

# Court-Based Self-Help Centers

August 2023

## Summary:

The civil justice gap leaves **millions** of Americans **without legal assistance** to navigate the complex civil legal system. **Self-help centers** play a pivotal role in expanding access, bridging the justice gap, empowering litigants, and benefiting the courts by reducing reliance on clerks. In 2022, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and Massachusetts Applesseed conducted a national survey of court-based self-help center programs.

### Bridging the Divide

#### Challenge

- Complexity →
- Isolation →
- Accessibility →
- Connectivity →

#### CSC Solution

- Translate processes into plain language
- High-traffic & easy to find locations
- Services for disabled & LEP individuals
- Offering remote & mobile services, & clinics

“Imagine walking into a courtroom where the language is unfamiliar, the **rules are hidden**, and your housing, family, or **livelihood is on the line**. For millions, this isn't a "what if"... it's their reality.”

**over 30 million**

Americans face life-altering civil legal problems without a lawyer by their side.

For low-income Americans, the door to justice is often locked;

**92%** receive little to no legal help for their civil legal needs.

- While most programs handle under 10,000 cases, well-funded models in Colorado and Maryland prove handling over 150,000 instances of service annually is possible.
- 60% of programs are "skeleton crews" powered by 5 or fewer staff members.



**Massachusetts  
Appleseed**  
Center for Law & Justice

Check the Report Out Here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/2etzvmjw>

