



Supreme Court of Illinois

May 17, 2021

ILLINOIS COURT HELP LAUNCHES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Illinois Court Help was launched today in order to connect people to the resources and information they need to go to court in Illinois. It is the first personalized court information service offered by the Illinois Courts and one of the latest innovations created during the COVID-19 pandemic to make the courts and information more accessible.

People can **call or text 833-411-1121** to connect with a trained court guide who can provide up-to-date Illinois court information and answers to specific questions about the court process. Illinois Court Help guides will also connect people to the resources they need to go to court, from filing forms to accessing legal aid. Initial hours of operation are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, with expanded hours to come over the next few months.

“Illinois Court Help really is a gamechanger for people who, due to economic hardship, must represent themselves in court and have had access to in-person assistance restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke said. “This easy-to-use service closes the information gap and helps people go to court with more confidence.”

COVID-19 has made going to court for in-person information and assistance a challenge due to social distancing restrictions. This comes at a time when more lower income residents are facing eviction and other legal issues and cannot afford a lawyer to help them navigate the court system.

Nationally, an estimated 3 out of every 5 people in all civil legal cases go to court without a lawyer, according to the Self-Represented Litigants Network. Here in Illinois, half of all family law cases and 56% of domestic violence cases had at least one person representing themselves in 2020. At the same time, less than a quarter of Illinois courts have dedicated self-help staff to assist people representing themselves.

Illinois Court Help guides will provide step-by-step instructions on how to file court documents and explain how to appear in court on Zoom. Users will also be able to access one set of easy-to-read forms that can be used in any Illinois court. Lawyers who practice in multiple Illinois counties can find courthouse information. The new service will not provide legal advice but allows for guides to connect people to legal aid and other community services.

This service builds on other innovative changes instituted in response to COVID-19 to improve people’s access to the court system.

“Just as people now attend court hearings through Zoom, Illinois Court Help allows people to find the court information they need no matter where they are,” said Justice Mary K. Rochford, Chair of the Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission. “By guiding people through the court process through an emphasis on customer service, Illinois Court Help has the added benefit of reducing court delays and helping our courts operate more smoothly and efficiently.”

More information on Illinois Court Help can be found by going to www.ilcourthelp.gov

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(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Chris Bonjean, Communications Director to the Illinois Supreme Court at 312.793.2323, cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov. or Terri Cornelius, Illinois Court Help, 708.257.4010, tcorncomms@gmail.com)