

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR  
INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, OKEECHOBEE, AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES  
STATE OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 99-1**

**RE: Nineteenth Circuit Family Self Help Program**

**WHEREAS**, Rule 12.750, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure provides that the chief judge may by administrative order establish a self-help program to facilitate access to family courts, and;

**WHEREAS**, there is a substantial need for assistance to self-represented litigants in family law cases; it is therefore,

**RESOLVED** that a Family Self Help Program is hereby established in the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit and shall operate pursuant to the requirements to Rule 12.750, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure and shall abide by the following guidelines and procedures;

**1. PERSONNEL:**

The Self-Help Program shall be staffed by nonlawyer personnel who have training and/or experience working as a paralegal in family law cases. The staff shall operate under the direct supervision of the Staff Attorney for the Family Division.

**2. TYPES OF CASES COVERED BY PROGRAM:**

The Self-Help Program shall assist self represented individuals in the following types of cases for which there have been forms packages approved by the Chief Judge:

- a. Dissolution of Marriage
- b. Post-Judgement Modification Cases in the Family Division
- c. Name Change
- d. Simple Adoptions
- e. Enforcement
- f. Temporary Custody By Extended Family pursuant to Chapter 751
- g. Child Custody and/or Visitation once Paternity is Established
- h. Any additional cases for which the Chief Judge has approved a forms packet

**3. APPROVED FORMS AND FORM PACKETS:**

The Self-Help Program shall utilize those simplified forms and instructions that have been approved by the Chief Judge and that have been compiled in form packets. In addition, self-

represented litigants may utilize the Supreme Court approved forms.

**4. SERVICES PROVIDED:**

Self-Help personnel may:

- a. encourage self-represented litigants to obtain legal advice;
- b. provide information about available pro bono legal services, low cost legal services, and lawyer referral services;
- c. provide information about available approved forms and form packets, without providing advice or recommendations as to any specific course of action;
- d. provide approved forms and approved packets including instructions through the offices of the Clerk of Court;
- e. engage in limited oral communications to assist a person in the completion of blanks on approved forms;
- f. provide, either orally or in writing, definitions of legal terminology from widely accepted legal dictionaries or other dictionaries without advising whether or not a particular definition is applicable to the self-represented litigant's situation;
- g. provide, either orally or in writing, citations of statutes and rules, without advising whether or not a particular statute or rule is applicable to the self-represented litigant's situation;
- h. provide general information about court process, practice, and procedure;
- i. provide information about mediation, required parenting courses, and courses for children of divorcing parents; and,
- j. set hearings in accordance with court procedure and as requested by the self represented litigant.

**5. COST:**

The Self-Help Program shall be available to all self-represented litigants in family law cases. Simplified forms and forms packets which have been approved by the Chief Judge shall be available for purchase through the offices of the Clerk of Court. The cost for such forms shall be established by Administrative Order.

**6. OPERATING PROCEDURES:**

The Self-Help Program shall comply with the following procedures;

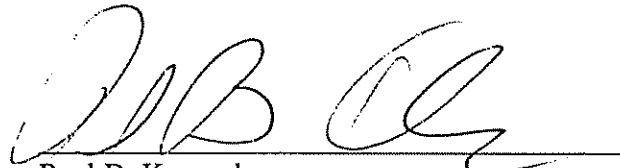
- a. All contact between the self-represented litigant and the program shall be by telephone. The approved forms packets shall include a telephone number and instructions on how to contact the program for questions or information. All telephone calls shall be returned within three (3) working days;
- b. The program shall maintain a list of all pro bono legal clinics, lawyer referral

services, and any available low cost legal services;

- c. In appropriate contested cases the program shall refer the matter to mediation through the court's mediation program and shall forward the file and a proposed order of referral to the presiding judge for their review and signature;
- d. Shall schedule all non-emergency hearings for cases in which both parties are self-represented;
- e. Shall review files for completeness prior to scheduling hearings;
- f. Shall prepare a Child Support Guidelines worksheet for each case involving children using the financial information available in the file;
- g. Shall maintain appropriate records for all self-help litigants for whom services are provided;

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**DONE AND ORDERED** in quadruplicate at Vero Beach, Indian River County, Florida, this day of January, 1999

  
Paul B. Kanarek  
Chief Judge