Resources for Self-Represented Litigants in the Maryland Courts
Fiscal Year 2021

ACCESS TO JUSTICE
CONFERENCE OF MARYLAND COURT LAW LIBRARY DIRECTORS
JUVENILE AND FAMILY SERVICES
THURGOOD MARSHALL STATE LAW LIBRARY
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Introduction

For nearly 30 years, the Maryland Judiciary has offered programs and services to help address the needs of Marylanders who use the courts without counsel. Access to high-quality, free legal help is vital to ensuring equal access to justice, and the Maryland Judiciary offers help in many formats. These programs are critically important to advancing the Judiciary’s mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all.

Legal Information

The Judiciary makes legal information available in a variety of formats. Live webinars are offered monthly on many different topics, including rent court for landlords and tenants, and family law topics such as divorce and child custody. Litigants can view online videos that are packaged with tip sheets to make complex information easy to understand. Online form finder pages pose plain language questions to help litigants find and select their correct court form. Litigants may access law library services in person and online. The Maryland Court Help app brings these resources together in one place, in English, Spanish, and other languages.

Legal Advice

Maryland’s statewide network of court help centers offers free legal advice and information to self-represented litigants with civil legal problems. Services are available in person and remotely by phone, live chat, videoconferencing, and email. In fiscal year 2021, Maryland Court Help Centers provided more than 147,000 instances of service statewide. Demand for remote services increased by more than 23%.

Legal Representation

The Judiciary funds programs operated by nonprofit legal service organizations which provide representation to litigants in a variety of high-stakes civil matters. The Judicare program provides full representation to litigants involved in contested custody and other family law matters. Day-of-court programs provide limited scope representation in landlord-tenant and consumer matters.
Outreach and Program Promotion

While many court users benefit from resources for self-represented litigants, others are not aware that these programs exist. Over the past five years, staff have focused on program promotion, outreach, and advertising to increase the number of litigants who use these vital services.

Rebranding

In fiscal year 2020, resources were unified under one umbrella, called Maryland Court Help. Consistent branding helps build program credibility and reduces barriers to program access.

A new web toolkit helps litigants access services online. The landing page contains information about Maryland Court Help programs that may be helpful.

Figure 1. Maryland Court Help Landing Page
In the spring of 2021, signs were installed at District Court Help Centers throughout the state, featuring the Maryland Court Help branding.

Outreach and Program Promotion

Throughout the pandemic, many Marylanders struggled to make rent and mortgage payments. The Judiciary focused outreach and advertising efforts on landlord-tenant and foreclosure matters in fiscal year 2021. Print and online advertisements, radio campaigns, and transit advertising directed litigants to seek legal help early and referred litigants to remote services.

Campaigns targeted litigants throughout the state. Print and online advertisements ran in Western Maryland in the Hagerstown Herald-Mail, and online ads in the Baltimore Sun reached litigants throughout central Maryland.

In the fall of 2020, ads were placed inside buses and at bus stops in Baltimore City. This campaign promoted Maryland Court Help Centers and focused on housing issues.
In addition to print and online advertising, the Judiciary ran radio advertisements on a variety of different stations, including 98 Rock, WBAL news radio, the Ravens Radio Network, Urban Contemporary station WPGC 95.5, and Spanish radio station El Zol.

Figure 4. Bus Stop Advertisement - Baltimore City - Fiscal Year 2021

In fiscal year 2021, the Judiciary also began using social media to promote programs. Regular tweets encouraged self-represented litigants to access webinars, Maryland Court Help webpages, videos, and the Maryland Court Help app.

Figure 5. Social Media - Twitter

Staff engaged in outreach with local partners, including schools. The monthly Anne Arundel County Public Schools’ newsletters featured content in English and Spanish.

Figure 6. Maryland Court Help Promo - Spanish

¿Sabía? Puede hablar con un abogado de forma gratuita en un Centro de Ayuda de Los Tribunales de Maryland. Obtenga ayuda con asuntos civiles que incluyen divorcio, custodia de menores, arrendador-inquilino, ejecución hipotecaria y más.

Llame al 410 460-1392 o visite www.mdcourts.gov/helpcenter

8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. lunes - viernes
The Judiciary also took advantage of free 30-second ad spots which play on Maryland’s Motor Vehicle Network via TV monitors at locations statewide. Ads promote the Maryland Court Help Video Library, Maryland Court Help Centers, and language services.

Outreach and advertising efforts continue. In the coming year, digital ads will run on Google, YouTube, and Spotify. Additional transit campaigns are planned in Montgomery County. Billboard advertisements will run in more rural areas throughout Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore.

COVID-19 Innovations

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges to program staff. Prior to March 2020, most programs relied on in person interactions. In the early days of the pandemic, staff worked through technology challenges, adjusted physical workspaces, and reevaluated service delivery methods. Through these changes, programs improved and became easier to use, more accessible, and more user-friendly.

Knowledge Base

In the summer of 2020, Maryland Court Help Centers began using knowledge base software to help centralize important information for staff. Written by lawyers for lawyers, knowledge base articles include citations to statutes and case law, forms, practice tips, and referral sources. There are many benefits to using a staff knowledge base including providing more consistent advice to litigants, keeping program information in one place, increasing the speed of service delivery, and improving productivity. The knowledge base is particularly useful to remote services attorneys who can quickly and easily access current information about rental assistance resources in all 24 Maryland jurisdictions. Program supervisors used the knowledge base to help onboard and train new staff.

Maryland Justice Passport

With most programs operating remotely in fiscal year 2021, there was a renewed focus on improving program collaboration to aid litigants without counsel, particularly in high-volume civil matters, such as housing and consumer cases. The Maryland Justice Passport is a digital portfolio aimed at helping litigants get organized, find legal help, and understand what steps they can take to advance their legal objectives.
In fiscal year 2021, Maryland Court Help Center attorneys began using the Maryland Justice Passport to make referrals to nonprofit legal services providers and other organizations, such as consumer credit counseling. Attorneys help litigants scan and input case information into the Maryland Justice Passport, which makes it easier for receiving organizations to understand why litigants were referred and what steps they need to take next to advance their legal objectives.

Best Practices

In fiscal year 2021, the Judiciary published *Best Practices for Maryland Court Help Centers*. The guide contains a broad range of topics that courts should consider when offering court-based help centers in Maryland. It describes how Maryland Court Help Centers operate, innovate, implement strategies, and generate ideas for the future.

**Topics include:**
- Staff Qualifications, Training, and Supervision
- Scope of Service
- Accessibility
- Facilities and Security
- Ethics
- Data Collection and Reporting
- Outreach, Marketing, and Advertising

The guide is advisory and informational, and is not binding on providers or court staff. Access Best Practices for Maryland Court Help Centers online at [https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/accesstojustice/pdfs/bestpracticesmdcourthelpcenters.pdf](https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/accesstojustice/pdfs/bestpracticesmdcourthelpcenters.pdf).
Maryland Court Help Centers

Maryland Court Help Centers assist self-represented litigants by providing legal advice, information, help with forms, and referrals to legal services providers and the private bar. In fiscal year 2021, Maryland Court Help Centers provided more than 147,000 instances of service to litigants without counsel.

In person help is available in the following locations:

**District Court Help Centers (DCHCs)**

**Family Court Help Centers (FCHCs)**
All Maryland counties and Baltimore City.

**Maryland Court Help Center – All Civil**
Circuit Court for Frederick County.

Remote services are offered by telephone, live chat, videoconferencing, and email. In fiscal year 2021, demand was greatest for telephone service. Staff also provided 342 instances of service via videoconferencing.

Figure 9. Maryland Court Help Centers - Service Delivery
Fiscal Year 2021
Remote Services

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic fueled demand for remote services in fiscal year 2021. Staff provided 18,507 more instances of service than in the previous year, an increase of 23%.

In fiscal year 2021, more than 40% of remote services involved family law matters, including divorce, child custody, child support, and visitation. Maryland Court Help Center attorneys fielded many questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on custody and visitation orders.

Figure 10. Remote Service - Fiscal Year 2012 to Fiscal Year 2021

Figure 11. Remote Services - Case Types - Fiscal Year 2021
The next greatest demand area was for housing matters. Maryland Court Help Centers assist unrepresented landlords and tenants. Staff do not assist businesses such as sole proprietorships, corporations, or LLCs. In fiscal year 2021, remote services attorneys provided more than 21,000 instances of service in landlord and tenant disputes, including Failure to Pay Rent, Tenant Holding Over, Breach of Lease, and Wrongful Detainer. Walk-in District Court Help Centers assisted an additional 4,000 self-represented litigants with housing matters in fiscal year 2021.

In fiscal year 2021, Maryland Court Help Center staff provided more than 5,400 instances of service to Baltimore City landlords and tenants.

Figure 12. Housing - Party Type - All Services Fiscal Year 2021

Figure 13. Housing - County - All Services - Fiscal Year 2021
While phone and chat users report zip codes from all over the country, the greatest was in Maryland. The darker red areas indicate a higher concentration of users.

The top four reported zip codes are in Glen Burnie, Pasadena, Owings Mills, and Baltimore City’s Park Heights neighborhood.
About two-thirds of remote services users identify as female.

Chat users report a slightly higher level of education than phone users.

Figure 16. Remote Services - Gender - Fiscal Year 2021

Figure 17. Remote Services - Education - Fiscal Year 2021
Most Maryland Court Help Center users report an annual household income below the Maryland median income, which was $95,572 in 2019. In fiscal year 2021, 87% of phone users and 88% of chat users reported an annual household income below $99,999.

Remote services users report high levels of satisfaction with Maryland Court Help Center services.

“The people working at this chat center have always been extremely nice and helpful as I try to understand my case and move it along. Cannot speak highly enough of the convenience and quality of service from these folks!!”
- Remote Services User

1 https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/economy/html/income.html
District Court Help Centers

District Court Help Centers assist unrepresented litigants with high-volume, civil matters including landlord-tenant matters, small and large claims, expungement of criminal records, and peace and protective orders.

In fiscal year 2021, there were seven locations in Baltimore City, Cambridge, Catonsville, Glen Burnie, Hagerstown, Salisbury, and Upper Marlboro.2

A web-based interactive map helps litigants find a location that meets their needs.

![Figure 19. Maryland Court Help Center Interactive Map](image)

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impacted operations in fiscal year 2021. While access to walk-in locations was restricted from December 2020 to March 2021, attorneys provided legal help remotely by telephone and live chat through the remote services center. Staff also spent time developing new webinar topics and drafted articles for the attorney knowledge base. Because of location closures, instances of walk-in service declined in fiscal year 2021.

2 The Maryland Court Help Center in Frederick assists with a full range of civil case types handled by both Circuit and District Courts: https://mdcourts.gov/helpcenter/inperson/frederick
At the District Court Help Centers, the greatest demand for assistance was with housing matters, including general landlord and tenant disputes, Failure to Pay Rent, Tenant Holding Over, Breach of Lease, and Wrongful Detainer. The next greatest demand area was for small and large claims.

*District Court Help Centers were closed for part of the year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.*

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**Figure 20. District Court Help Centers - Instances of Service**  
*Fiscal Year 2011 to Fiscal Year 2021*

**Figure 21. District Court Help Centers - Case Types by Location - Fiscal Year 2021**
In fiscal year 2021, demand was greatest for walk-in assistance at the Baltimore City location.

Litigants reported a slightly lower annual household income in fiscal year 2021. Seventy-eight percent of District Court Help Center users reported an annual household income of less than $49,999.
Fifty-nine percent of District Court Help Center users identify as female.

![Figure 24. District Court Help Centers - Gender Fiscal Year 2021](image1)

Sixty-one percent of District Court Help Center users identify as Black or African American, 19% identify as white, non-Hispanic, and 7% as Hispanic.

![Figure 25. District Court Help Centers - Race Fiscal Year 2021](image2)

Most District Court Help Center users are English speakers. The next most prevalent language is Spanish.

![Figure 26. District Court Help Centers - Language Fiscal Year 2021](image3)
Family Court Help Centers

Family law assistance is available to litigants without counsel in every jurisdiction in Maryland. Family Court Help Centers are staffed in many ways. In some jurisdictions, litigants meet with an attorney or paralegal for guidance on court forms and legal procedures. In others, courts contract with private attorneys or legal services providers to provide help to self-represented litigants.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impacted Family Court Help Centers in fiscal year 2021. With access to the courts reduced, the number of people who received help center services declined. In fiscal year 2021, Family Court Help Centers provided 37,995 instances of service.

While all courts resumed help center services in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021, many centers did not resume full in person, "walk-in" services until late in the third quarter.

As walk-in programs reopened, demand for service increased in Baltimore City, Charles, Frederick, Harford, and Montgomery Counties.
Eighty-four percent of Family Court Help Center users are English speakers. The next most common language is Spanish.

In fiscal year 2021, some programs began requiring litigants to schedule an appointment for service. Several jurisdictions used appointment-setting software, while family services coordinators took on scheduling duties in other locations. Many programs report that appointments have improved program efficiency.

Beginning in 2019, the Administrative Office of the Court’s Juvenile and Family Services unit launched a study to evaluate Family Court Help Centers. The study expanded statewide in fiscal year 2021. Litigants voluntarily provided contact information and received a follow-up survey via email two days later. Nearly 1,800 litigants responded.

![Figure 29. Family Court Help Centers - Language - Fiscal Year 2021](image_url)

![Figure 30. Family Court Help Centers - Survey Data - Fiscal Year 2021](image_url)
Nearly all litigants reported feeling that the staff treated them with respect. Ninety-three percent reported that the staff listened to what they had to say. Eighty-three percent reported that they knew what to do next and 86% reported that all their concerns were addressed.

“I was completely clueless as to what I was supposed to do for a contested divorce. Your self-help department was absolutely amazing. I felt so lucky that that service was available.”

- Family Court Help Center User

“Very thorough and wise counsel on how to prepare myself for court...”

- Family Court Help Center User
Day-of-Court Programs

The Administrative Office of the Courts provides grants to nonprofit legal services providers who represent litigants in high-volume civil case types, such as consumer and landlord and tenant matters.

Figure 31. Pro Bono Resource Center staff assist consumers in the law library at the District Court in Baltimore City

The Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day Program (TVLD) connects tenants with volunteer attorneys who help them identify legal issues such as improper licensing, incorrect amount of rent claimed, and housing conditions that impact life, health, or safety. This program is operated by the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (PBRC).

Figure 32. TVLD - Legal Issues Identified - Fiscal Year 2021
In fiscal year 2021, TVLD represented 197 tenants in Failure to Pay Rent Cases on 80 days in the District Court for Baltimore City. Unrepresented landlords who need legal help are referred to the District Court Help Center in Baltimore City.

Most tenants receiving assistance reported that they had lived in their homes for more than one year. 23% of tenants reported that they had lived in their home for more than four years. Tenants served via the TVLD reported 199 children who were at risk of eviction.

The Consumer Protection Program (CPP) provides day-of-court representation to litigants involved in consumer debt collection cases. This program operates in Baltimore City and Prince George’s County. Operated by PBRC and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyer’s Service (MVLS), this program represented 523 consumers in fiscal year 2021.

Most litigants served via the CPP report a very low income. In fiscal year 2021, 60% of consumers assisted reported an annual household income of less than $29,999. Many are collection-proof. Nearly 60% are female, and 84% report that they are Black or African American.

“Ms. W left her apartment due to domestic violence and was sued by her former landlord. MVLS staff negotiated a settlement agreement with plaintiff’s counsel, reducing her responsibility by over $2,000.”

- FY21 CPP Grant Report
Judicare

The Judicare program provides full representation to litigants involved in contested custody and other family law matters. The Judiciary funds the program via a grant to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC). Funds are sub-granted to nonprofit legal services organizations that connect litigants with counsel. In fiscal year 2021, Judicare program funds were sub-granted to seven organizations:

- Allegany Law Foundation
- Community Legal Services of Prince George’s County
- Harford County Bar Foundation
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
- Mid-Shore Pro Bono
- Montgomery County Bar Foundation
- Women’s Law Center

Grantee organizations recruit, train, and support experienced family practitioners from the private bar. The program provides a $100 per hour stipend for up to 30 hours of full representation in family law matters.

In fiscal year 2021, 155 attorneys provided more than 13,500 hours of legal services to litigants who could not afford counsel. The program opened 642 new cases and closed 607 cases. Of the closed cases, 74% received representation through litigation.

The most common benefit achieved for the client was obtaining or maintaining custody.
The Judicare program tracks the economic impact of services provided. In fiscal year 2021, beneficiaries of the Judicare program received $1,239,972 in financial benefits alone. This figure represents alimony, child support, and marital property awarded or modified to the benefit of clients.

Intermittent reductions in court operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in hearing delays in many family law matters. Delays increased the average length that a Judicare case remained open by 72 days compared to fiscal year 2019.
Law Libraries

Maryland’s network of court law libraries provides access to legal information, forms, educational programs, and the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) case management system. Law librarians provide help with civil and criminal legal questions and help fill in gaps where limited resources exist. Professional law librarians provide guides, programming, and services aimed at non-lawyer litigants.

There are staffed law libraries in the following circuit court locations:

- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Carroll County
- Howard County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George’s County

The Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD) brings together directors of the seven staffed circuit court libraries and the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library to discuss advancing access to justice through education and the provision of legal information to the public. CMCLLD members meet regularly to exchange ideas on law library operations and programming.

Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Home to one of the state’s largest collections of legal and government information, the State Law Library is staffed by 17 full-time employees. These individuals aid self-represented litigants, attorneys, and the Judiciary in-person and by phone and email.

People’s Law Library

The People’s Law Library (PLL) is a legal information website managed by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library. PLL provides articles written in plain language by legal services organizations, pro bono attorneys, and the academic community. Articles focus on case types that are frequently handled in Maryland state courts.

In fiscal year 2021, court-based staffed law libraries provided more than 35,500 instances of service. Throughout 2020 and 2021, most circuit court law libraries were unable to provide walk-in services while the public health emergency continued.
Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, services were offered in-person, and remotely by phone and email.

In fiscal year 2021, the number of in-person services decreased from 32,163 to 11,016 but remote services increased from 17,280 to 24,298. Prior to March 2020, email accounted for only half of the State Law Library’s reference activity. In fiscal year 2021, email comprised more than 70% of reference activity. Remote reference activity now accounts for more than 90% of total activity.

Law libraries use many formats to connect the public and attorneys with legal information, including web-based information resources, such as the People’s Law Library, database access, digital materials, and traditional print materials. Library staff guide patrons to the materials that work best for their needs. The greatest demand is for reference services.
Libraries provide equal access to materials that may be unavailable to certain groups due to paywalls or subscription fees. These resources include Westlaw Edge, LexisNexis, HeinOnline, PACER, and more. Libraries also subscribe to legal texts for non-lawyers.

Law libraries provide information on unique subject areas including business law, traffic, wills, trusts, and estates. When litigants need legal advice, librarians make referrals to court programs and services, including Maryland Court Help Centers and Lawyer in the Library programs, which provide free legal advice to litigants without counsel.

Law libraries are a resource for the judiciary, the legal community, and the public. The public accounted for 77% of law library assistance in fiscal year 2021.

Maryland court law libraries use technology to connect people to legal information and provide technical assistance to those who need it. Technical assistance includes helping litigants navigate websites and legal databases, upload and download documents, scan and print documents, and locate online resources.

Law libraries assist members of the public and attorneys with MDEC. Despite COVID restrictions, there was an increase in demand for public assistance with MDEC in fiscal year 2021.
In fiscal year 2021, the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library had the largest single-year increase in reference activity at the State Law Library, with more than 13,600 total interactions. This is an increase of nearly 3,000 over fiscal year 2020.

In 2020, Catherine McGuire of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library and Joan Bellistri of the Anne Arundel County Public Law Library presented Law on the Frontlines, a training on legal reference services for public library staff.

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Law on the Frontlines
Resources for Public Library Reference

Catherine McGuire, MSLS
Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Reena Shah, JD
Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Joan Bellistri, MLS
Anne Arundel County Public Law Library

Developed through a partnership of the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors and the Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Figure 45. Law Libraries - Law on the Frontlines Program
Fiscal Year 2021

In 2020, Catherine McGuire of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library and Joan Bellistri of the Anne Arundel County Public Law Library presented Law on the Frontlines, a training on legal reference services for public library staff.
Virtual sessions were hosted by the Montgomery County Public Library, and the full-length program was presented at the Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Conference. The training covered a variety of topics including landlord and tenant, family law, domestic violence, consumer, public benefits, and life planning.

In fiscal year 2021, the Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library partnered with the Rockville branch of Montgomery County Public Libraries, local volunteer attorneys, and the court’s Family Court Help Center attorneys to present “Everyday Law” programs. These programs provided free information and resources for the public.

Topics included estate planning, elder law, family law, immigration, and guardianship. Sessions were offered virtually, via videoconferencing. More than 80 individuals participated in the programs.

The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library partnered with the Anne Arundel Public Library to promote virtual Lawyer in the Library programs. Library staff also developed a virtual reference desk for quick remote access to library services. The page includes online information including law library FAQ pages and referrals to programs that offer legal help.

The Howard County Circuit Court Law Library & Legal Resource Center connects self-represented litigants with legal advice through their Civil Law Center, Family Law Assistance Program, and a videoconferencing kiosk which connects visitors with an attorney at the Maryland Court Help Center.

Videoconferencing is available for all civil case types and helps fill in the gaps when in-person programs are not operating.
People’s Law Library

People’s Law Library (PLL) is a legal information and self-help website maintained by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, providing information on state and federal laws that impact Marylanders and their families.

Information is organized by topic such as housing, family law, domestic violence, consumer law, and state and federal benefit programs.
PLL connects Marylanders who need legal advice or assistance to service providers through a directory of legal service organizations and a calendar of events for the public.

In fiscal year 2021, the number of total users and pageviews increased. The number of users increased by 23%, topping 2 million for the first time.

![Figure 49. PLL - Total Users - Fiscal Year 2019 to Fiscal Year 2021](image)

Page views grew by 27% to 3.9 million views.

![Figure 50. PLL - Total Pageviews - Fiscal Year 2019 to Fiscal Year 2021](image)

Sixty-eight percent of users accessed PLL via mobile phone. The number of users who access the site via desktop device decreased.
The “How do I...?” court procedure articles were reviewed, reorganized, edited, and republished in fiscal year 2021 to prioritize content frequently handled by self-represented litigants in Maryland. Procedural articles address a wide range of topics, including how to start a case, how to respond if served with a case, how to prepare for court, discovery, evidence, legal research, and how to find legal assistance.

In fiscal year 2021, PLL published seven new articles, including:

- Spousal Elective Share
- Baltimore City Rental Dwelling License Law
- Unemployment Insurance Benefit Series
- Frequently Asked Questions about Utilities for Landlords and Tenants
- Contesting a Will (Caveat Proceeding)
- Parenting Coordination
- Frequently Asked Questions – Deeds

PLL made enhancements to increase accessibility in fiscal year 2021. One upgrade improved how screen readers view content on PLL.
Another new feature allows users to dynamically adjust text size. This upgrade is particularly useful for individuals who use the website on mobile devices.

PLL has articles in English, Spanish, French, Korean, and Chinese (Mandarin/Simplified). Of the more than 600 English language resources, 44% are available in Spanish. The site’s top 20 pages and all domestic violence articles are available in the Judiciary’s priority languages.
Webinars

The Judiciary offers free online classes, taught by Maryland Court Help Center attorneys, on a variety of legal topics. Live classes are offered every month on *Filing for Divorce in Maryland* and *Child Custody*.

Topics are also recorded and offered on-demand.

On-demand topics include:

- Responding to a Complaint for Divorce in Maryland
- Facing Eviction for Failure to Pay Rent?
- Filing a Failure to Pay Rent Case?
- Filing for Expungement in Maryland
- How to Collect Your District Court Judgment
- Filing Your Case in the District Court of Maryland

In fiscal year 2021, staff developed a new webinar, called *Rent Debt and the Coronavirus*. This topic, for both landlords and tenants, focused on new laws and programs that impact how rent and fees are calculated.

“I’m thankful for this type of webinar. I appreciate the presenter taking the time to go over the form and speaking slowly and clearly.”

- Webinar Participant
Form Finders

Maryland offers many forms to assist individuals who need to file court papers without the assistance of counsel. Web-based form finder tools help litigants identify which forms they need to file.

**District Court Form Finder**

This tool assists individuals with District Court forms, covering a variety of different matters including landlord-tenant, replevin, detinue, peace and protective orders, and small claims. In fiscal year 2021, there were 13,575 hits on the District Court Form Finder page, a slight increase over fiscal year 2020.

![Figure 55. District Court Form Finder - Fiscal Year 2021](image)

**Family Law Form Finder**

This tool assists individuals who are unsure about which form they need in domestic matters by prompting users to answer a series of plain language questions about their situation. In fiscal year 2021, there were more than 22,500 hits on the Family Law Form Finder page.
Maryland Guide & File

Maryland Guide & File is a document assembly product that uses a series of interactive guided interviews that help litigants fill out court forms. This program asks questions and uses answers to complete court forms. Information is recorded on court forms exactly as it is entered. The service is provided at no cost to users.

Most users hear about Guide & File from courthouse staff and access it from the Maryland Judiciary’s website.
Guide & File includes helpful resources, detailed explanations, and explains next steps for litigants.

Ten new interviews launched in fiscal year 2021. Topics include child custody, divorce, small claims, fee waiver requests, restricted information, notice of satisfaction, motion compelling answers to interrogatories, and request for order directing judgment debtor to appear.

The most popular interview populates the DC-CV-001 Civil Complaint form, which allows filers to initiate any number of small claims.
After forms are completed, litigants may save, print, and submit them in-person at the courthouse or download the PDFs and e-file them. Soon, litigants will be able to e-file directly from Guide & File rather than having to print out the forms.

Ninety-five percent of Guide & File users reported that the program was helpful or very helpful in completing legal filings.
Most users complete Guide & File interviews in less than one hour.

![Figure 60. Guide & File - Time to Complete Interview - Fiscal Year 2021](image)

Video Library

The Judiciary’s Maryland Court Help Video Library contains brief videos that outline court basics and law topics for self-represented litigants. Videos run between two and ten minutes in length and are closed-captioned in English and Spanish.

In fiscal year 2021, 33 new videos were added to the library. New series include: Name Change, Peace Orders, and Parenting Plans.

![Figure 61. Video Library - Fiscal Year 2021](image)
In fiscal year 2021, there were more than 121,200 video views, nearly three times more than in fiscal year 2020.

The new, two-part Need an Interpreter? series replaced a single video about court interpreters. The first video explains how to request an interpreter. The second explains how to work with an interpreter in the courtroom. The revision incorporates live moderators, universal symbols, and is offered in six languages: English, Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese, and Korean.

The new Mediation Series also replaced a single video. Content was redistributed from an eleven-minute standalone video into four videos which run between three and five minutes each. Videos feature a live moderator over an infinite white background. Colorful and inviting graphics help to set a warm, friendly tone and convey the collaborative nature of mediation.

Videos address the most common question from the public about mediation. They include:

- What is Mediation?
- How Do I Find a Mediator?
- How to Participate in Mediation
- Common Questions After Mediation
Work continues to expand the video library to include new topics, such as traffic citations, domestic violence, access to court records, and updates to the court’s rent court series.
Maryland Court Help App

Maryland Court Help is a free mobile app for smartphones and tablets. The app brings together tools and resources developed by the Maryland Judiciary and others to help Marylanders use the courts, find local resources, or explore legal help options.

The app connects Marylanders with legal information, court location information, Maryland law, and the statewide network of Maryland Court Help Centers.

In fiscal year 2021, the app was updated to add new Maryland Court Help video series and new Maryland Court Help Center locations.

Figure 66. Maryland Court Help App
In fiscal year 2021, the app developer worked with the Michigan Advocacy Program on a user interface design audit. The purpose of the audit was to improve the usability of existing tools and increase the understanding and abilities of the developers. The audit consisted of a heuristics evaluation, a cognitive walkthrough, and an accessibility review.

The auditor recommended changes such as reconfiguring the back button and adding definition and shadow to buttons to allow for better accessibility. The recommended updates are in progress.

CourtTV

CourtTV is an enterprise video distribution system that delivers curated playlists of legal videos to courthouses statewide. Large screen monitors are strategically placed in public waiting areas, law libraries, and court help centers in all District and circuit court locations throughout Maryland. Each monitor is equipped with an Exterity unit that permits data streaming of video content from the Maryland Judiciary’s data servers.

CourtTV units display playlists and provide continual viewing. Videos can be displayed with captions if the court prefers a sound-free environment. Playlists are drawn from:

- Over 90 Maryland Court Help Video Library titles
- Promotional content to raise awareness of court-based services for the self-represented
- News pieces and informational videos about the Judiciary

Access to Justice has created themed playlists for circuit and District Courts. Playlists can be customized for each court, with a unique schedule to match each court’s docket.
Program Costs

District Court Help Centers
The District Court of Maryland provides funding for the District Court Help Centers. In fiscal year 2021, staffing costs totaled $ 2.6 million. Office space, supplies, technology, and software are provided separately and are not included in this figure.

Remote Services Help Center
Expenditures for the remote services help center are provided jointly by the District Court of Maryland and the Administrative Office of the Courts. In fiscal year 2021, expenditures were just under $ 1.6 million. Office space, supplies, technology, and software are provided separately and are not included in this figure.

Family Court Help Centers
Family Court Help Centers are funded by Judiciary family services grants to circuit courts. In fiscal year 2021, Family Court Help Center expenditures totaled $ 2.1 million. Of that, 69% was spent on personnel costs.

In Howard and Calvert Counties, grant funds are not used to support help center services. These counties staff help centers with volunteer attorneys in partnerships with local bar associations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>EXPENDITURES</th>
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<tr>
<td>District Court Help Centers</td>
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<td>Remote Services Help Center</td>
<td>$1,593,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Court Help Centers</td>
<td>$2,143,685</td>
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</table>
Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

The state law library budget was $1.2 million in fiscal year 2021. This figure excludes funds budgeted for salaries, as well as Maryland Code volumes for judges and Judiciary-wide Westlaw access.

Circuit Court Law Libraries

Maryland circuit court law libraries are not funded uniformly. Annual budgets include a combination of appropriations from county budgets, membership dues, appearance fees, criminal fines and forfeitures, and miscellaneous sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>EXPENDITURES</th>
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<td>Carroll County</td>
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<td>Howard County</td>
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<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>$ 249,571</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince George’s County</td>
<td>$ 775,555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix

### Walk-In Maryland Court Help Centers by County

#### District Court Help Center

- **Family Court Help Center**
- **All Civil Help Center**

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**Allegany County**

Family Court Help Center  
Courthouse Annex  
59 Prospect Square  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
Tuesdays: 12:30 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.  
Telephone appointments only.  
Contact: Allegany Law Foundation at (301) 722-3390

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**Anne Arundel County**

**District Court Help Center**

George M. Taylor Multi-Service Center  
7500 Gov. Ritchie Highway, Rm. 205  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061  
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center  
8 Church Circle, Suite 303  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Contact: Kim Klein (410) 222-1153

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**Baltimore City**

**District Court Help Center**

Civil Division  
501 East Fayette Street, 3rd Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center  
Courthouse East  
111 N. Calvert Street, Room 114  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Daily: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Morning session sign-up: 8:30 a.m.  
Afternoon session sign-up: 1:00 p.m.  
Telephone and email only:  
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday.  
Call (410) 396-6925 or email ccbaltcity.pro.se@mdcourts.gov

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**Baltimore County**

**District Court Help Center**

District Court in Baltimore County  
1 Rolling Cross Road, 2nd Floor  
Catonsville, MD 21228  
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Family Court Help Center
401 Bosley Ave., Room 101, First Floor
Towson, MD 21204
Monday - Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.,
Closed 12:00 p.m.– 1:00 p.m.
Fridays: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.,
Closed 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Call (410) 887-3446 and leave a message or
email baltcoselfhelp@mdcourts.gov

Calvert County
Family Court Help Center
175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, MD 20678
Wednesdays: 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
All Civil Help Center
First Thursday every month:
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Appointments only. Call Margie Moore at
(410) 535-1600, ext. 2516.

Caroline County
Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court
109 Market St.
Denton, MD 21629
Mondays: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Limited to five in waiting area. Any more are
asked to come back later.
Caroline Public Library
100 Market Street, 2nd Floor
Denton, MD 21629
Third Thursday of the month:
6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Library currently closed.
Contact: Mary Bartholomy at (410) 479-5735

Carroll County
Family Court Help Center
Courthouse Annex
55 North Court Street, Suite 208
Westminster, MD 21157
Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. and
Thursdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Call (410) 386-2751, first come, first served.
Family Law for the People Seminar
First Wednesday of the month 4:00
– 7:00 p.m.
Appointment only. Call (410) 386-2751 or
email powel.welliver@mdcourts.gov.
Family Navigator – Forms Only
Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Contact (410) 386-2734 or
justin.seidler@mdcourts.gov

Cecil County
Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court for Cecil County
129 East Main Street, Room 205
Elkton, MD 21921
Mondays: 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Wednesdays: 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Thursdays: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
Fridays (REMOTE ONLY): 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Appointment only. Schedule at
https://familylawclinic.setmore.com
Contact: Nolanda Kirby, (410) 996-1157
Charles County

Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court
200 Charles Street
La Plata, MD 20646
Civil and Family: Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Telephone appointment only.
Call Jennifer Murphy at (301) 932-3278.

Dorchester County

District Court Help Center
310 Gay Street
Cambridge, MD 21613
Fridays: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Closed 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Family Court Help Center
Dorchester County Circuit Court
206 High Street, Room 101
Cambridge, MD 21613
Mondays 12:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Wednesdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Telephone only. Call Miko Collins at (410) 228-1395.

Frederick County

All Civil Help Center
Circuit Court for Frederick County
100 West Patrick Street, Lower Level
Frederick, MD 21701
Daily 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center
Appointment only. To make an appointment, text (301) 834-2627 or call Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Contact: Colby S. Hall at (301) 600-2023.

Garrett County

Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court
203 S. 4th Street
Oakland, MD 21550
Daily 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Appointment only. Call Melissa Buskirk at (301) 334-7602.

Harford County

Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court
20 W Courtland St., Level A
Bel Air, MD 21014
Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.
(on-site by appointment only)
Monday - Friday 12.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.
(remote)
Call Samrin Khwaja at (410) 638-4916.
Howard County

Family Court Help Center
Howard County Circuit Court
8360 Court Avenue
Ellicott City, MD 21043
Mondays and Wednesdays
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Appointment only.
Contact Sandy Brewer at
(410) 313-2135 or
sandy.brewer@mdcourts.gov

All Civil Help Center
Howard County Circuit Court
8360 Court Avenue, Law Library
Ellicott City, MD 21043
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Appointment only. Contact: Sandy Brewer at
(410) 313-2135 or
sandy.brewer@mdcourts.gov

Kent County

Family Court Help Center
Kent County Circuit Court
103 N. Cross Street, 2nd Floor
Chestertown, MD 21620
In-Person: Tuesdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Remote: Thursdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Call Lori Jacobs at (410) 810-1059.

Montgomery County

District Court Help Center
191 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, MD 20850
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center
Montgomery County Circuit Court
50 Maryland Avenue
South Tower, 1st Floor, Room 1500
Rockville, MD 20850
Daily 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Assistance in multiple languages by appointment only.
Call (240) 777-9079. 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
and until 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Prince George’s County

District Court Help Center
Bourne Wing, Room 069B
14735 Main Street
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center
Family Division Information Center — No legal advice
14735 Main Street, Room M0415
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Call (301) 780-8000, ext. 6.
Assistance is available in Spanish.

Paralegal Unit — No legal advice
Circuit Court for Prince George’s County
14735 Main Street, Room M0416
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Daily 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Assistance is available in Spanish by appointment only. Call: (301) 780-8028.
Queen Anne’s County

Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County
200 North Commerce Street, Suite 114
Centreville, MD 21617

Monday – Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Assistance provided via phone or via videoconferencing. Call Elisa Dickens at (410) 758-1773, ext. 5128.

Somerset County

Family Court Help Center
Somerset County Circuit Court Annex
30513 Prince William Street
Princess Anne, Maryland 21853

Tuesdays: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Appointment Only. Call Helen Webster at (410) 621-7582.

St. Mary’s County

Family Court Help Center
Circuit Court
41605 Courthouse Drive
Leonardtown, MD 20650

Wednesdays: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
First and last Friday of the month:
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Telephone only. Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and the first and last Friday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Call (240) 309-4130.

You may call and speak with a lawyer on the first and last Tuesday of every month from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m. Call Linda J. Grove at (301) 475-7844, ext. 4110.
**Talbot County**

Family Court Help Center  
Circuit Court  
11 North Washington St., South Wing  
Easton, MD 21601  
Mondays: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Appointment only. Call (410) 770-6806 or (410) 819-9876.

**Washington County**

**District Court Help Center**  
36 W. Antietam Street, 2nd Floor  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
Mondays: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Closed 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Family Court Help Center  
TEMPORARY LOCATION CHANGE  
County Administration Building  
100 West Washington Street  
Room 1301  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
Thursdays: 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Appointment only. To schedule, visit:  
Contact Amie Spigler at (240) 313-2580.

**Worcester County**

Family Court Help Center  
Circuit Court for Worcester County  
One West Market Street, Room 101  
Snow Hill, MD 21863  
Mondays: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Appointment only. Contact: Family Services Division at (410) 632-5638.

Pro Se Guardianship Assistance Clinic  
Third Wednesday of every month from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Appointment only. Contact Family Services Division at (410) 632-5638.

**Wicomico County**

**District Court Help Center**  
201 Baptist Street, 2nd Floor  
Salisbury, MD 21740  
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Law Libraries

Staffed Law Library
Not Staffed

Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Staffed Law Library
361 Rowe Blvd.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Contact: (410) 260-1430

Circuit Court for Allegany County
Law Library

Open to the public, not staffed
30 Washington Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (301) 777-5925

Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County
Law Library

Staffed Law Library
8 Church Circle, Room 303
Annapolis MD 21401
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 222-1387

Circuit Court for Baltimore County
Law Library

Staffed Law Library
County Courts Building
401 Bosley Avenue
Towson, MD 21204
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 887-3086

Baltimore Bar Library

Staffed Law Library
100 N. Calvert St, Room 618
Baltimore, MD 21202
Monday – Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
July and August
Monday – Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Contact: (410) 727-0280

Circuit Court for Calvert County
Law Library

Not Staffed
175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, MD 20678
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Contact: (410) 535-1600, ext. 2730
Circuit Court for Caroline County Law Library

Not Staffed
109 Market Street
Denton, MD 21629
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., by appointment or prior arrangement
Contact: (410) 479-2303

Circuit Court for Carroll County Law Library

Staffed Law Library
200 Willis Street
Westminster, MD 21157
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 386-2672

Circuit Court for Cecil County Law Library

Not Staffed
129 E. Main Street, 2nd Floor
Elkton, MD 21921
Contact: (410) 996-5325

Circuit Court for Charles County Law Library

Not Staffed
200 Charles Street
La Plata, MD 20646
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (301) 932-3322

Circuit Court for Dorchester County Law Library

Not Staffed
206 High Street
Cambridge, MD 21613
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 228-6300

Circuit Court for Frederick County Law Library

Not Staffed
100 West Patrick Street
Frederick, MD 21701
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (301) 600-1993

Circuit Court for Garrett County Law Library

Not Staffed
203 South 4th Street
Oakland, MD 21550
Contact: (301) 334-1934

Circuit Court for Howard County Public Law Library

Staffed Law Library
8360 Court Avenue
Ellicott City, MD 21043
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 313-2135
Circuit Court for Kent County Public Law Library
Open to the public, not staffed
103 North Cross Street
Chestertown, MD 21620
Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 778-7440

Circuit Court for Montgomery County Law Library
Staffed Law Library
50 Maryland Ave Room N-3420
Rockville, MD 20850
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Contact: (240) 777-9120

Circuit Court for Prince George’s County Law Library
Staffed Law Library
14375 Main Street, Room M-1400
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (301) 952-3438

Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County Law Library
Not Staffed
100 Courthouse Square
Centreville, MD 21617
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 758-0216

Circuit Court for Somerset County Law Library
Not Staffed
30512 Prince William Street
Princess Anne, MD 21853
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 621-7581

Circuit Court for St. Mary’s County Law Library
Not Staffed
41605 Court House Drive
Leonardtown, MD 20650
Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (301) 475-7844, ext. 4165

Circuit Court for Talbot County Law Library
Not Staffed
11 N. Washington Street
Easton, MD 21601
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 770-6801

Circuit Court for Washington County Law Library
Not Staffed
24 Summit Avenue, Room 116
Hagerstown, MD 21740
Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (240) 313-2570
Circuit Court for Wicomico County
Law Library

Not Staffed
P.O. Box 4074
Salisbury, MD 21803
Contact: (410) 749-6513

Circuit Court for Worcester County
Law Library

Not Staffed
1 West Market Street, Room 228
Snow Hill, MD 21863
Monday – Friday: 8:30a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Contact: (410) 632-0600