

Self-Represented Litigants (SRL)

Definition: Pro se: refers to persons who present their own cases in court without a lawyer; from the Latin meaning “on one’s own behalf.” Also referred to as “Self-Represented Litigants.”

Court Staff Cannot Give you Legal Advice

Does it seem like you can’t get helpful answers to your questions from court staff?

That’s because we can’t give recommendations or legal advice that would help one side of the case over the other.

Here is a resource that explains the difference between legal *information* and legal *advice*:

<http://www.txcourts.gov/media/1220087/legalinformationvslegaladviceguidelines.pdf>

Resources for SRLS

- www.texaslawhelp.org
- Montgomery County Law Library (936) 539-7976
 - Address: 301 N Thompson Street, Conroe, Tx 77301 Suite 105
 - www.mctx.org/departments/departments_l_p/law_library/index.php
- Texas Court Help webpage: www.texascourthelp.gov
- The Houston Lawyer Referral Service, <http://www.hlrs.org>, (713) 237-9429 or (800) 289-4577, can help you find a private attorney.
- PRO BONO CLINICS (Montgomery County Local Bar Association or The Woodlands Bar Association)

What Do I Do When I Come to Court on My Court Date?

Come to court on the date and time listed in the notice. Come into the courtroom—do not wait in the hallway. It is okay to come into the courtroom even if there are things already going on. Have a seat and wait for the judge to call your case. If it seems like you are waiting a long time, you can always ask the bailiff for an update.

How will my case be finished?

Agreed order.

If all parties have signed a final order, please file the Agreed Judgment with the District Clerks office. If you have not received notice from the clerk that the judgment has been signed within a week, please contact the court for status of your Order.

Trial. Once an answer has been filed into the case (please provide contact information: phone, email, and address in your answer), the court will issue a Docket Control Order outlining your deadlines and your Trial date. You must comply with all deadlines listed, and if you cannot come to an agreement, everyone must be present for trial.

Default judgment. If the other side has been served but has not responded after 30 days, then a default judgment can be filed (forms can be found at www.texaslawhelp.org). If you have been served, you should file a response to avoid having a default judgment taken against you.

Dismissal. If it has been more than 3 months since you filed your case and you have not filed documents to finalize the case, you will receive a notice that your case may be placed on our dismissed

for want of prosecution docket. If you receive a notice, please appear to court to speak with the judge about any issues you may have.

WHAT IS *EX PARTE* COMMUNICATION?

IT IS A VIOLATION OF THE **CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT** FOR THE JUDGE TO PARTICIPATE IN *EX PARTE* COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE ATTORNEYS OR LITIGANTS IN A LAWSUIT.

EX PARTE COMMUNICATION IS ANY COMMUNICATION WITH THE JUDGE OR HIS/HER **STAFF** ABOUT THE FACTS OF THE CASE WITH ONE PARTY WHEN THE OTHER PARTY IS NOT PRESENT OR INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNICATION.

THESE IMPROPER COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE ORAL, EITHER IN PERSON OR TELEPHONICALLY, OR IN WRITING BY LETTER OR EMAIL.

BASICALLY, THE JUDGE IS PROHIBITED FROM DISCUSSING THIS CASE OR GATHERING INFORMATION ON THIS CASE WITHOUT BOTH SIDES BEING PRESENT OR REPRESENTED.

THE COURT (**AND STAFF**) CANNOT SPEAK TO A PARTY BY ANY MEANS, INCLUDING PHONE CALLS, LETTERS OR EMAILS, CONCERNING THE FACTS OF A CASE.