

Who Ya Gonna Call?

Sometimes it is confusing to try to figure out where to send folks who need help in Dauphin County.

I. First, a person who needs legal help can call MidPenn Legal Services (232-0581) to see if s/he is eligible for free Legal Services and/or the Pro Bono Program (all DCBA pro bono referrals are screened by MidPenn).

A. S/he must have income at less than or equal to the federally-defined poverty level, and

B. The issue must be one MidPenn can address (e.g., not criminal or fee-generating).

C. If the caller is a Conflict with MidPenn but otherwise eligible, Sally or Peg will tell the caller to call "Sandy Ballard" for screening.

II. If s/he is not eligible for free services, Sally or Peg at MidPenn will tell the caller to call the DCBA Lawyer Referral Services (232-7536) – we do not take “walk-ins”

A. If s/he is not eligible for MidPenn, Sandy Ballard will screen her/him to see if s/he is eligible for our Modest Means Panel (lawyers who agree to take cases at \$50/hour, with a \$500 down payment).

1. It must not be a fee-generating matter, and

2. S/he must have income at less than or equal to twice the federally-defined poverty level, and

3. S/he must be able to pay (many callers are unable to do this!)

A.) The \$50/hour fee,

B.) A reasonable down payment (around \$500), and

C.) Any filing fees or other expenses.

B. Sandy Ballard refers her/him to a regular-priced attorney if

1. S/he is not eligible for Modest Means Panel, or

2. S/he is eligible for Modest Means but can not pay the fees noted above (then s/he is free to work out whatever payment arrangements s/he wants).

C. In addition, for any call, Sandy Ballard usually tries to

1. If the caller is > 60, refer the caller to AAA (255-2790) for free legal help.

2. Provide a sympathetic ear and listen to their concerns for as long as she can (unless another call is waiting)

3. Encourage the caller to go to PaLawHelp.org and/or the Courthouse Self Help Center.

4. Encourage the caller to try free mediation through Neighborhood Dispute Settlement (322-8255) (see Section III. below)

5. Give the caller legal information (not advice)

6. Refer the caller to other agencies, if appropriate (e.g., Contact Helpline 652-4400)

III. Also a free pro bono mediation is also available to help folks resolve their issues without having to pay an expensive lawyer.

A. For all cases with any client represented by pro bono attorneys appointed by MidPenn Legal Services and/or MidPenn staff attorneys, either side can request a free mediation through the Dauphin County Bar Association Civil Dispute Resolution Program by contacting me at (232-7536) or sandy@dcbpa.org.

1. Pro bono mediations can be especially helpful in contentious custody cases. The family law mediators prefer to do the roughly two-hour mediations without attorneys present. However, we can arrange for attorneys to be present also.

2. We can schedule the pro bono mediation without delaying the hearing or other court deadline.

B. Free mediation is also available through Neighborhood Dispute Settlement (233-8255) for pro se litigants.