LEGAL PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES FOR SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

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LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF
OVERVIEW

• Self-Represented Litigants
• Program Challenges
• Building Partnerships
• Best Practices / Lessons Learned
• Program Ideas
• Discussion
SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

• SRLs – People representing themselves in a legal matter. Sometimes referred to as “pro se.”

• “More than 50 percent of all civil litigants and nearly 76 percent of parties in domestic relations cases are self-represented.” – Justice Crisis in Colorado, 2014.
SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

• Issues involved with the “Unauthorized Practice of Law.”

• Legal Information vs. Legal Advice
PROGRAM CHALLENGES

• Determining what kind of program you want to offer
• Anticipating what people want
• Finding presenters
• Getting people to come
• Measuring success
FINDING & WORKING WITH PARTNERS

• Are there existing programs that you can support?
• Vetting presenters
• Establishing an agreement
FINDING & WORKING WITH PARTNERS

• Bar Associations
• Legal Services
• Access to Justice Committees
• Other Service Providers
• City and Local Government
• Self-Help Groups in Courts
• Law School Faculty and Students
• Department of Corrections / Parole Officers
BEST PRACTICES

Planning stage –

• Who is your audience? What do they need? What do they want?

• Scope of program

• Establish agreement

• Make it clear that your programs are offering legal information not legal advice
BEST PRACTICES

• Communicate how you will communicate
• Advertise, advertise, advertise
• Advantages of registration
BEST PRACTICES

Week of:
• Touch base with presenter:
  • Directions, contact information
  • Inclement weather or other contingency plans
  • Last minute needs
  • A/V needs
BEST PRACTICES

Day of:
• Room and A/V set up
• Water for speakers
• Refreshments
• Greet people

• Remember it is supposed to be fun!
LESSONS LEARNED

• Make clear expectations with host
• You can do everything right and still no one shows
• Avoid conflicts with community events
RESOURCES

- Webjunction
- Programming Librarian
- State Library
- Networking with other librarians who provide programming
PROGRAMMING IDEAS

• Virtual Pro Se Clinic
• Estate and Probate Classes
• Legal Research Basics Classes / WestlawNext Classes
• Renter’s Rights Workshops
• Record Sealing Clinics
• Legal Resource Days
• CLE Classes
• Constitution Day
PROGRAMMING IDEAS

- Debt Collection Defense Clinics
- Civil and Procedural Classes
- Re-entry Clinics
- Family Law Series
- Unemployment Appeals
- Reference Hours at the Public Library / Training for Public Librarians
SERVICES

- Clinic Calendars
- Legal Aid Handout
- Learning Center / Research Guides / FAQs
- Video Tutorials
- Start Here Guides
DISCUSSION

What is your library doing?

What kind of service would you like to offer?

What lessons have you learned? What has worked well?
THANK YOU!

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