Court Buiding Design Considerations for Self-Repersented Litigants

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
OFFICE OF COURT CONSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

This is an outline of the principles for court environments which respond to the needs of self-represented litigants. These principles apply to new construction and to the extent feasible to the reconfiguration of existing buildings. Many of these principles are excerpted from the *California Trial Court Facilities Standards, 2006 edition* prepared by the Office of Court Construction and Management. The Judicial Council will consider adoption of these Facilities Standards in April 2006.

General Principles for Building Design	▪ The building must be easy to understand	▪ High-volume public spaces and services are located on the lower floors of court facilities directly adjacent to the public lobby; ▪ The overall building organization is defined by the public circulation system, visual cues lead users to important designations; ▪ The prime services are directly visible from the public lobby; right after security screening;
	▪ Public spaces must have the right amount of information	▪ Create friendly, uncluttered lobbies by displaying appropriate messages in a consistent, uniform manner; ▪ Clear signage immediately inside the courthouse public lobby. Many courthouse visitors will require directions to courtrooms or hearing rooms. Provide large, easily readable court calendar monitors
	▪ Information Kiosk	▪ An information kiosk or counter to provide basic information to individuals unfamiliar with the court; ▪ Locate in a highly visible place near the main entrance and beyond security screening; ▪ Directional signage with information about location of services. ▪ Computer touch-screen information station, or a combination of automated signage with a staff member at the kiosk

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	▪ Signage and Graphics	▪ Clear, legible, and strategically placed graphics ▪ Direct users; minimize confusion ▪ Too many signs in one place confuses first-time visitors, and undermines dignity of the court; ▪ Number rooms logically and consecutively; ▪ Number courtrooms on a predictable sequence, not the internal administrative department labels; ▪ A building directory and Court calendar display at the main lobby; ▪ Courtroom entry signs – calendar of cases; restrictions and instructions;
General Principles for Self-Help centers	▪ Relationship to the Courthouse	▪ Is the Self-Help center located inside the court building or in a separate building? ▪ Separate location would allow operation when Courthouse is not open ▪ Does a separate location confuse or reinforce the difference between assistance and the judicial role?
	▪ Self-Help center design	▪ Reception and Triage area; ▪ Information displays; computer carrels, and tables; ▪ Conference and training rooms; ▪ Space of children; ▪ Audio visual displays; copiers; ▪ Staff and volunteer office areas; files, equipment and storage; ▪ Make the spaces flexible, not too tailored – anticipate that service delivery models will change
	▪ Relation to other Court functions	▪ Close to the clerk public service counters; ▪ Family Court Services; ▪ Children's waiting room; ▪ Main lobby, and public accommodations