



COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

General Instructions To Parties With No Lawyer

There are complex rules of law that everyone who comes to court must follow. You must follow these rules even though you are not a lawyer because the rules exist to provide an orderly process to reach a fair conclusion. There are many rules; this card lists only some of the rules.

- The Judge and courthouse staff cannot give you legal advice, teach you the rules of law or give you special treatment just because you represent yourself.
- It is best to have a lawyer represent you. You should consider at least talking to a lawyer. To assist with finding a lawyer for a consultation, please call the Bar Association of Lehigh County Lawyer Referral Service at 610-433-7094.
- Judges cannot act on, or respond to, letters or telephone calls from you.
- A major legal rule is "Due Process." This means that a judge cannot make a final decision on a request by one party unless the other party is told about it and is given a chance to respond to it and to come to court to tell their side of the story.
- Any time you file a legal document in a civil or criminal case, you must mail a copy of it to the other party and file a certification that you mailed it, and deliver a copy of the document to the Court Administrator's Office.

If you are filing for divorce, name change, expungement of criminal record, there is a self-help center on the Court's website at www.lccpa.org. Also, click on "Family Law" for information on Child Custody, Child Support and Protection From Abuse.

You may use the public law library on the 4th floor of the Courthouse to access the Court's website on the public computer and to do your own legal research.

****SEE OTHER SIDE FOR IMPORTANT DO'S AND DON'TS****



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DO:

DO file a change of address form with the Clerk of Judicial Records whenever you move your residence because Court notices of hearings and Orders will be sent to the address you have on file and you will be assumed to have received them.

DO file a praecipe for self-representation with the Clerk of Judicial Records if you are representing yourself in a Family Court case.

DO present evidence (witnesses, documents [2 copies], photographs [2 copies], etc.) to the judge in the courtroom to support your position. Judges decide cases after taking evidence from parties in the courtroom.

DO print out any evidence that is in your cell phone or computer if you want the judge to consider it (text, email, photograph, etc.).

DO NOT:

DO NOT write letters or send faxes to any judge or judge's staff.

DO NOT call any judge or judge's staff on the telephone.

DO NOT ask the judge to solve all of your problems. The judge can only make a decision on the matter that is properly before him or her that day.

DO NOT ask the judge to telephone witnesses or conduct investigations.

DO NOT ask the judge's staff or anyone working in any of the courthouse offices to solve your case, tell you what to do with your case, give you legal advice or predict what the judge will do.

DO NOT mail or deliver letters to the Clerk of Judicial Records. You may only file proper legal documents that are permitted under the rules.

****SEE OTHER SIDE FOR IMPORTANT GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS****