

Small Claims Advisor Program

A Guide for Self-Represented Litigants



Superior Court of California
County of Riverside

Self-Help Center

What is a Small Claims Advisor?

California law requires each county in the State of California to provide its residents with the services of a Small Claims Advisor at no charge. The Small Claims Advisor gives individual assistance to litigants on all small claims matters.

Who Can Use the Services of the Small Claims Advisor?

The Small Claims Advisor can provide services to any party (plaintiff or defendant) involved in a Small Claims case, or any person who is anticipating filing a small claims case. The Small Claims Advisor can also help with small claims appeals and collection of a small claims judgment.

How do I Contact the Small Claims Advisor?

There are different ways to contact the Riverside Small Claims Advisor:

By telephone (Riverside): 951-274-4499
(Desert Region): 760-393-2163

By E-mail: smallclaimsadvisory@riverside.courts.ca.gov

You can also meet with the Small Claims Advisor in person. Dates, times, and locations are available at your local court or online at:

<http://riverside.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp/smclaadvisorcal.pdf>

What Types of Services Can I Receive From the Small Claims Advisor?

The services provided by the Small Claims Advisor are intended to make the Small Claims process simpler, faster and more efficient. Some of the services you can expect to receive are as follows:

- Explanation of terms used in Small Claims court;
- Assistance in sorting out the issues of a potential case in order for you to decide on your course of action;
- Form preparation for your case;
- Information about collecting your Judgment (money);
- Guidance on how to prepare for trial (and what to expect when you get to court);
- Information on how to subpoena a witness(s); and
- Help in filing a Small Claims Appeals.

What do I Need When I Talk with the Small Claims Advisor?

- Originals or copies of any court documents (already filed or which you anticipate to file) which are important to your case;
- Dates/times of any events related to the case;
- Amount of damages;
- Evidence for your case (letters, bills, invoices, pictures, affidavits, written statements by witnesses) or any other documents related to your case.
- A notepad or sheet of paper to take down information, phone numbers, addresses, and other referrals that may be provided to you by the Small Claims Advisor.

How Can I Settle My Case Without Going to Court?

Both parties can participate in Small Claims Mediation before trial. The Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Riverside County has a Dispute Resolution Center that offers free or very low cost mediation services. Mediation is a voluntary confidential process where the disputing parties have an opportunity to sit down and talk about the problem with the help of a neutral third person known as a mediator. Trained, volunteer mediators work with both sides in an attempt to reach an agreement. Both parties must agree to participate in the mediation session. Mediation sessions are scheduled in a location near where you live.

Mediation provides the opportunity to resolve issues in an informal and less stressful environment and eliminates the need for time consuming and costly legal hearings and trials.

Please check the court's website for information regarding mediation or contact your local court: <http://www.riverside.courts.ca.gov/adr/adrciv.pdf>

Where Else Can I Locate Small Claims Information?

Small Claims information is available at the Superior Court of California, County of Riverside's website at:

www.riverside.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp/self-help.shtml

You can also obtain information regarding Small Claims at the California Department of Consumer Affairs website at:

http://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/small_claims/

You can also obtain useful information regarding Small Claims at the California Courts website at:

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-smallclaims.htm>