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| **New Fourth Judicial Branch Logo with Hennepin** |  |

**SELF-HELP**

**CENTERS**

**FAQs about Family Court Self-Help Center**

**services during the COVID-19 restrictions**

1. **Where to direct people for court information:**

In Hennepin County District Court call **(612) 348-6000** for any questions related to cases or access to court buildings. This number is also good for lots of questions, such as whether a case will be heard or scheduled to a future date, how to get a court record, where drop boxes are located, etc.

Up-to-date information about the how Covid-19 is impacting the courts can be found at: <http://www.mncourts.gov/Emergency.aspx>

The State Court Administrator, Jeff Shorba, has also launched a [new webpage](http://mncourts.gov/remote-hearings) to assist Minnesotans who must participate in remote hearings, and to provide information to members of the public who wish to access a remote hearing.

1. **What is the best way to refer self-represented litigants (SRLs) to the Family Court Self-Help Center (SHC) for assistance during this time?**

Direct callers to the Statewide Self-HelpCenterat (651) 435-6535 Monday – Friday 8:30 am – 4:00 pm to speak to someone. There is also a [Contact Us](http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Self-Help-Centers/Self-Help-Centers-Contact.aspx) form on the court’s website if they prefer to email their question. Some of our staff are actually assisting Statewide SHC with calls and emails. Statewide SHC can use language line for callers with language access needs. Additional information is available on the website about how to reach our individual [4th District SHC locations](http://www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp) by phone and email. However, customers do have to leave a voicemail, so that is why starting with the Statewide SHC is often better.

1. **Is Self-Help still reviewing forms for SRLs? If so, how?**

Yes. We are asking customers to email us their forms, so we can review them electronically while the public counters are closed. If someone mails in their forms or puts them in the drop box in the FJC lobby addressed to Self-Help, someone from court administration scans them and sends them to us. SRLs filing emergency custody and/or parenting time requests are given priority.

1. **What if someone files without having the forms reviewed?**

If someone files without having forms reviewed, court administration will send out a **Notice of Referral to Self-Help Center** form. It tells the person how to contact us to request a review. Filings can’t be rejected for lack of a review, but those who file without having forms reviewed

by us often make other mistakes which cause their filings to be rejected and/or a deficiency notice sent. Some SRLs are not aware of or do not understand the requirement to have forms reviewed, so it helps if they are notified of that requirement. More info about it is on the court’s website under the section for Hennepin County Self-Help Centers.

1. **What if customers do not have access to a computer or scanner to email their forms? Can they submit documents to be reviewed another way?**

If someone is filing forms that need to be reviewed and has technology limitations, please tell the customer to contact the Self-Help Center, so we can discuss their options with them directly and make arrangements for them to have forms reviewed in a timely manner. As a last resort, people can mail paper copies to Self-Help or leave them in the drop box in the Family Justice Center lobby addressed to Self-Help. Court Administration is helping to get those papers to our staff electronically.

1. **What if someone needs help filling out forms?**

We are strongly encouraging them to find a friend or family member to assist since we can’t do it in person. You can tell people to contact us and we can talk about options.

1. **Is Self-Help conducting assessments for court forms?**

Yes – both the Statewide Self-Help Center staff and our staff from the walk-in center are communicating with customers via telephone and email to direct SRLs to the types of forms that can be filed for various situations. If someone claims they have an emergency request, staff provide the “What if it’s an Emergency?” Handout and encourage legal advice, in addition to providing the necessary emergency forms via email as needed. We continue to make referrals to legal advice, which is also being provided remotely by our partners.

1. **Is Self-Help distributing forms packets to people by mail?**

No, not at this time. However, customers unable to print forms can contact the MN State Law Library and request that statewide forms be mailed to them. The best way for the customer to contact them is via email through the Ask-A-Librarian page the MN State Law Library’s website:

<https://mn.gov/law-library/ask-a-librarian/>

In the event the customer does not have email access, they can call The MN State Law Library and request to have the forms mailed to call them. If that is the case, instruct the customer to leave a voicemail at the following number: 651-297-7651. There is no fee at this time.

1. **What is happening with the VLN Family Law Legal Advice Clinic?**

Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN) has currently suspended all in-person legal advice clinics. The VLN client intake phone line remains open. They are taking calls during normal intake hours, making referrals and scheduling remote appointments with volunteers. Customers can be directed to call 612-752-6677 between 9:00 am to 1:00 pm Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday to be screened for eligibility and to sign up for phone advice services.They do not talk with an attorney the same day, but an appointment will be set if they are eligible. More information is available at: <https://www.vlnmn.org/>.