

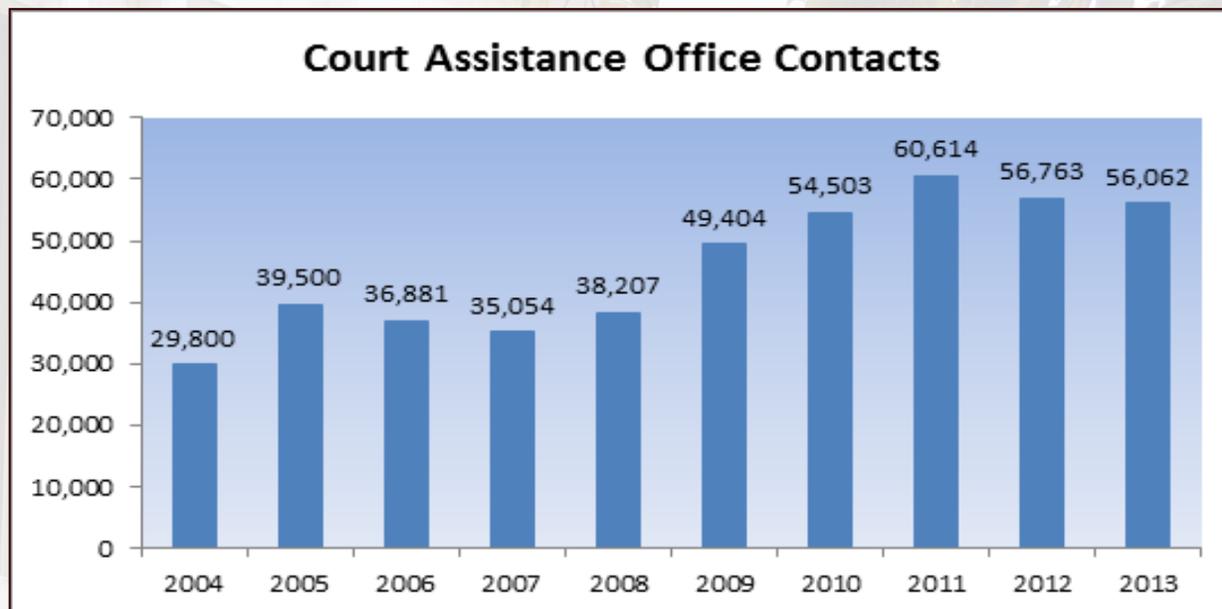


Court Assistance Office

Providing Services and Resources to Improve Accessibility to the Courts

The demand for court assistance services remained high at over 50,000 requests for services this year. Family law issues continue to be the primary area of need for services with over 75% of all requests involving divorce, custody, or child support. Court assistance continues to be essential to those of limited means; over half of the people who visit the office for services in person are at or below the poverty level.

Website demand increased with over 180,000 visitors last year and approximately 5.75 million hits to the court assistance site. The most frequently visited pages were those that provide court forms on family law and informational pamphlets on landlord/tenant issues.



Beyond court forms, court assistance officers (CAO) provide legal information and information on court procedures. The help provided by the Court Assistance Office decreases the demand on other court offices, and helps connect people to appropriate resources in one visit.

Services Expanded to Improve Accessibility and Available Resources

- **3rd District Gets New District-wide Attorney Court Assistance Officer:** In January the 3rd Judicial District became the fourth district to provide district-wide services. With this addition, there are now five attorneys in the state serving in the role of court assistance officers. The attorney CAO serves as a resource to other CAOs and district court clerks in determining the level of assistance allowed to litigants and identifying all available resources for litigants. The attorney has also increased the collaboration of services throughout the district and is working on improvements to pre-filing workshops and delivery of services.

***Report to Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter
and the 2nd Regular Session of the 62nd Idaho Legislature***

- **Attorney Workshops Expand to the 5th District:** The 5th Judicial District is now the third district to offer attorney workshops. Attorneys volunteer to staff the workshop, and the legal information that they provide is invaluable to attendees. One of the most common issues that attorneys address at the workshops are the complexities involved with enforcing custody orders. For example, one attendee was able to get guidance on resolving paternity issues that were getting in the way of obtaining medical insurance for a child. In the 7th District, the assistance and information that attorneys provided during the workshops has been essential in aiding several litigants to resolve complex legal issues to finalize their divorce. In addition, they have provided legal information in subject matters beyond those covered by the Court Assistance Office such as probate and contract issues.

Have a Legal Question?
Join us for a **FREE**
Attorney Workshop

The 2nd Wednesday of each month
at 2:00 pm
in Courtroom 108

Co-Sponsored by Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program
Attorneys will not be representing you and are not bound by discussion topics.

- Get Your Questions Answered by Volunteer Attorneys!
- Ask Questions of Legal Experts
- Find out answers to common questions

- **New Pre-filing Family Law Workshops in the 1st and 5th Districts:** The 1st and the 5th Judicial Districts are now offering family law workshops that help people with their court forms before they are filed with the court. What originally began as a pilot project has now expanded to five districts due to its effectiveness in helping large numbers of people with the limited resources available. The 5th District reports that in the group setting people feel encouraged to ask questions as they see others in similar situations. In addition, common pitfalls are easier to address when attendees share their personal experiences from having ignored such cautionary pitfalls.



- **Plain Language Efforts Begin:** In an effort to increase accessibility of information on the court assistance website considerable efforts have been made to display information using plain language. Plain language involves simplifying legal terms into words that can easily be understood. In addition, some court assistance officers have taken plain language training which teaches methods of displaying information in a visual manner that makes it more readable. These and other efforts continue to improve the accessibility of the courts for Idahoans.

- **Court Assistance Collaborates on Pilot Project:** The Court Assistance Office collaborated with the Supreme Court on implementation of the Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure that are being piloted in the 4th Judicial District. Changes were made to over 100 forms and instructions for compliance with the new rules, and instructions were developed for new court forms. The forms were added to the court assistance website, and the district's CAOs are participating in a focus group evaluation of the pilot rules.

