ACTION PLAN TO ASSIST SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

1. ***Description of Need:*** Santa Clara County Superior Court became aware of the increasing numbers of self-represented litigants and began the process of addressing the unmet needs more than two years ago. Under the direction of the Presiding Judge, a *Self-Represented Litigant Advisory Committee* was appointed and commenced evaluation of the Court's ability to deliver services to these court users. The development of the Self-Service Website, the Self-Service Center at the Notre Dame Courthouse, and the upcoming Mobile Self-Service Center are a direct result of the efforts of that group.

   As part of the Court's ongoing project, a series of surveys were conducted at all Court locations to determine the nature and kinds of services needed by self-represented litigants. In September 2000, surveys of court users and court personnel were distributed by and results compiled by external volunteers. The complete results of these surveys are documented in Santa Clara County Superior Court, Self-Represented Litigant Assistance Project, Phase I Interim Report, dated December 2000. A brief snapshot of the survey results is produced below to demonstrate the range of needs of self-represented litigants in Santa Clara County.

   Survey Findings: A total of 164 court user responses were compiled during the 2-week period in which survey interviews were conducted. The responses received indicated that many court users came to the Courthouse multiple times to seek assistance. Traffic, Small Claims, and Family Law accounted for the highest numbers of cases in the survey responses. Approximately one-third of the court users surveyed had sought legal help before coming to the courthouse from the Court, a private attorney or legal aid. Of those surveyed, 73% did not have an attorney, 24% chose to represent themselves, 19% indicated they could not afford an attorney, and 39% chose not to answer the question.

   Most of the public wanted basic information about court procedures. This came out in various responses, such as requesting information about date and time of court appearances, how to fill out legal paperwork, information about a person's constitutional rights, the procedure to follow for various violations, and directions to various court facilities. When asked what self-help services they would like to see the Court provide, 35.6% wanted Court staff dedicated to answering procedural questions, with close to one-third wanting more information on the Court's website.

   The Court's web site has been part of the Court's ongoing project. The survey results indicated that three-fourths of respondents had Internet access, three-fourths indicated they were unaware the Court had a web site, 85% indicated they had not visited the Court's web site, and less than 5% had used other legal web sites.

In terms of special services needed, 62.5% asked for assistance in Spanish, and four requested assistance in Chinese, Japanese, Cambodian and Vietnamese. Five people requested special services. Four requested ADA accommodations, but did not specify the type of assistance needed. Two did ask for handicapped parking assistance. A majority of respondents indicated a desire for the Court to be open and provide services during evening hours.

In a current sampling of Family Law cases, the Court has found that at the time of filing 95 percent of the parties are self-represented.

The Court's efforts to address self-represented litigant needs have been supported by grants awarded by the Judicial Council from the Trial Court Improvement and Modernization Funds. Those grants have funded for consulting services for project design and management, web design services, and the upcoming purchase of the Court's Mobile Self-Service Unit. In addition to the grant funds dedicated to this project, the Court has committed substantial resources in the form of budgetary match and personnel hours to support the project.

On September 6, 2001, the Court initiated its Self-Service Center web site www.scself-service.org. The home page of the Self-Service web site is depicted below. A full description of the development of the web site is available in Web Site Phase I. The Final Grant Report was submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts in February 2002.

On April 25, 2002, the Court celebrated its Grand Opening of the Self-Service Center at its Notre Dame Courthouse. Photographs of the facility and the Grand Opening are included below.

Exterior View
Self-Service Center - Notre Dame Avenue

Hon. Jack Komar, Self-Service Center Advisory Committee Chair
Hon Richard Turrone, Presiding Judge

Ms. Jean Pennypacker, Director, Family Resources Division
Ms. Debra Hodges, Director, Special Projects

Mediators, judges pro tempore, bench officers, committee members and staff joined members of the community in celebrating the opening of the Self-Service Center.

Despite the Court's significant accomplishments to date, much remains to be done to fully and effectively make use of the Self-Service Center and the web site. This Action Plan addresses the next steps in the Court's ongoing Self-Represented Litigant Assistance Project.

1. ***Program Areas:*** The Court's Action Plan for Self-Represented Litigants contains activities in 7 different program areas, as follows

Action Arena (Program Area)	***Brief Description***
1. Coordinated Information Services	Providing a comprehensive and coordinated process for developing and distributing information about Court services.
2. Enhancing Volunteer Services	Soliciting lawyers and other volunteers to provide self-help services.
3. Self-Service Center and Mobile Unit	Providing assistance to self-represented litigants regarding court procedures, processes, and referrals to other resource agencies and providing access to the Court's website and Self-Service Center website.
4. Language Access	Providing assistance in various languages, such as Spanish and Vietnamese, for litigants that do not speak English. Simply English language on the Court website and the Self-Service Center website.
5. Staff Training	Ensuring all Court staff is trained to enable them to direct litigants to the proper resources and to assist litigants in maneuvering through the Court website.
6. Community Outreach	Promoting available resources to the community and developing a "Train the Trainers" program.

The Court's Action Plan in each of these Program Areas is set forth below.

2. Program Action Plans:

PROGRAM AREA 1: COORDINATED INFORMATION SERVICES.

Program Description:

Many litigants need assistance with a variety of issues at the same time; however, they are in different areas of the law and are located in more than one facility. (For example, the drug arrest of a parent may lead to an eviction and a Juvenile Court intervention). The public often does not know to which court facilities to go and each court facility may not have the information on all areas of the law. (For example, the facility where Drug Court is held may not have information on evictions).

The Court strongly encourages the use of the Web to access Court information, as it is the most accurate state and local court information available. Information available on the web is maintained and updated in a coordinated fashion by the Court and the State Administrative Office of the Courts.

To most effectively provide users with the "Coordinated Information Services," it is necessary for the Court to integrate the use of people, written materials, and technology. In addition to the development of court information and its use on the web, other elements include providing Coordinated Information Services through the Mobile Self-Help Center and "Train the Trainers" program, which are addressed in more detail in other parts of this Action Plan.

In an effort to serve all court users, comprehensive court information must be provided. The types of information and ways it will be distributed include information booths, forms/instructions packets, telephone services, and FAQ's/brochures/pamphlets at all courthouse locations. The Court's Self-Service Center Web Site provides information to all court users with web access, including web-based form packets (an interim solution), a simple means of filling out legal forms (e.g. "San Mateo" forms software – more advanced solution), and interactive web site questions and responses. The web site will provide information at any location with web access, as well as the Self-Service Center and the Mobile Self-Service Center.

Program Partners:

Legal services providers, Neighborhood Resource Centers, Senior Citizen Centers, Court's IS Department, Court's Department Directors, Court's Departmental Subject Area Experts, and the AOC.

Program Plan: COORDINATED INFORMATION SERVICES

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Create form packets	Completed by 10/02	Leigh Parsons - SSC Dept. Dirs. – Hannah Barletta - Francine Collier - Jean Pennypacker
Enter form packets on the web	Completed by 1/03	Leigh Parsons - SSC Hannah Barletta - IS
Hire staff to staff information booths	Completed by 11/01/02	Hannah Barletta Melanie Conroy Martha Wilson
Create information booth in the lobby of the west side of the Hall of Justice with necessary furniture and equipment (telephone/ data lines, computer and cabling).	Completed by 11/01/02	Leigh Parsons - SSC Terri Cain - Criminal Division
Create binder of contacts, phone numbers, maps, forms and instructions to provide resource information to court users.	Completed by 12/01/02	Terri Cain - Criminal Division Hannah Barletta - IS
Create an "Action Center to provide "one-stop" post-proceeding information source.	Completed by 11/01/02	Terri Cain – Criminal Division
Coordinate information sharing among the Court, Probation, Dept. of Revenue, Dept. of Correction, and Dept. of Alcohol and Drugs to keep abreast of latest info needed by defendants to carry out court orders.	Completed by 11/01/02	Terri Cain - Criminal

PROGRAM AREA 2: ENHANCING VOLUNTEER SERVICES.

Program Description:

The Court has a need to maintain and enhance the level of customer service it provides to court users. To satisfy this level of service the Court needs to recruit volunteers from legal service providers, the SCC Bar Association, Senior Centers, Community Centers, Religious/Ethnic organizations, libraries, school district offices, area law schools, area paralegal schools and paraprofessional organizations. Volunteers from these groups will assist the Court in addressing the needs of self-represented litigants in many ways, including (1) staffing information booths/kiosks in court locations, (2) providing volunteer lawyer assistance at the Self-Service Center and with the website; and (3) providing training for community groups regarding available resources.

Program Partners:

Legal service providers, SCC Bar Association, Senior Centers, Community Centers, Religious/Ethnic organizations, libraries, school district offices, area law schools, area paralegal schools and organizations

Program Plan: ENHANCING VOLUNTEER SERVICES.

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Contact Program Partners (above) for volunteers	July	Leigh Parsons (or designee), LSP's
Create training curriculum	9/02	SSC, Department experts
Provide orientation for volunteers prior to training	11/02	Leigh Parsons (or designee)
Contact Bar Association to solicit attorney assistance	6/02	John Conway
Establish a process for lawyers to participate in providing assistance	8/02	SSC, Department experts
Begin volunteer training	12/02	SSC, Department experts
Volunteer cultivation	Ongoing	SSC, Volunteer Coordinator

PROGRAM AREA 3: SELF-SERVICE CENTER AND MOBILE UNIT

Program Description:

In addressing the needs of self-represented litigants in Santa Clara County, the Court has chosen to establish a Self-Service Center made up of a physical location in the Notre Dame Courthouse, which will be augmented soon by the acquisition and deployment of a Mobile Unit. Both the courthouse-based and mobile self-service centers will provide locations in which self-represented litigants can avail themselves of court information and seek the assistance of volunteers in pursuing their legal actions. Services at these centers will include one-on-one legal information, web access to legal information, printed handouts & forms packets, workshops and other trainings. In addition to these court facilities, educational workshops may be held at other facilities, neighborhood centers, senior citizen centers, libraries, etc.

The Court is assuming responsibility from the County District Attorney's Office for the Small Claims Advisor program, which will provide comprehensive services to Small Claims litigants, as part of the Self-Service Center. In addition, the Court is actively developing additional resources related to each of its operational areas.

The Self-Service Center Mobile Unit will duplicate the information and services provided at Notre Dame Courthouse to litigants who are unable to travel to the Court. The Court will collaborate with organizations throughout the county to determine locations for the Mobile Unit to be located, including community resource centers, senior citizen centers, libraries, etc.

Program Partners:

Legal services providers, Neighborhood Resource Centers, Senior Citizen Centers, Court's IS Department, Court's Department Directors, Court's Departmental Subject Area Experts, AOC, Dept. of Consumer Affairs, Small Claims Advisor Committees, District Attorney

Program Plan: SELF-SERVICE CENTER AND MOBILE UNIT

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Develop and present workshops on particular subject areas	Beginning 5/1/02 & ongoing	SSC & Dept. subject area experts for program content, Train the Trainer's Program, SSC & volunteers
Hire 2 attorneys: 1 dedicated to the Small Claims assistance and 1 dedicated to the Self-Service Center	6/02	SSC
Move the Small Claims Advisor Program to the Self-Service Center	7/1/02	SSC, Francine Collier
Acquire mobile unit	7/02	Administration
Meet with legal service providers to discuss where they think the mobile unit is most needed, to share program materials and to discuss how they can assist in our efforts to expand services to self-represented litigants.	8/02	SSC, Administration, LSP's
Install web-based Interactive forms program enhancement	Ongoing	IS, SSC

PROGRAM AREA 4: LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Program Description:

Access to justice is directly related to the ability to understand proceedings in which court users are involved. The ability to understand the proceedings is affected by the complexity of the legal language, as well as the ability to speak and read English. Based on the language needs of the residents of Santa Clara County, the Court needs to translate website and other written information into plain English and provide that information to court users in languages other than English.

Program Partners:

Translation vendors; Interpreters, Administrative Office of the Courts Information Services Division; Department of Commerce

Program Plan: LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Identify vendor for translation into simple English	June 2002	Kimberly Henderson
Employ vendor to translate information into plain English	Pending designation of vendor	Contract Vendor
Identify vendor for Spanish and Vietnamese translation	To be determined	Kimberly Henderson
Employ vendor to translate information into Spanish and Vietnamese	To be determined	Contract Vendor
Convert to HTML	Ongoing	Superior Court I.S. Division
Hire bilingual Spanish-speaking driver for Mobile Unit	To be determined	Sheriff's Office
Develop a symbiotic partnership with AOC's I.S. Division to eliminate duplicate processing	Ongoing	Leigh Parsons
Enter into a contract with Language Line to provide interpreting services for the Self Help Center and the Mobile Van	To be determined	Roberta Stibbard

PROGRAM AREA 5: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING.

Program Description:

To effectively provide Self-Service Center Services through the use of community volunteers and court staff, comprehensive training is needed. Training needs to include three separate areas: (1) the volunteers; (2) court staff assigned to the Self-Service Center; and (3) all court personnel so they know where to refer self-represented litigants for services. Training for community members ("train the trainer" classes) is addressed in Program Area 6 - Community Outreach.

Program Partners:

Legal service providers, Senior Centers, Community Centers, Religious/Ethnic organizations, City of San Jose libraries, school district offices, area law schools, area paralegal schools.

Program Plan: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Contact San Jose libraries for space for classes	5/15/02	Leigh Parsons
Contact school district offices for space for classes	6/15/02	Liz Shivell
Recruit trainers	TBD	Leigh Parsons, Ann Jovet, Cmsr. Jimenez

PROGRAM AREA 6: COMMUNITY OUTREACH.

Program Description:

Community outreach as it relates to serving self-represented litigants is focused on acquainting the public with:

- The services of the Court and other human service providers;
- The availability of volunteer legal services;
- The Self-Service Center and website; and
- The Mobile Self-Service Unit.

By providing training and written information to community "experts," they can accurately educate people who visit them for other services. Some of the ways in which to "get the word out" to the public about the availability of services is to provide training 'in parcels' on a regular basis at strategic locations to serve the underrepresented; to provide "single page" instructions for processing of commonly used procedures; and to bring self-service opportunities to the public at their locations (other than use of the mobile unit) such as neighborhood centers, senior centers, drug treatment centers, etc. The curriculum for training community members about available services will include court information available on the web, in brochures, and as form packets. Regular, systematic training provided by the Court will ensure a high level of quality among the community trainers.

Program Partners:

Court's Community Outreach Committee; Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors; City of San Jose City Council; local public television; local ethnic and cultural organizations; local churches, synagogues, temples

Program Plan: **COMMUNITY OUTREACH.**

Task	*Deadline*	*Person/Org Responsible*
Identify community contacts	5/02	LSP's, SSC, Debra Hodges
Contact regional jurisdictions for materials to share	6/02	Leigh Parsons (or designee)
Develop comprehensive Public Service Announcement program in English and other languages for radio and television	6/02	Leigh Parsons (or designee)
Develop "Train the Trainer" curriculum	8/02	LSP's, SSC, Debra Hodges, Dept. Subject Area Experts
Contact newspapers and other advertisers; set up booth at flea market	9/02	Community Outreach Committee members
Pursue County funding from Board of Supervisors	8/02	Presiding Judge/CEO
Contact local churches, synagogues, temples	8/02	Leigh Parsons (or designee)
Contact local cultural and ethnic organizations	8/02	Leigh Parsons (or designee)
Begin "Train the Trainer" program	9/02	SSC, LSP's

Timeline	***Coordinated Information Resources***	***Enhancing Volunteer Services***	***Self-Service Center and Mobile Unit***	***Language Access***	***Staff Training***	***Community Outreach***
7/02	Hire staff to work in information booth	Contact Bar Association to solicit attorney assistance	SSC – workshops (and ongoing)			Identify Community Contacts
8/02	Create information booth in the lobby of the west side of the Hall of Justice with necessary furniture and equipment (telephone/ data lines, computer and cabling). Create binder of contacts, phone numbers, maps, forms and instructions to help provide information to court users.		Hire 2 attorneys: 1 dedicated to Small Claims assistance and 1 dedicated to the Self-Service Center	Identify vendor for plain English translation		Contact regional jurisdictions for materials to share Develop comprehensive program in English and other languages for radio and television

Timeline	***Coordinated Information Resources***	***Enhancing Volunteer Services***	***Self-Service Center and Mobile Unit***	***Language Access***	***Staff & Volunteer Training***	***Community Outreach***
7/02	Create an "Action Center" to provide "one-stop" post-proceeding information source.	Contact Program Partners to recruit volunteers	Move the Small Claims Advisor Program to the Self-Service Center Acquire Mobile Unit			Develop "Train the Trainer" curriculum
8/02	Coordinate information sharing among the Court, Probation, Dept. of Revenue, Dept. of Correction, and Dept. of Alcohol and Drugs to keep abreast of latest info needed by defendants to carry out court orders.	Establish a process for attorneys to participate in providing assistance to self-represented litigants through the Self-Service Center	Meet with legal service providers to discuss where they think the mobile unit is most needed, to share program materials and to discuss how they can assist in our efforts			Contact newspapers and other advertisers; set up booth at flea market Pursue county funding from Board of Supervisors Contact local churches, synagogues, temples, cultural and ethnic organizations

Timeline	***Coordinated Information Resources***	***Enhancing Volunteer Services***	***Self-Service Center and Mobile Unit***	***Language Access***	***Staff & Volunteer Training***	***Community Outreach***
9/02		Create training curriculum				Begin "Train the trainer" program
10/02	Create form packets					
11/02		Provide orientation for volunteers prior to training				
12/02		Begin volunteer training				
1/03	Migrate form packets to web					

Timeline	***Coordinated Information Resources***	***Enhancing Volunteer Services***	***Self-Service Center and Mobile Unit***	***Language Access***	***Staff & Volunteer Training***	***Community Outreach***
To Be Determined				Employ vendor to translate information into plain English Identify vendor for Spanish and Vietnamese translation Employ vendor(s) to translate information into Spanish and Vietnamese Hire bilingual Spanish-speaking driver for Mobile Unit	Contact school dist. offices for space for classes Contact San Jose libraries for space for classes Recruit Trainers	
Ongoing		Volunteer cultivation	Web-based interactive forms program enhancement	Convert to HTML Develop a partnership with AOC's IS Division to eliminate duplicate processing		Periodic "Train the Trainer" Programs held.

Existing Resources:

- Assistance of Program Partners previously identified
- Time and expertise of existing Court personnel
- Time and expertise of volunteers
- Existing court facilities and equipment for both service delivery and training
- External agencies' existing facilities and equipment
- Mobile Unit, funded by $80,000 from Trial Court Improvement Fund grant.
- Driver – Mobile Unit - $80K
- Translation services funded by grant money of $111,000. (The Court has also applied for an additional grant with the Federal Government in the amount of $224,000)
- Font software that supports the unique characters some languages require in conjunction with language translation software
- Training materials available from other jurisdictions
- Small Claims Advisor Program
    - Recruitment/Training of Small Claims Advisor
    - Participation of Small Claims Advisor in special training provided by AOC
    - Language Line for litigants who do not speak English
    - Reconfiguration of workstation in LG Clerk's Office to accommodate Small Claims Advisor
    - Computers, telephone, data links in LG Facility to accommodate Small Claims Advisor

Additional Resources Needed:

- Recruitment and hiring of a Volunteer Coordinator - $70K/yr
- Information booths with computer, data/phone line where volunteers will serve the public $15K (grant request in process)
- Photocopying – ongoing expense
- Interpreter/Language line - $50K/yr
- Photocopying brochures & forms packets - $10K/yr
- Paralegal(s) - $70K each/yr
- Equipment at Self-Service Center for training (laptop, projector, screen)
- Additional security for extended hours of operation

Evaluation:

The Court will design an ongoing evaluation process to effectively identify and document successes, necessary program modifications, and outcomes regarding the impact of self-represented litigant program services on both case processing and on the ability of users to effectively use the court. The evaluation process will include the use of surveys, focus groups, and other forms of input from legal services providers, judicial officers, court staff, and case processing analysis within the technological capability of the Court's case management systems. The Court will also evaluate the use of the Self-Service Center by tallying the numbers of individuals using the services. In addition, the Court will seek customer feedback about the quality and helpfulness of those services. Finally, the Court will monitor requests from other jurisdictions for assistance with its self-service and outreach efforts.

State Support:

The State can best provide for the assistance of self-represented litigants in the following ways:

- AOC's continued development of its self-help website (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/self-help) ensuring that court users receive accurate, consistent information.
- Provide grant funding for continued enhancement of individual courts' self-help website.
- Provide leadership and resource materials for individual courts.
- Implement periodic reviews of resources available for self-represented litigants.
  If the AOC continues to develop its self-help website (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/self-help) and San Mateo's web-based interactive forms program, the state and counties could efficiently use their resources;
- Use of the AOC Self-Help Website as a resource for forms and statewide info;
- Provide additional funding for training staff;
- Provide source materials for duplication re all operational divisions of the court;
- Provide a means of collaboration (statewide conferences for staff?) among multiple jurisdictions (possibly regional groups) to share source materials for duplication and training materials for staff and volunteers;

Unique Approaches:

Santa Clara has used several unique approaches in the design of its Self-Service Center Program. One approach is Santa Clara County's decision to hire a Volunteer Coordinator as a unique means of tapping the community's resources. Additionally, the Court has been able to use some remaining grant hours available from Legal Aid Society for volunteer attorneys at the Self-Service Center. Although not the first Mobile Unit in the State, the Court's Mobile Unit is exceptional in that it will have a satellite link that will allow 3 to 5 laptop workstations to access the web from the Unit, and it is ADA

accessible. Santa Clara's Self-Service Center is also at the leading edge of providing translation services on the website, self help center and mobile van.
Other unique approaches include the use of some remaining grant hours available from Legal Aid Society for "Train the Trainer" training; seeking and obtaining government/grant funding for the Family Law Information Center (FLIC), publishing informational brochures; and partnering with Santa Clara County's Training Division to use already available equipment.

Sustaining the Action Plan:

There are many ways in which the Court will sustain the Action Plan and thus the delivery of services to assist self-represented litigants. Some of those activities will include:

- Continuing court involvement in training the trainers is desirable so that court trainers can show new trainers how to access the Court's sites and show existing trainers about new features. Once the community trainers are trained they will be able to train themselves to a degree by accessing the Internet to see what information is currently available.
- Establishing a list of reliable, trained volunteers will help the Court more effectively reach out to the underrepresented citizens.
- Providing websites and web access that will ensure volunteers to provide accurate information.
  Reducing the use of hard copy forms packets as the same information will be available on the state's website, www.courtinfo.ca.gov/self-help.
  Consistently providing an excellent level of customer service with a strong volunteer base that is cultivated in the legal community and the community at large.
- Continuing to include language translation in contracts with the vendors that specifically addresses updates and revisions.
- Extending training to new employees and volunteers.
- Providing ongoing training that can be included as part of the annual Staff Development and Training Strategic Plan.
- Collaborating with the Social Services Department for outreach to the underrepresented.
- Collaborating with the County Board of Supervisors to publicize the self-service center services.
- Collaborating with County/City libraries to provide classes regarding simple court procedures to the public.
- Collaborating with the Valley Transit Agency (VTA) to provide advertising on its vehicles in use throughout the county.
- Collaborating with municipalities and government agencies to further develop the concept of the Self-Service Center.

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

Self-Service Center Project

SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANT ASSISTANCE ACTION PLAN

June 1, 2002