

## COURT ASSISTANCE SERVICES: DEMAND FOR COURT ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN IDAHO REMAINS HIGH



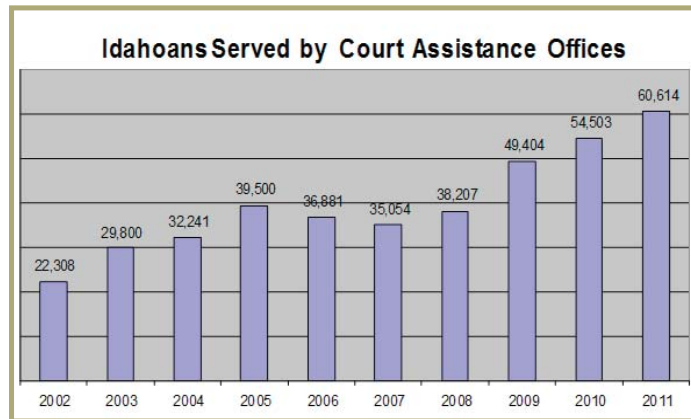
Report to  
Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter  
and the 2nd Regular Session of  
the 61st Idaho Legislature

# IDAHO JUDICIARY

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The demand for court assistance services increased in FY2011 for the third consecutive year to a record 60,614 requests, an increase of 11% over FY2010. Since FY2008 the number of requests for assistance has increased by 59%. The greatest demand continues to be for forms and instructions in cases ranging from landlord/tenant, name changes, and general civil types of proceedings to family related cases which include divorce, custody and child support. While forms and instructions are not available in all areas, parties also requested and received legal information and referrals for a wide range of other legal areas, such as bankruptcy, employment, probate, and real estate.



In addition, many requests are for referrals to relevant social services, help in accessing ISTARs and the court's self-help center website, as well as educational materials and videos explaining courts and court procedures.

While court assistance officers report difficulty in meeting the increase in demand for help, they continue to explore new

ways to provide service through the use of technology, workshops and collaboration with members of the Idaho Bar Association.

Recognizing the benefit court assistance services provide to the public and to the courts, clerks of the district court have provided additional support to court assistance offices. Deputy court clerks are being trained to coordinate with court assistance officers in the filing and review of family related cases, and to provide other discrete court assistance services such as assisting with workshops and orientations. This collaborative effort has helped meet the increasing demand for services.

### Pre-filing Workshops now available in three judicial districts

In FY2010 the first pilot pre-filing workshop was launched in the 6th Judicial District. Based on the success of that effort, pre-filing workshops are also now available in the 3rd and 7th Judicial Districts. The workshops provide assistance with court forms, court procedure, form review, child support calculation, and resources for self-represented litigants handling their own divorce or custody case. The group setting allows a court assistance officer to help more people in less time and in a more effective way. The 7th District reports they have been able to double the number of forms reviewed this year because of the workshop. Attending a workshop before filing forms with the court provides parents with more information and assistance, which increases the quality

**Workshop Wednesday**  
for filing of  
**Divorce with Children**  
**Modification of Custody/Support**

9:30 am  
Pick-Up Forms  
Getting Started - What to Expect  
Child Custody Issues  
Child Support Explained  
Property Issues

2:00 pm  
Form Review  
Notary Services  
Copy & File  
What Next?

Workshop fee  
FREE

If you are interested in attending, sign up in Room 218  
or between 9-10 am or 2-3 pm in 103A

Divorce Packet \$40.00  
Modification Packet \$25.00  
Custody Packet \$30.00

**WARNING: If either party has retirement,  
you should seek legal advice or talk to the Court Assistance Officer FIRST.**

of their pleadings and the likelihood of having a successful experience in court while also lessening the amount of time court clerks and judges spend correcting errors or redirecting the parents' efforts.

In addition, the 7th Judicial District is piloting a mandatory form review policy in two rural counties where workshops are not available, to ensure that forms are completed correctly before being filed. This has also led to a doubling of the number of forms reviewed for those two counties.

The 3rd Judicial District also reports favorably on its newly developed workshop with judges commenting about the increased quality of court assistance forms filed. The model implemented in this district includes participation by the family court services coordinator who provides educational information needed to create good parent plans as well as direct assistance in completing a proposed parent plan. Increasing the collaboration between court assistance and family court services is a statewide goal for FY2012.

### Attorney Workshop debuts in the 6th Judicial District



Building on the success of its pre-filing workshops, the first monthly attorney workshop debuted in the 6th Judicial District in April of 2011. The workshop provides a forum for persons handling their own court cases to ask a lawyer general legal questions on any topic. Lawyers participate pro bono through the Idaho Volunteer Lawyer Program. Both the participants and the lawyers have expressed a high level of enjoyment and satisfaction with these workshops. Another goal for FY2012 is to expand this model to other judicial districts.

### New Self-Help Center Website coming soon

The newly revised Court Assistance Website is nearing completion. The site will use open source software, allowing content to be easily updated which is a critical feature since the site contains over 400 court forms and instructions which must be modified regularly. The site will also feature a revised "Legal Services Directory," where governmental agencies and nonprofit corporations can list contact information as well as information about legal services they provide. Contact information for attorneys throughout the state willing to provide low cost, or sliding scale charges to low income Idahoans will also be available from the site's "Attorney Roster" section.



Plans for FY2012 include adding content and resources to the site, including "How To" videos which explain common court procedures self-represented litigants may encounter or need to properly present their case to the court.

### Continued innovation And collaboration key to meeting rising demand

Despite the lack of any additional resources, more Idahoans received court assistance services in FY2011 than ever before through the innovative practices and efforts of dedicated court assistance officers and deputy court clerks whose goal is simply to do all they can to provide the public with meaningful access to the courts. Moving forward into FY2012, this staff will continue to devise additional effective strategies for improving services and access to the courts.



## The Commitment of the Idaho Judiciary

As the Third Branch of Government, the Idaho Judiciary is committed to providing access to justice through the timely, fair, and impartial resolution of cases.

*The Idaho Courts stand for:*  
Integrity  
Fairness  
Independence  
Respect  
Excellence  
Innovation

*The Idaho Courts strive to:*

**Provide Timely, Fair, Impartial Case Resolution**

**Ensure Access to Justice**

**Promote Effective, Innovative Services**

**Increase Public Trust and Confidence in Idaho Courts**

Approved by the  
Supreme Court  
October 31, 2011