

How Can I Help You Help Me?

Court personnel are here to help, and there are a few things you can do to help us help you.

When You Have A Scheduled Court Date

Before Coming to Court:

- When you file a pleading, you have to send a copy of that to the other party.
- The Clerk's Office will not automatically provide a copy of what you've filed to the judge. Therefore if the filing is very detailed you may want to provide the judge with a copy ahead of your hearing date. This is known as a "courtesy copy" and it must be clear that the document has been filed and sent to the other party.

When You Arrive at Court:

- Check in with the judge's clerk or coordinator sitting on either side of the judge's seat.
- Know your line number and tell the clerk or coordinator your name and line number.
- Listen for your name or your line number to be called and then step up to the bench.

When You Are Done with Your Court Date:

- You should receive a copy of whatever order is entered that day. Don't leave the courtroom without it.
- Keep all of your court orders, pleadings, and any relevant documents in the same place. We recommend putting everything in a folder and bringing that folder when you come to court.

When You Ask For Help

Know your goal:

- Be specific about the issue you would like to address before leaving the courthouse today.
- Focus the conversation on the issue you'd like to address. Note that it might not be possible to address that issue today, but court personnel will try their best to help you.
- If needed, Court personnel will ask you specific questions to help you reach your goal.

Know your audience:

- Not every person who works at the courthouse knows how to answer every question.
- When speaking to court personnel, tell them your goal and ask if that is something they can help you with. If they can't, ask if they know who can.
- Most people who work in the courthouse cannot give you legal advice; meaning they cannot strategize with you, evaluate your likelihood of success, or present your argument to the judge. Some, not all, court personnel can provide legal information; meaning they can tell you what you *can* do, not what you *should* do. Others can only answer questions about court procedures.

DISCLAIMER: This guide serves as a court-process navigation tool. It does not contain legal advice. Litigants are encouraged to consult an attorney if possible and the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act (IMDMA) at 750 ILCS 5/ *et seq.* for more information. Note that the IMDMA and all accompanying statutes have been interpreted and explained by the Illinois Appellate Court and the Supreme Court of Illinois; and their decisions are equally as binding on the trial court as the statute itself. To research and review those cases via a legal research database commonly used by judges and attorneys, please visit any of the Circuit Court of Cook County's Law Libraries (e.g. 29th floor of the Daley Center).