substantial family law, civil, or probate practice including litigation and/or mediation.

*Note: One (1) year of experience performing legal work in a court based self-help center while attending law school may be considered as a substitution.*

**HIGHLY DESIRABLE BUT NOT REQUIRED:** Bilingual Spanish

**GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS**

**Criminal History and Background Checks:**

Candidates are required to pass a fingerprint clearance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice (DOJ). Convictions, depending on the type, number and date, may be disqualifying.

**License Requirement:**

Possession of a valid driver's license may be required depending on the position or the ability to provide alternate methods of transportation that meets job requirements. Proof of adequate vehicle insurance and medical clearance may also be required.

**Physical Requirements:**

The physical demands and work environment characteristics described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- Occasional lifting and moving of objects weighting up to 25 pounds;
- Ability to sit, stand, and/or walk for long periods of time;
- Ability to move from one place to another place within a facility;
- Periodically required travel to other locations;
- Some reaching for items above and below desk level;
- Talk and hear;
- Use hands to finger, handle, feel or operate objects, tools or controls;
- Perform repetitive movements of hands or wrists;
- Specific vision abilities required for this job include close vision and the ability to adjust focus; and
- The incumbent may be required to work additional hours.

**Working Conditions:**

Job duties are generally performed in an indoor office setting with environmental controls. Assigned work is performed in a standard court setting with open cubicles and/or offices. Assigned incumbents are expected to work inside buildings, alone, or closely with others. Routine noises and noise levels occur within the work environment. This classification may be required to drive to other Placer Superior Court locations.

**General sign-off:** The employee is expected to adhere to all court policies and procedures. I have read and understand this explanation and job description. By signing below I am declaring that I am able to meet the minimum qualifications and perform the physical demands and essential functions of this job with or without accommodation.

**Note:** This document is intended to describe the general nature and level of work performed by individuals assigned to this job classification. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all duties and responsibilities of personnel in all divisions and/or a location so classified, nor are it intended to limit the authority of supervisors or manager to assign or direct the activities of employee.