



FISCAL YEAR 2024

# RESOURCES FOR THE SELF-REPRESENTED IN THE MARYLAND COURTS

## ANNUAL REPORT



**Access to Justice**  
**Juvenile & Family Services**  
**Thurgood Marshall State Law Library**  
**Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors**

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## Introduction

The Maryland Judiciary's mission is to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. To accomplish that mission, courts must address the needs of self-represented litigants. Many individuals are unable, for a variety of reasons, to secure representation for their civil cases. The Maryland Judiciary has responded to this need by supporting the various programs and resources outlined in this report.

Together, these programs and resources allow self-represented litigants to learn about the court process, receive brief legal advice, and connect with legal services providers for representation. This reflects the commitment of the Maryland Judiciary to ensure that all Marylanders can meaningfully participate in the court process.

In this year's report, updates are provided from the following Judiciary programs and resources:

- Maryland Court Help Centers
  - The Remote Services Center
  - District Court and "All Civil" Help Centers
  - Court Help Access & Information Centers
  - Family Court Help Centers
- Law Libraries
  - The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
  - Circuit Court Law Libraries
- Legal Information Resources
  - Court Help web content on [www.mdcourts.gov](http://www.mdcourts.gov)
  - The People's Law Library of Maryland
  - The Maryland Court Help Video Library
  - Maryland Court Help Webinars
  - The Maryland Court Help App
- Forms Tools
  - Guide & File
  - Form Finders
- Access to Justice Impact Dashboard

# Maryland Court Help Centers

A key resource for the self-represented is the network of Maryland Court Help Centers. Maryland Court Help Centers provide legal information and advice to self-represented litigants for civil matters in a variety of settings statewide.

The Judiciary supports several types of help centers:

- The Remote Services Center
- District Court & All-Civil Help Centers
- Court Help Access & Information Centers
- Family Court Help Centers

In fiscal year 2024, Maryland Court Help Centers together provided over 230,000 instances of service to self-represented Marylanders.

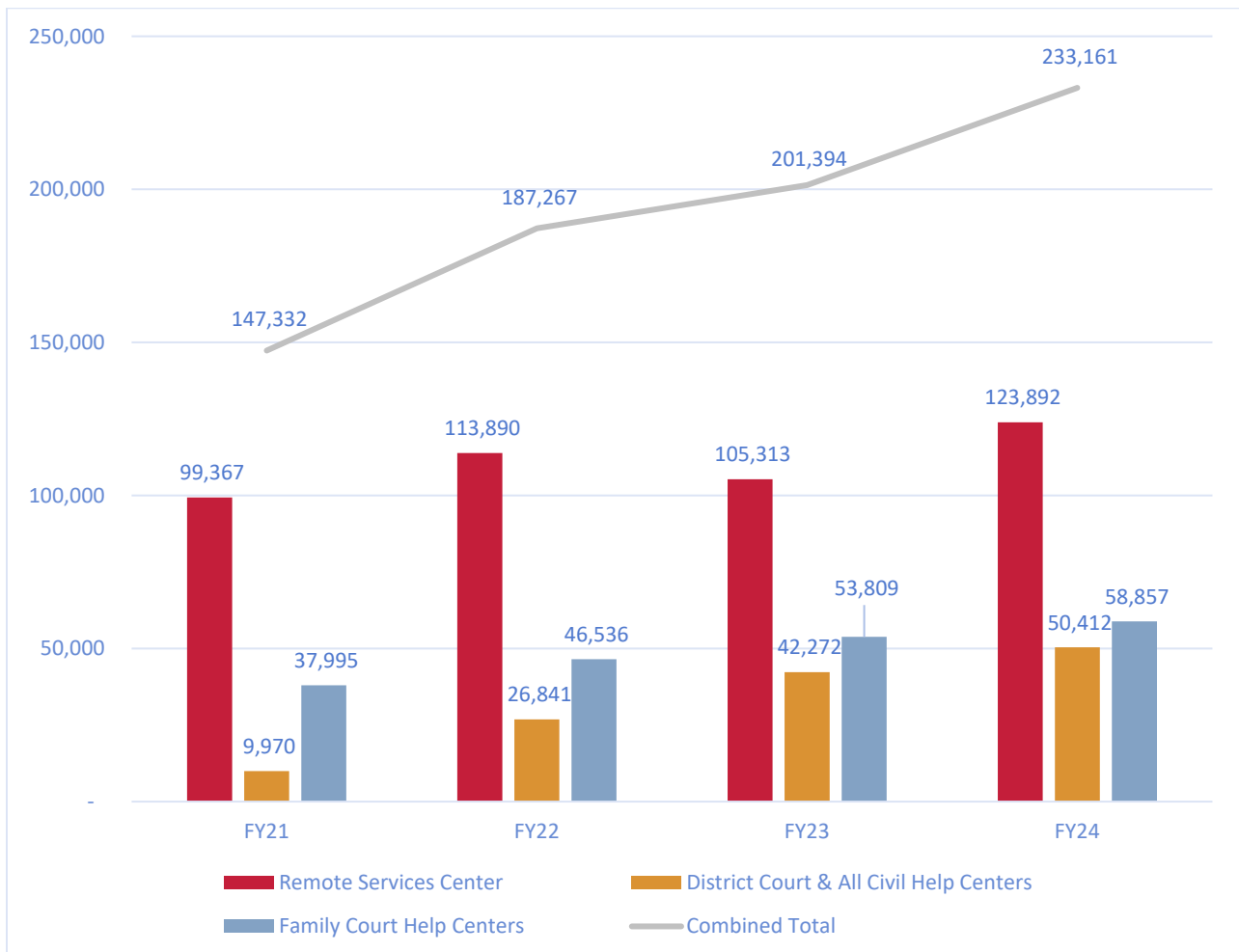


Figure 1. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - Instances of Services by Fiscal Year

## Who Uses Maryland Court Help Centers?

At each type of help center, demographic data is collected to determine who is utilizing court help centers and inform decisions about future expansions. Some centers collect this data for every instance of service, while other high-volume centers collect this data only during certain periods of the year.

Data shows that visitors to the Maryland Court Help Centers are predominantly 30–49-year-old females with less than a college education. Seventy-five percent (75%) of visitors report an annual household income of less than \$50,000, which is significantly lower than the median household income in Maryland of approximately \$100,000.

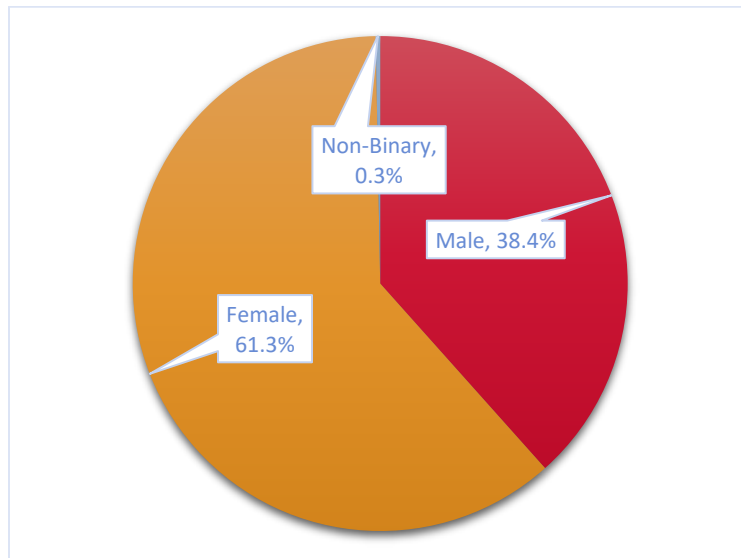


Figure 2. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Gender Identity - FY2024

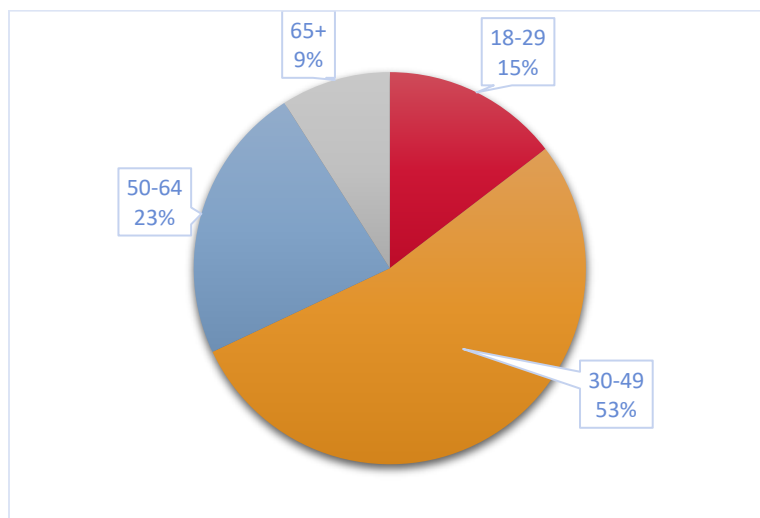


Figure 3. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Age in Years - FY2024

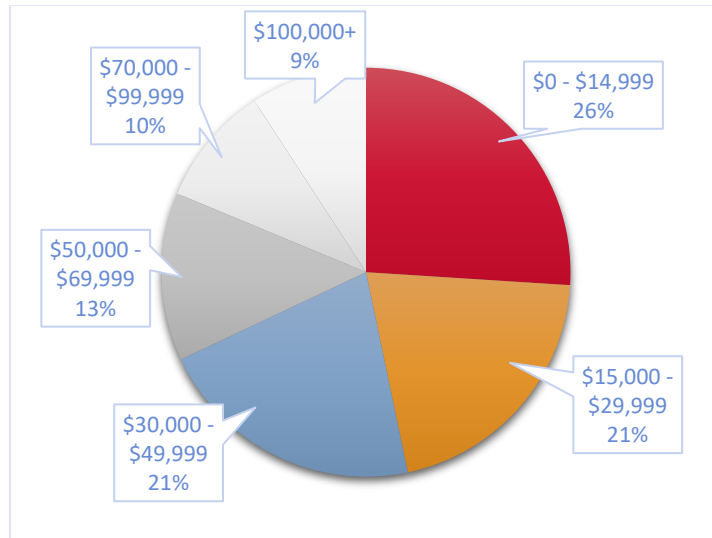


Figure 4. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Annual Household Income - FY2024

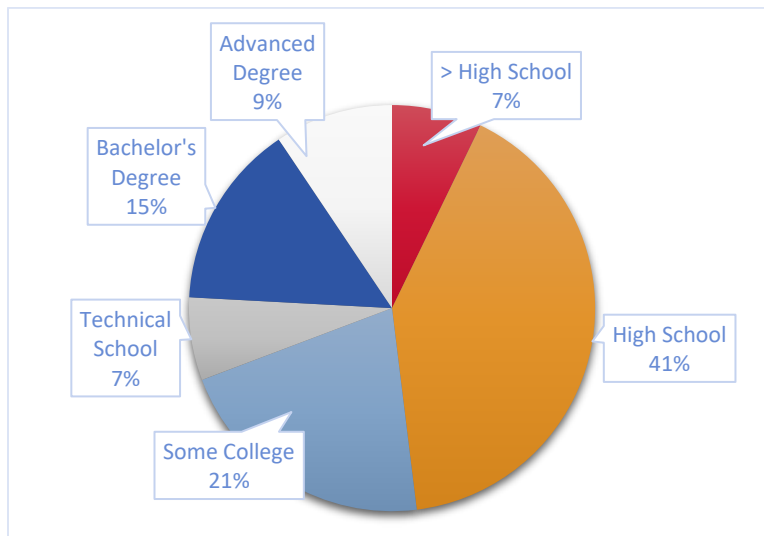


Figure 5. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Highest Level of Education - FY2024

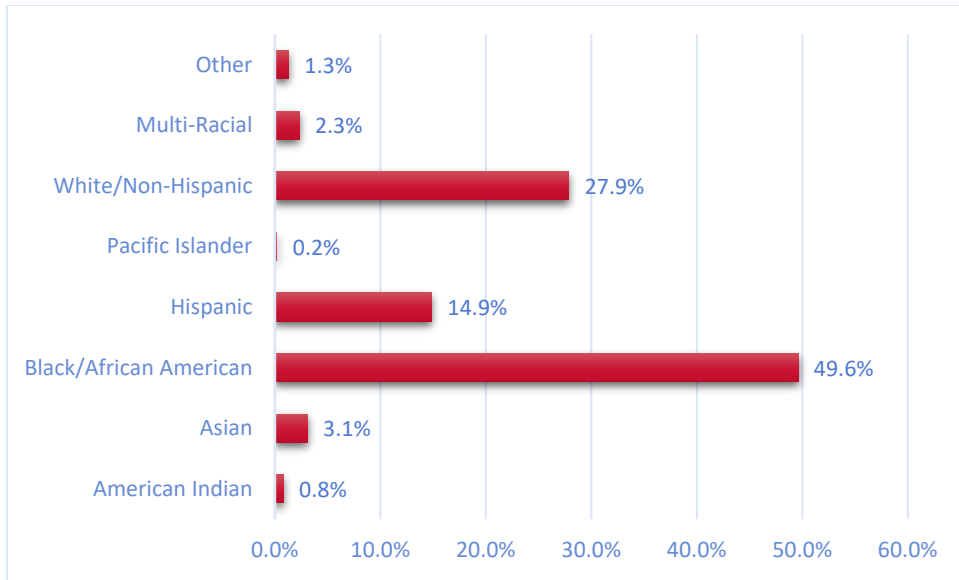


Figure 6. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Race/Ethnicity - FY2024

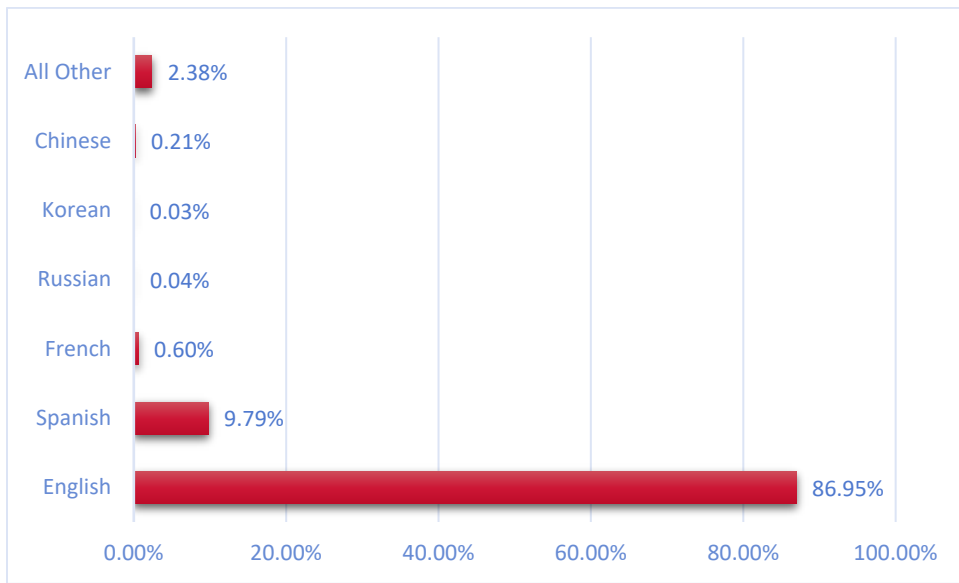


Figure 7. Maryland Court Help Centers - All - User Primary Language Spoken at Home - FY2024

### The Remote Services Center

The Remote Services Center assists the self-represented statewide via phone, live-chat, and email. Attorneys provide brief legal advice on both District Court and circuit court issues. The center is staffed by licensed attorneys through a contract with the Maryland Center for Legal Assistance (MCLA).

The Remote Services Center is convenient, allowing litigants to obtain legal help from any location, via phone or live chat. During fiscal year 2024, the Remote Services Center provided 123,892 instances of service, the bulk of those (90,957) via the phone. While all remote services saw an increase in usage this fiscal year, there was an eighty-five percent (85%) increase in the number of live chats from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024.



Nearly a third of remote services involve family law matters, and another quarter involve housing matters. Attorneys fielding calls and chats must be knowledgeable about all civil case types affecting low-income Marylanders. MCLA cross trains all call center attorneys as well as those working in walk-in centers to ensure that all attorneys can respond effectively to all case types. Walk-in attorneys pick up calls and chats to aid the Remote Services Center when they are not actively engaged with walk-in visitors.

Case Type		
Type	# of Services	% of Total
Family	37,817	31.95%
Housing	28,639	24.19%
Other	15,463	13.06%
Small Claim	9,104	7.69%
Large Claim	6,481	5.48%
Debtor/Creditor	5,105	4.31%
Peace and Protective Order	4,020	3.40%
Other 3P	2,313	1.95%
Expungement	1,971	1.67%
Guardianship	1,522	1.29%
Other Criminal	1,292	1.09%
Other Business	1,097	0.93%
Probate	863	0.73%
Replevin/Detinue	729	0.62%
Foreclosure	661	0.56%
Mandamus	509	0.43%
Admin Appeal	388	0.33%

Figure 8. Remote Services Center - Case Types - FY2024

Early on, the Judiciary recognized the difficulties that self-represented litigants can have accessing legal help during the business day. Therefore, the Remote Services Center is open until 8 p.m. each court day, allowing litigants who may not be able to visit a court location during business hours a chance to speak with an attorney in the evening. On average, the Remote Services Center serves almost 2,000 litigants a month during extended evening hours.

In fiscal year 2024, the Remote Services Center launched a technological innovation that improved customer service and efficiency. MCLA developed a feature in their custom data collection application to allow attorneys to send litigants an email or text message with helpful information during a phone call. Litigants have requested this feature in the past. Attorneys can now send a URL or link to a court form with a simple click of a button.

*“It was great that everything I requested help with or needed was emailed directly to me.”*

*“[The] information emailed to me was extremely helpful, thank you for your kind considerate service.”*

*“Very kind and very helpful. I love the follow up email too that gave me a chance to review what we discussed since I was on the road when I called it helped a lot.”*

## District Court & All-Civil Help Centers

Access to Justice currently manages ten (10) District Court Help Centers across the state: eight (8) full-time and two (2) satellite locations. Each District Court Help Center (DCHC) is in a District Court location and can assist with District Court case types including small claims, housing, criminal expungement, peace and protective orders, and consumer debt matters. The DCHCs are staffed by attorneys through a contract with MCLA.

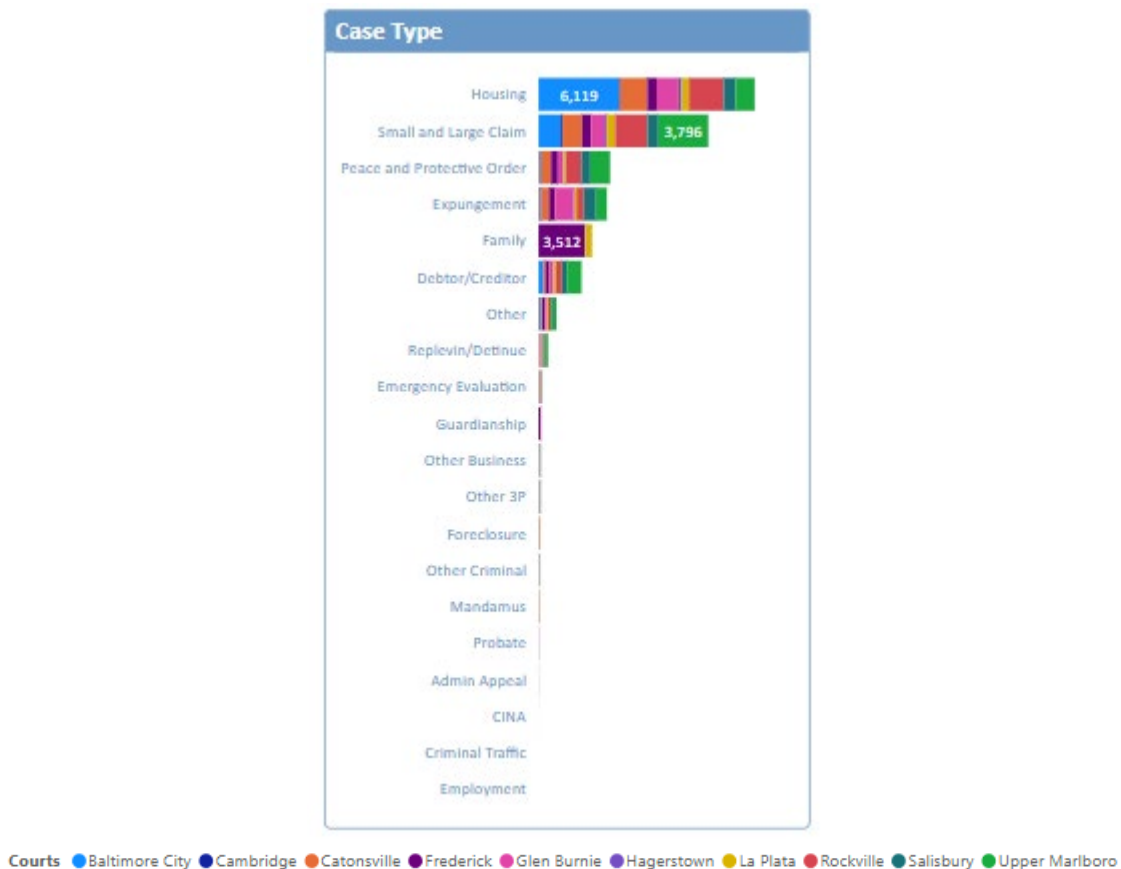


Figure 9. District Court and All-Civil Walk-in Help Centers - Case Types - FY2024

Of these centers, two are all-civil help centers. These centers, in Frederick County and Charles County, serve co-located circuit and District courts and assist with both circuit and District Court issues. These centers provide critical assistance to the self-represented with family law matters as well as non-family issues in the circuit courts such as foreclosures, large claims, or writs of mandamus. Like the District Court Help Centers, the all-civil centers are staffed by attorneys through a contract with MCLA.

In fiscal year 2024, the District Court Help Centers and all-civil help centers consulted with a record number of self-represented litigants, providing 50,412 instances of service. Every single location saw an increase in visitors from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024. In addition, as noted above, all walk-in center attorneys field calls and chats through the Remote Services Center when not engaged with walk-in visitors.

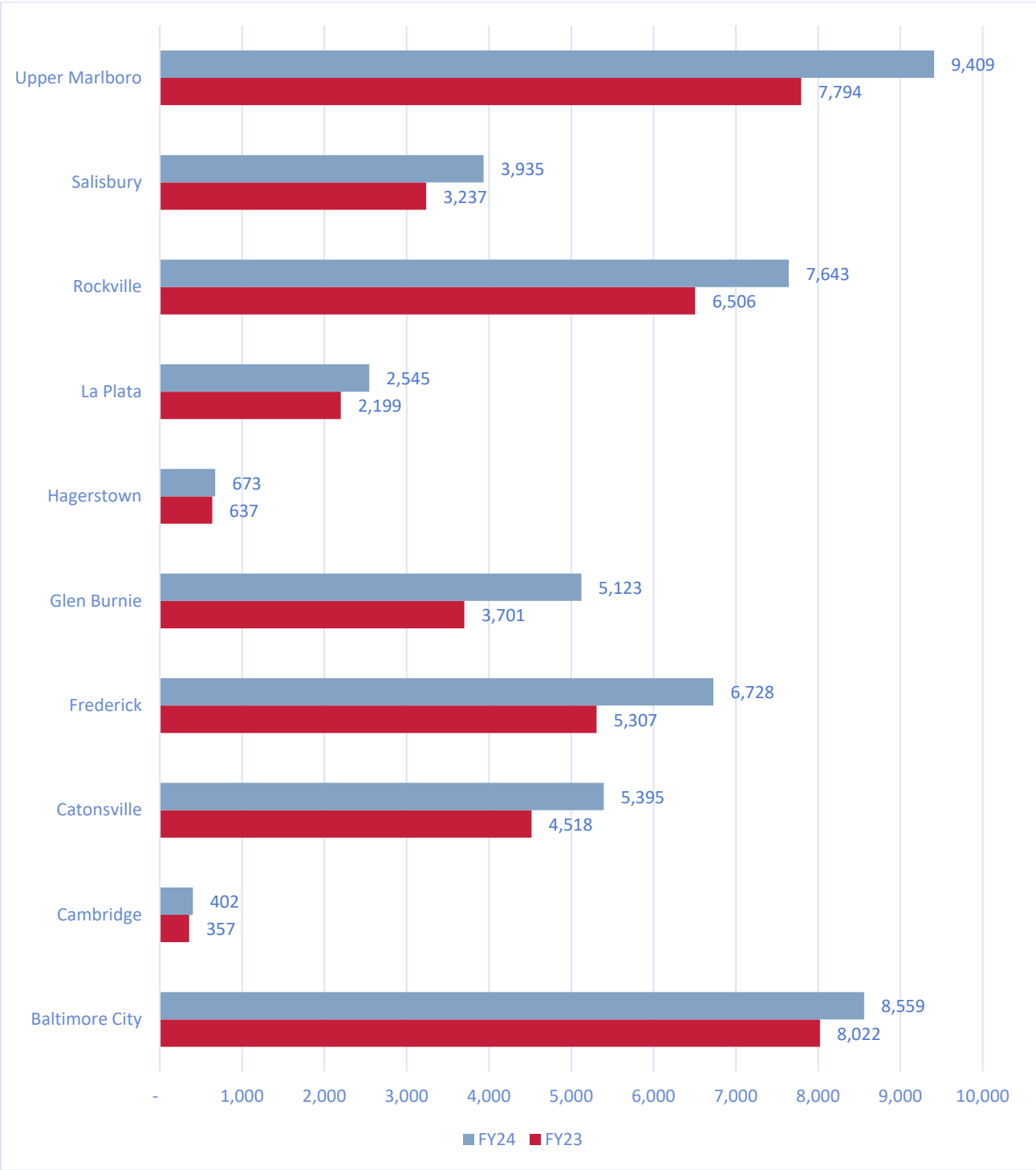


Figure 10. District Court & All-Civil Walk-in Help Centers - Instances of Service - FY2023 - FY2023

## Court Help Access & Information Centers

Court Help Access & Information (CHAI) centers are locations that allow self-represented litigants to use a public access computer to connect with a help center attorney for legal assistance. While no attorneys are located on site, some CHAI centers have court or law library staff available to aid litigants in using the center. Each CHAI center is equipped with a printer, easy-to-follow tabletop instructions, and print materials such as court forms and brochures. At a CHAI center, visitors can use the online chat service or speak with an attorney via video conference. CHAI centers can also be used to find legal information, look up case information, and complete court forms using online tools such as Guide & File. Currently, Access to Justice manages three CHAI centers in the following locations:

- Circuit Court for Allegany County
- Circuit Court for Howard County
- Circuit Court for Washington County

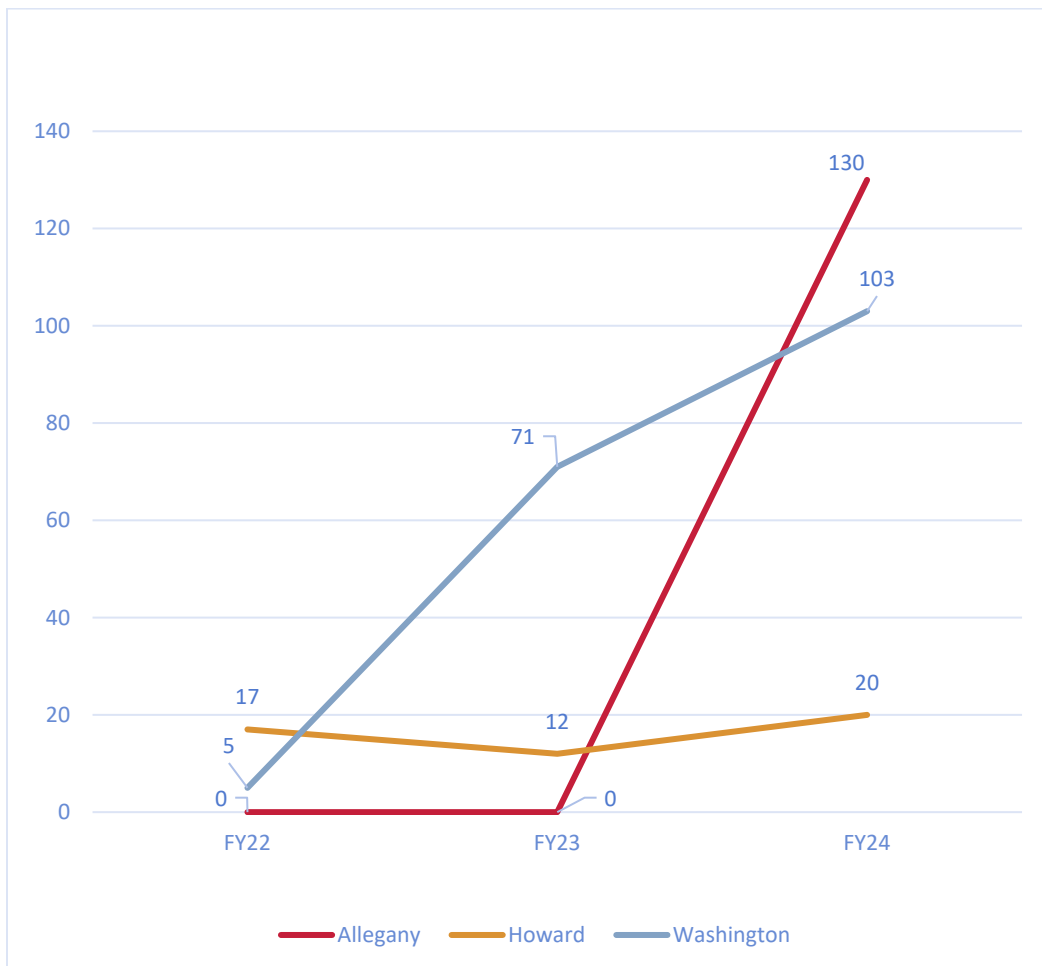


Figure 11. CHAI Centers - Videoconference Sessions - FY2022 - FY2024

The use of CHAI centers grew significantly in fiscal year 2024, with the opening of the Circuit Court for Allegany County center in February 2024. From opening until the end of fiscal year 2024, just over four months, the Allegany County CHAI location provided 130 litigants the chance to consult

with a lawyer via videoconference. The success of the Allegany County CHAI suggests that with creativity and minimal infrastructure, courts can extend the reach of core services to all Marylanders, including those in rural areas of the state.



*Figure 12. Judiciary leadership celebrates the opening of the Allegany County CHAI Center in May 2024 with a ribbon cutting. Pictured from left to right: Thomas J. Fisher, Jr., Managing Director, MCLA; the Honorable Matthew Fader, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland; the Honorable Jeffrey S. Getty, Administrative Judge, Circuit Court for Allegany County; the Honorable John P. Morrissey, Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland; and Judy Rupp, State Court Administrator.*

## Family Court Help Centers

Every circuit court in Maryland provides services to self-represented litigants in family law cases. Through jurisdictional grants from Juvenile & Family Services, Family Court Help Centers offer support for litigants in domestic matters such as divorce, custody, or child support. While some larger jurisdictions are operated by staff attorneys or paralegals, other jurisdictions contract with private attorneys or legal services providers to offer similar services. Each center is managed locally, allowing each court to determine how best to provide services based on local needs and resources.

### The Need for Assistance in Family Cases

The need for legal assistance in domestic cases is well established and continues to rise. In fiscal year 2024, both the number of hearings and the number of domestic case events where one or more litigants was not represented by an attorney increased by 1% statewide. In some counties,

the number of domestic case events where one or more litigants was not represented remains extremely high. For example, Wicomico County reported 91.8% of domestic case events had at least one self-represented party.

Even when litigants do obtain representation, many are not represented for the full length of their domestic case. Representation rates generally decrease as domestic cases progress, suggesting that many litigants that start their case with representation are not able to maintain it.

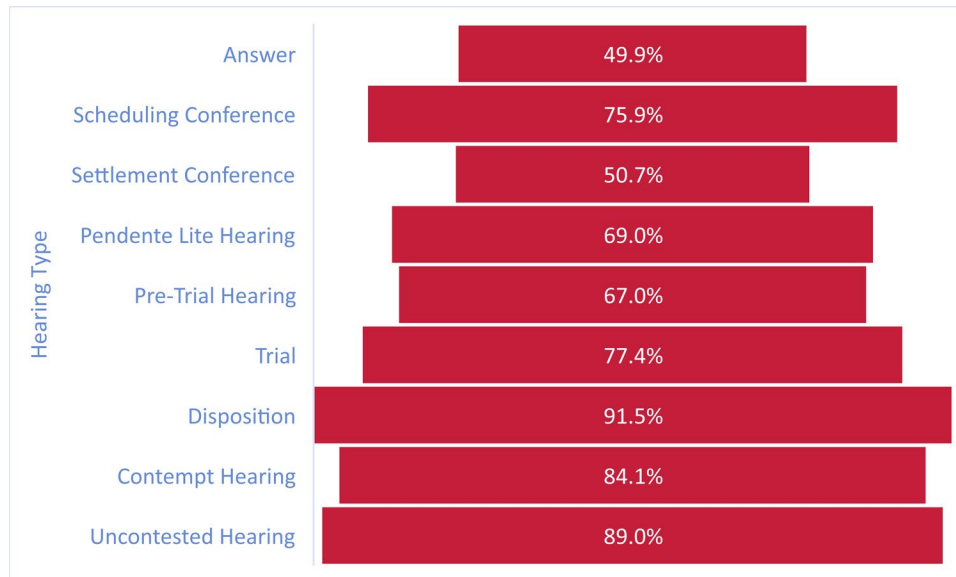


Figure 13. Domestic Cases with at Least One Self-Represented Party - Statewide - FY2024

### Meeting the Need

In fiscal year 2024, Family Court Help Centers provided 58,857 instances of service, a 9.4% increase from fiscal year 2023. Twenty out of twenty-four jurisdictions reported growth in fiscal year 2024. This growth is due in large part to the expansion of the hours and increased accessibility of services in many of the family law help centers.

*The Circuit Court for Wicomico County’s Family Law Help Center increased their instances of services by 46% in fiscal year 2024. This feat was accomplished by expanding their Help Center Assistant to full-time and having contractual attorneys available to assist litigants for three hours each day. In addition to expanding the center’s operating hours, Wicomico made sure all the in-house service providers in the courthouse knew about the expansion and could refer self-represented litigants.*

### Our Help Centers are Leaders Around the Nation

In January 2024, Thomas J. Fisher, Jr., MCLA Managing Director, presented along with representatives from Civil Justice, Inc., at the Legal Services Corporation’s annual Innovations in Technology Conference. The [presentation](#) highlighted how Maryland Court Help Centers used the [Maryland Justice Passport](#) to connect Baltimore City tenants facing eviction to rental assistance from the United Way of Central Maryland. The partnership allowed tenants to receive rental assistance quickly without the worry of dealing with incomplete or duplicate applications for

assistance. In fiscal year 2023, over 260 Baltimore City families received rental assistance from the United Way of Central Maryland thanks to the partnership with the Maryland Court Help Centers.

In May 2024, the Honorable John P. Morrissey, Chief Judge of the District Court of Maryland, Graham Bennie (MCLA), and Alyssa Patzoldt (MCLA) provided a presentation at the ABA/NLADA 2024 Equal Justice Conference. The presentation provided attendees information on how Maryland's help center program used brief advice and technology to assist almost 200,000 litigants in a year with fewer than 50 attorneys. Chief Judge Morrissey provided insights on how to generate support from stakeholders to fund such programs, while MCLA leaders provided examples of the power of brief advice for the self-represented and explained the important of utilizing new technologies.

## Law Libraries

Maryland's network of law libraries serves the needs of Marylanders by building and preserving collections of legal information resources, promoting access to these collections, and creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information. Law libraries are critical resources for the self-represented across the state.

### Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, a court-related agency of the Maryland Judiciary, supports the needs of Maryland's self-represented through the provision of many valuable services.

#### Reference Assistance

One of the most critical ways the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library assists the self-represented is through reference activity. Self-represented litigants can contact reference librarians for assistance with their legal research and information requests.

In fiscal year 2024, the public comprised 85% of library reference customers.<sup>1</sup> More than half of requests from the general public (64%) were for information about civil non-domestic topics, including landlord-tenant, wills and probate, consumer, commercial property, and more. Another 15% were for civil domestic matters. In total, almost 80% of reference questions from the public address concerns about civil legal matters.

*"I truly appreciate your prompt, courteous, help and assistance. You guys are really great at the Thurgood Marshall building, really a Maryland State Community Diamond."*

*"You've shared a wealth of information and contacts. I will be much better prepared for my inquiries with the overview you have provided."*

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<sup>1</sup> Reference activity reflects instances in which persons interacted with a reference librarian for information support. Reference data does not reflect usage of library materials and services that does not require interaction with a reference librarian.

### Self-Help Collection

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library also maintains a specific collection of resources aimed at assisting the self-represented. This collection provides information on court procedures and overviews of common legal topics. This year, the library added many new titles to the collection.

### Law on the Frontlines

The library partners with the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors to organize *Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries* (Frontlines). *Frontlines* is a statewide training program for public library staff. Public libraries are recognized locations in communities for trusted information, yet many public librarians do not have experience with legal information requests. The *Frontlines* project provides these librarians with training in best practices and resources for managing legal reference questions.

In fiscal year 2024, the *Frontlines* project hosted ten training sessions, providing crucial training to more than 100 attendees. In addition to introductory webinars, Frontlines also provided webinars focused on specific legal topics such as family law, consumer law, public benefits, and life & health planning. *Frontlines* also introduced for the first time special “lab” sessions where attendees were able to put into practice the reference training they had received.

*“The instructor was exceptionally knowledgeable and entertaining. I enjoyed this training and am excited to try my hand at and delve into these resources and provide them to our customers.”*

*“This was an excellent series and I am recommending it very highly to my coworkers.”*

### Planting Seeds of Change

In May 2024, Leland Sampson, Head of Web Content and Services at the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, and Brittany West, Legal Content Analyst with Access to Justice, presented at the 2024 Maryland Library Association (MLA) & Delaware Library Association (DLA) Conference: *Seeds of Change*. Mr. Sampson and Ms. West presented the program *We Sow, You Reap: Gathering a Bounty of Legal Information*, describing the many resources provided by the Judiciary to support the legal information needs of the public.

### McGuire Honored with Marbury Award

Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director of the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, received the 2023 William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award from the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC). The Marbury Award is presented to a non-attorney who has demonstrated outstanding service representing the civil legal needs of low-income Marylanders or expanding access to justice.





*Figure 14. From Left to Right: Debra Thomas, Chair, Board of Directors, Maryland Legal Services Corporation; Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library; the Honorable Matthew J. Fader, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland.*

## Circuit Court Law Libraries

Each circuit court in Maryland has a law library that provides access to legal information to the public. While some locations are unstaffed, staffed law libraries can be found in the following circuit courts:

- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Carroll County
- Charles County
- Harford County
- Howard County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- Washington County

At staffed law libraries, litigants receive assistance with legal reference and technology. Litigants can also receive referrals to programs providing legal advice. Critically, law libraries also provide physical space for litigants to use to work on their cases with stable access to computers and the

internet. Library space is also often used to host reoccurring help center programs such as Lawyer in the Library events and family law clinics.

In fiscal year 2024, court law libraries provided close to 37,000 instances of service.<sup>2</sup> This is a 33% increase from fiscal year 2023. The public and self-represented litigants remained the largest patron base in fiscal year 2024, constituting 76% of library patrons.

### Legal Reference

Law library staff use their expertise to connect the self-represented with legal information. This information includes web-based informational resources, such as the People’s Law Library, legal database access, digital materials, and traditional print materials. Library staff guide patrons to the materials that work best for their legal research needs and level of comfort.

Importantly, law libraries provide equitable access to materials that would otherwise be unavailable to the self-represented due to paywalls or subscription fees. These resources include databases such as Westlaw, LexisNexis, Hein Online, and SASI-CALC, as well as expensive legal treatises and sample form books.

### Legal Referrals

When litigants need legal advice, law library staff make informed referrals to court programs and services, including all Maryland Court Help Centers. When litigants need assistance that goes beyond brief legal advice, law library staff also make referrals to appropriate legal service providers, community services, and government agencies. In fiscal year 2024, law library staff provided 2,779 legal referrals, an increase of 45% since fiscal year 2023.

*“You are the best thing in this courthouse - - thanks for your help.”*

*“Thank you sincerely for the search results you provided to me ...I am grateful for your cooperation and patience.”*

### Guides and Educational Programs

Law Librarians craft guides that provide information to help self-represented litigants navigate their libraries and courthouses.

The Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library revised their guides display and library maps within the library and embarked on an internal guides revision project.

The Law Library at the Carroll County Circuit Court created laminated bookmarks with the Law Library’s contact information. The bookmarks were handed out to the Family Law Administration as well as to Circuit and District Court offices to provide law library information if they need to contact and/or refer anyone to the law librarian.

The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library moved into a new space within the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County and is co-located with the Family Court Help Center (FCHC). A display of

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<sup>2</sup> This number does not include statistics from Baltimore City, Baltimore County, or Harford County law libraries. Charles County reported statistics through March and Washington County began reporting in April.

family law packets was created for FCHC use. The packets provide links to forms and online family law information found on the People’s Law Library of Maryland and the Judiciary’s webpages.



*Figure 15. The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library's newly renovated space, ready to be enjoyed by the public.*

### Partnerships

Multiple law libraries loan space to host recurring programs such as brief advice clinics and Lawyer in the Library programs. Some law libraries are co-located with Maryland Court Help Centers to provide court visitors with seamless access to both legal information and legal advice.

- In Howard County, the Law Library & Legal Resources Center offers two free legal advice programs, the Civil Law Center and Family Law Assistance Program, in the Law Library space. The Law Librarian manages all aspects of the two programs. In 2024, these programs assisted 760 litigants in person.
- The Law Library at the Carroll County Circuit Court continues to partner with their Family Law Administration on civil docket days in the historic courthouse. The law library provides conference rooms, computers, and printers, SASI-Calc and alimony calculators, copier services for same day alternative dispute resolution and mediation of family law cases.
- The Washington County Law Library offers a free Family Law Legal Clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- The Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center and Public Law Library offers free limited legal advice for family matters with a full-time family court help center. The Legal Resource Center and Public Law Library shares a space with an All-Civil Maryland Court Help Center.
- The Anne Arundel Public Law Library continues to coordinate weekly, remote Lawyer in the Library clinics with the Anne Arundel County Public Library. In addition, the law librarian helped with the coordination of brief legal advice clinics including the Tangled Title Clinic in October 2023 and the Family Law Day held at the Chrysalis House in January 2024.

### Technology Assistance

Law library staff provide technical assistance in-person as well as remotely via phone, email, and Zoom. Technical assistance includes helping litigants navigate websites and legal databases, using child support calculators, uploading and downloading documents, scanning and printing documents, operating microfilm and microfiche readers, and more.

- At the Public Law Library in Anne Arundel County, those that use the Family Court Help Center have access to computers with family law information and forms packets, print materials, and online databases. The law library conference room is also available for Maryland Court Help Center access and has videoconferencing capability.
- The Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library improved their technology offerings for the public by adding a third Zoom room to the library for litigants to use to attend remote hearings.
- The Law Library at the Carroll County Circuit Court added a stand-alone laptop and printer that allows self-represented litigants to access their email, create or edit their own legal documents, and save or retrieve documents.

With the adoption of MDEC, law library staff have increasingly assisted self-represented litigants with e-filing and viewing case documents on MDEC. All law libraries contain computers with MDEC File and Serve and public kiosk portals. Law library staff are trained to assist the public with basic MDEC needs. In fiscal year 2024, library staff assisted library patrons with 977 instances of MDEC-related assistance, a 50% increase over the last fiscal year.

### Liberty Bell Award Recipient

Julee Snyder, Court Administrator and former Self-Help & Legal Resource Coordinator at the Circuit Court for Charles County, was presented with a Liberty Bell Award from the Charles County Bar Association. The Liberty Bell Award was established more than 40 years ago to acknowledge outstanding community service. The award is presented to someone who has promoted better understanding of the rule of law, encouraged greater respect for law and the courts, stimulated a sense of civic responsibility, or contributed to good government in the community.

## Legal Information Resources

The Maryland Judiciary recognizes that many self-represented litigants turn to internet searches to find answers when faced with legal questions. The Judiciary creates and maintains online resources to provide accurate, trustworthy, legal information to the public.

### The People's Law Library of Maryland

The People's Law Library (PLL) is an online legal information resource managed by the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library. PLL offers plain language summaries of federal, state, and local laws relevant to Maryland residents and their families. The topics covered include housing, family law, domestic violence, consumer issues, and life and health planning, among others. PLL also connects users to other services, including the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library's Information Desk and the Maryland Court Help Centers. Additionally, it features a statewide directory of legal service organizations and a schedule of legal clinics for those seeking legal advice or assistance.

#### Maintaining Content

PLL maintains nearly 500 articles, requiring staff to continually review and update articles for accuracy and relevance. In fiscal year 2024, staff analyzed 22% of site content, reflecting a commitment to providing up-to-date legal information. For example, PLL's juvenile justice articles were entirely revised to reflect new developments. Additionally, PLL published a new article titled *Rental License Requirements*, which includes a searchable database to learn which counties and municipalities require landlords to obtain a rental license.

#### Increasing Language Access

This year, PLL implemented sitewide machine translation. This feature allows the site to be fully available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Amharic, Simplified Chinese, French, Filipino, Korean, Persian, Russian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba. These languages were chosen for translation efforts based on recent Census data showing the most widely spoken languages in Maryland, significantly improving the accessibility and availability of vital legal information for diverse communities across the state. This advancement not only broadens PLL's reach but also empowers individuals from various linguistic backgrounds to better understand their legal rights and resources.

#### Future Initiatives

In alignment with its commitment to providing an exceptional user experience, PLL plans to undertake a comprehensive site redesign in fiscal year 2025. The redesign will seek to enhance accessibility and usability for all site visitors. They hope to incorporate new features such as user-selectable font type and size options to accommodate diverse visual needs. PLL also hopes the redesign will incorporate expanded graphics and a more intuitive user interface. The redesign will result in a site that better serves the diverse communities of the state, empowering Marylanders through enhanced access to legal information.

### Court Help Content on MDCourts.Gov

Access to Justice and Juvenile and Family Services maintain text-based web pages on a wide range of civil legal topics. This web content reaches a wide audience, with over 2.5 million views in fiscal year 2024. The most visited pages were on articles on access to court records, divorce, and traffic. These web pages contain fact sheets, links to Maryland Court Help Centers, and links to the variety of other court help resources outlined in this report.

## Maryland Court Help Video Library

The Court Help Video Library is an extensive resource on a range of topics from expungement to preparing for court. With over 130 videos, the library aims to prepare Marylanders for court and give them the information they need to better represent themselves. To this end, most of the videos engage the audience using a live on-camera narrator and kinetic typography. The Maryland Court Help videos are designed to be understandable, with brief run times between two and 10 minutes. Many of the videos are part of a topic-specific series with subjects broken up into several short topics. Each video comes with an accompanying Tip Sheet and offers closed captioning in English and Spanish. In some cases, the videos are produced in multiple languages. Access to Justice and Juvenile and Family Services collaborate to produce the videos.

Views of Court Help videos increased by 68% from the prior fiscal year, with a total of 318,350 views in fiscal year 2024. The number of hours viewers spent watching Court Help Videos also increased significantly in fiscal year 2024, with hours totaling 15,782.

The Judiciary added eighteen (18) new videos to the Court Help Video Library during the fiscal year, and an additional 11 videos were completed during the fiscal year and published just after the fiscal year ended. The new videos include:

- The Rights and Roles of Victims of Crime (two-part series)
- Expungement Series: Cannabis Charges
- Judicial Declaration of Gender Identity of an Adult
- Judicial Declaration of Gender Identity of a Minor
- Objecting to a Judicial Declaration of Gender Identity of a Minor

In addition, seven videos on parenting plans produced in Spanish were published in the series *Planes de Crianza*. The Video Library already hosts English versions of this series.

Five of the new videos were updated versions of previously published videos, revised to reflect changes in the law:

- Expungement Part 5
- Expungement Part 7
- Name Change Part 1
- Name Change Part 2
- Name Change Part 4

In addition, a video series on remote proceedings was produced during the fiscal year and published just after the end of fiscal year 2024. The series has six-parts with part 4, on working with an interpreter during a remote proceeding, available in six languages -- English, Spanish, Mandarin, French, Korean, and Russian. The series addresses how to prepare for and participate in a remote hearing and includes tips on using a phone to join a remote hearing, working with a court interpreter, and accessibility and remote hearings.

## Maryland Court Help Webinars

The Judiciary also hosts free online classes for self-represented litigants taught by attorneys from the Maryland Court Help Centers. MCLA offers one live class each month. Popular classes are also

made available on demand. In fiscal year 2024, webinars were viewed 6,693 times, totaling over two thousand hours watched. In fiscal year 2024, webinars were key to providing self-represented litigants with updates due to legislation that modified divorce law. The webinar *Recent Changes to Divorce in Maryland* offered in October 2023 was the most well-attended webinar of the fiscal year.

### Maryland Court Help App

The Maryland Court Help App is a free mobile app that connects Marylanders with legal information on their smartphones and tablets. The app provides self-represented litigants with access to all the resources highlighted in this report that are provided by the Maryland Judiciary to help them use the courts, find local resources, and explore legal help options.

At the end of fiscal year 2024, we introduced Maryland Court Help version 3.0, which includes easier navigation and a more accessible look and feel.

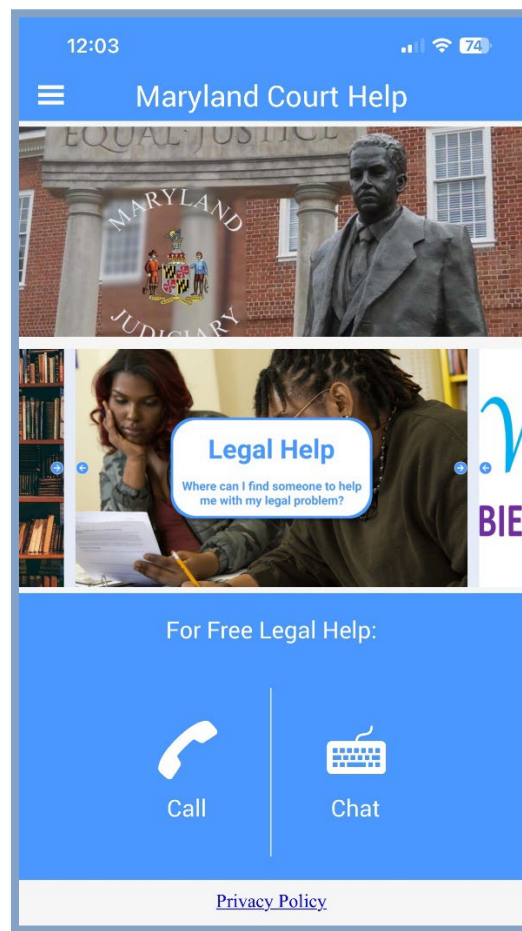


Figure 16. Maryland Court Help App 3.0 provides quick access to the Maryland Court Help Centers via phone and live chat.

# Forms Tools


## Guide & File

Guide & File is a series of online, guided interviews that help self-represented litigants complete court forms. This free program works by walking users through a series of dynamic interview questions where they input their answers. Guide & File then places the answers onto the court forms in the correct location exactly as they enter it.

Guide & File also includes links to other legal information resources, detailed explanations of legal terms, and instructions on how to take the next steps in the filing process. When finished with a Guide & File interview, the completed forms can be saved, printed, and filed (either in-person at a courthouse, or online through MDEC).

DC-CV-001: Someone owes me money/I want my property back.

**Complaint/Application in Support of Judgment**

 Use this interview to guide you through completing a civil complaint in the District Court for the following:

- A **contract** case where a person or business owes you money under an agreement or contract.
- A **tort** case that involves harm or damage to you or your property and has resulted in money damages.
- A **replevin** case where you seek the return of your property.
- A **detinue** case where you seek the value of your property **or** the property returned.
- A **bad faith insurance claim** where you want actual damages, litigation costs and expenses with interest from an insurer that did not act in good faith.
- A **consumer debt (original creditor)** case where a person owes a secured or unsecured debt for money owed arising from a consumer transaction (credit card debt, student loans, auto loans, medical bills, and pay day loans) and you are the original creditor.

1. **Complete court form** using [Guide & File](#) or the fillable [PDF](#).
2. **Print** documents, review contents, and sign.
3. **File**
  - in person at the court.
  - by mail to the court.
  - by scanning and [e-filing](#)\*. (E-filing directly from your interview is COMING SOON!)

Figure 17. Guide & File Interview for the Judiciary's DC-CV-001 Form: Complaint/Application for Affidavit in Support of Judgment. Once the interview is selected, the user will see helpful definitions of case types that can be filed using the form.

In fiscal year 2024, Access to Justice and District Court Administrative Services updated numerous interviews to comply with legislative changes, including the Notice Regarding Restricted Information, Expungement, Fee Waiver Request, and the Small Claims Suite.



Access to Justice and District Court Administrative Services released several new interviews during the fiscal year:

- I want to appear remotely;
- I need to request an interpreter;
- I need to change my address on a case in the District Court; and
- District Court Commissioner Application for Representation by the Public Defender.

### Form Finder Tools

The Maryland Judiciary’s website offers two decision tree tools designed to assist in identifying the form or forms that a litigant may need. These form finders ask a set of simple questions to guide the user to a form or set of forms.

The District Court Form Finder assists users in identifying which District Court form or forms they need. In fiscal year 2024, this forms finder tool was used 13,488 times. It has been available since 2009 and has been used over 200,000 times.

The Family Law Form Finder assists users in pinpointing the family law form or forms needed. In fiscal year 2024, this tool was used 12,857 times.

## Access to Justice Impact Dashboard

Access to Justice maintains a data visualization tool called the [Access to Justice Impact Dashboard](#). The dashboard, created using Microsoft Power BI, provides the public with an interactive way to view data on programs and services managed by Access to Justice: Legal Information Resources, Language Services, Guide & File, and the Maryland Court Help Centers. The dashboard’s data is updated monthly.

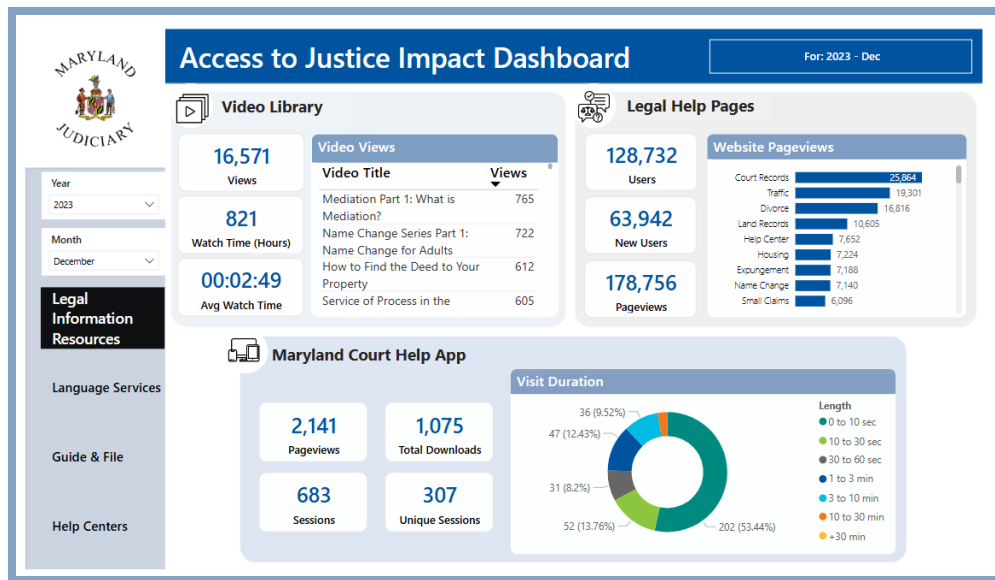


Figure 18. A screenshot of the Access to Justice Impact Dashboard displaying Legal Information Resource data from December 2023.