



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

Providing Access to Court Services (PACS)
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Providing Access to Court Services (PACS)

2015-2016

Phoenix, Arizona

Arizona's 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Federal
Congressional Districts

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Congressional District(s): 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th
State Legislative District(s): 12th, 15th, 16th, 17th,
18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th,
27th, 28th, 29th, 30th

Service Area by County/City: Maricopa County

Project Federal Share: \$112,158.00

Project Local Match: \$182,988.00

Community Volunteers Recruited: 34 (Proj.)

Volunteer Hours Served: 12,225 (Proj.)

Value of Volunteer Hours: \$275,307.00

*2013 Independent Sector Rate for the Value of a Volunteer Hour in
Arizona is \$22.52

Program Activities

The members of PACS are interacting with Court customers every day in the Maricopa County Superior Court complex. They provide information at the entry to the Court building to anyone who needs help finding something in the Court or navigating a Court process. PACS members assist Court customers who are completing and filing petitions for protective orders and paperwork involving child custody and support issues.

Because of the PACS members, Court customers receive one-on-one help on a consistent basis at all steps of a Court process, from entering the building, to accessing information, to filing and completing a Court case. Additionally, the program is recruiting subject matter experts and attorneys to provide informational classes and outreach to the community. Making people aware that the Court can be accessed without the expense of an attorney is an integral part of the program.

Program Impact

The program is in its first year. Already a member who speaks Arabic helped an Arabic-only speaker that would not have been able to get same-day assistance in the court. Before the program, the information desk at the court could only be staffed for a few hours a day. Now a PACS member is there at all times, as well as at a second location near the Law Library Resource Center. These additions have already saved hundreds of customers' time and prevented frustration in navigating the court.

Community Need

Many of this State's residents, including those that need it most, lack meaningful access to justice. Individuals who use the court to obtain an order of protection, get help with child custody or support, or help a vulnerable adult, often cannot afford an attorney. The Maricopa County Superior Court Law Library Resource Center distributed over 40,000 family law forms in 2015. Over the last 15 years, there has been a 275% increase in protective order filings in the Court. Both statistics show the urgent community need for legal information assistance. Customers often have to wait at the Law Library Resource Center for 15 to 20 minutes before staff can assist them. For people who have to take time from work, travel to the Court, and often bring their children, spending less time to get heard is keenly important. Serving these communities is a priority of the Court.



Providing Access to Court Services (PACS)

Mission

The Judicial Branch of Maricopa County is dedicated to providing a safe, fair and impartial forum for resolving disputes, enhancing access to our services, and providing innovative, evidence based programs that improve the safety of our community and ensure the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch.

Vision

The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County is committed to pursuing excellence and the principles inherent in the rule of law.....Every person, every day, every time!

History

The Maricopa County Superior Court is the fourth largest regional court system in the nation, including a downtown and four regional court complexes. The Court, which is comprised of 98 judges and 61 commissioners, is nationally recognized as an innovative and progressive Court. Four of the Court locations have a Self-Service Center and all have a Protective Order Center. The Self-Service Centers offer court forms, instructions, and information to serve the community that is representing themselves in civil, probate, juvenile, family, or justice court matters. The Court established the Self-Service Center in the mid-1990s and was an innovator in creating forms for self-represented customers. The Self-Service Center, now part of the Law Library Resource Center, has continued to evolve to meet the growing needs of Court patrons.

Other Information

The goals of the program are ambitious. With the help of the PACS members funded through the AmeriCorps grant, more volunteers will be recruited to further help with outreach and community service.

With the combined efforts of staff, PACS and community volunteers, the annual goal is to distribute 5,000 domestic violence handouts to victims in need; to assist over 13,000 customers with legal forms of all kinds to be heard in the Superior Court; to escort over 500 customers to the correct court area; and to help conduct workshops for members of the public on a variety of forms and legal information. The challenge is to do all of this while also decreasing wait time for customers, who often need to get back to work or to pick up children from school.

These customers do not just need forms, however. They also need assistance in understanding the forms and completing them correctly. Many require one-on-one assistance to complete forms so that they will not be rejected. Rejection of a form can cause delay in receiving a protective order or otherwise being heard by the Court. It is this service that the program will be instrumental in providing. Additionally, a similar program in California has found that the impact on the program participants results in important changes. Talking about the program there, Judge Harvey Silberman noted that "the...program is an important link between our young people and our governmental systems."

