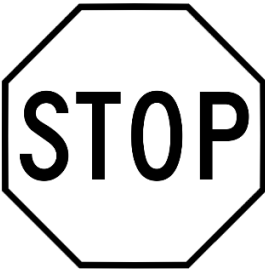


SELF-REPRESENTING LITIGANTS'
FAQ SHEET

WARNING ABOUT YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS



Self-represented litigants are held to the same standards as attorneys admitted to the bar of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Representing yourself does not exempt you from understanding and following the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure, other statewide rules, and Greene County Rules of Court. You are responsible to make sure you are referencing and using current rules. These rules can be found in the Greene County Law Library.

Q. Can I represent myself?

A. Yes, you can. However, if you qualify, Southwestern PA Legal Services is available to help if you are unable to hire an attorney. That agency can be reached at: 724.627.3127. They will determine if you qualify and if they can represent you.

Q. What if I don't qualify for legal aid? Can I still represent myself?

A. Yes, you can. If you're filing for custody or are appealing a ruling made by a Magistrate, we have forms that can make representing yourself easier. For custody cases, each form comes with a complete set of instructions. When appealing the decision of a magistrate, we have a form you can complete. If you're filing for divorce, you can find forms and instructions at www.pacourts.us/forms. However, keep in mind, that **you are responsible** to make sure you are following the correct procedure.

Q. What if I can't afford to pay the filing fees?

A. You can file to petition the Court for *In Forma Pauperis* status, which is Latin for "Cannot afford to pay". The judge will make a determination based on the information contained in your petition as to whether or not you can proceed without paying the filing costs.

Q. What if I do not understand the forms I am filling out? Can I come back here for legal advice or help?

A. No, we cannot give you legal advice nor can we assist in completing any forms, but you can go to a law library to help you find the answers that you seek. Local Rules of Court are available from the Office of the Court Administrator on the second floor of the Greene County Courthouse. In addition, the statutes of Pennsylvania are contained in Purdon's. These books can be found in most law libraries and are available for reference in the Law Library on the second floor of the Greene County Courthouse. Please note that these books cannot be checked out.

Q. If I don't understand the forms I am completing, can I leave certain sections unanswered or blank?

A. No, you must complete the forms in their entirety as they apply to you and the case. Refer back to the instruction sheets provided for each form [this applies to custody forms, which we provide, and divorce forms, which can be downloaded], or do some research in a law library. It may be the case that not all sections or questions apply to your particular situation, but **the responsibility is on you** to make that determination.

Q. Can I ask you to complete my forms for me if I give you the information?

A. No, we cannot complete forms for self-represented litigants. However, the forms we hand out for custody and the forms you can download for divorce come with a complete set of instructions to help you complete them.

Q. I am appealing the decision of a magistrate. Can you help me complete the necessary paperwork?

A. No, we cannot, but if you qualify for legal aid, you can call Southwestern Legal Services for assistance in completing that form and for advice on how to proceed. Their number is 724.627.3127.