



Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

Key Source Provides Popular Courthouse Navigation and Child Support Workshops

By Darella Motley



K.E.Y.S. (Keep Empowering Your Self), provided by Key Source Pro Se Consulting & Training, is a program that delivers tips and strategies for people who need to represent themselves in legal cases. These workshops are offered by the Reentry Reconnection Grassroots Coalition and

are funded by the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry.

Our research has shown that nearly every day, the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court receives cases with parents who have concerns about visitation, child custody and child support issues. Many of the motions are handwritten and are being filed by *Pro Se* (a legal term that means “self-represented”) people and/or those people who are unable to afford to hire an attorney.

Returning citizens will have to navigate the legal system regarding driver’s license issues, child support orders and arrearages, a host of post divorce decree matters, challenges to visitation and custody rights and many other potential legal issues. Regardless of the outcome of a particular case, it would help if returning citizens can perceive that the system is “working” through better access to the courts. This perception alone might reduce the frequency of repeat offenses.

We Can Help You Decide

Key Source realizes, of course, many people may have legal issues that are too complicated to be handled *Pro Se*. During the initial case review at the workshop, a Law Coach determines if a customer’s case falls outside of what our service can offer.

You need a lawyer if: (these are only examples)

- You want legal advice.
- You do not fully understand papers you received from the other party side or from the court.

(Court administration may be able to answer some questions for you.)

- You cannot afford to lose your case.
- You have a complicated case.
- You want to appeal a case.
- You are charged with a crime.
- You want to sue someone, but you don’t know the legal theory or basis for your claim.

You may not need a lawyer if: (these are only examples)

- You understand your case well enough to explain it to a judge.
- You don’t get overly nervous speaking in public, like a courtroom.
- You are organized and keep accurate records.
- You can write neatly or type.
- You have time to prepare papers, make copies, learn the required steps, file papers with the court, do legal research and attend court hearings.
- You have time to respond (right away) to papers you receive from the other party.
- You are able to read, understand, and respond promptly to all papers you get from the Court.

Do’s and Don’ts when Representing Yourself

The court is a very traditional place. When you are representing yourself in court, you are trying to persuade a judge or jury that you are right. So you must act, dress, and speak in a way that helps you with your case.

Here are some tips:

1. Be on time

- Your case can be dismissed if you are late.
- The judge may make a decision without hearing your side.

What do I do if I know I am going to be late to court?

- Call the court, ask to speak with the secretary of the judge assigned to your case or the court clerk. Ask



Continued on page 3

In This Issue

Page 1...Courthouse Navigation....

Page 2...Fatherhood Development...

Fatherhood Development Program Helps Returning Fathers Build Relationship Skills

By Mary Kelley



Many formerly incarcerated people come home to find they have fractured relationships with family and friends. At the very least, incarceration is an interruption of a stable family and social life. During this absence, a returning citizen can find that their role as a parent, father figure and family member has changed. Many returning citizens find that they want to repair and improve their relationships with others, but they don't know how to start.

Returning fathers can find the tools they need through the Fatherhood Development program offered by the Reentry Reconnection Grassroots Coalition and funded by the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry. Program Facilitator Muqit Sabur invites new members to attend weekly classes located at the Reconnection Center.

The Three Keys

"The program is based on the concept of the Three Keys: Making it Safe to Connect, Doing Your Part, and Deciding and Not Sliding," said Mr. Sabur. "We work to help a man discover his strengths and then use those strengths to manage his relationships – primarily his relationships with his children."

Any man who is a father or father figure to someone can join the twelve-week program at any time. The class format is relaxed and Mr. Sabur describes it as a comfortable living room where class members do their work in a safe and confidential setting. The program covers a number of different topics, including managing stress, setting personal priorities, staying positive, finding ways to give back and learning skills for how to keep healthy relationships.



Although the class deals with family relationships, it is not a family therapy or a mediation service. No one will make calls or contacts for a class member or make a class member make outside contacts if he doesn't want to do so. The purpose is to give the class member the tools to build or strengthen relationships on his own. Mr. Sabur emphasized that, "what goes on here stays here."

"The skills you learn in our class can be applied in all relationships, including those with your friends, your relatives and other ones as well – such as with your employers, employees or co-workers," Mr. Sabur said. "We don't judge people and we will work with you at whatever level you are at."

Mr. Muqit Sabur has worked in the field of fatherhood development for fifteen years. More information about the Fatherhood Development class is available at the Reentry Reconnection website at www.neofatehring.net or by calling 216-431-9000 or by sending an email to infoRRGC@gmail.com. The Reentry Reconnection Center is located at 3631 Perkins, 4th floor Cleveland, OH 44114.

"The skills you learn in our class can be applied in all relationships..."



*We want to hear from you...
Your comments are important to us.*

Write to us at

Cuyahoga County
Office of Reentry

310 West Lakeside Avenue, Suite 550
Cleveland, OH 44113

Courthouse Navigation *Continued from front cover*

the secretary to tell the judge why you are late & when you expect to arrive.

2. Dress neatly

- You do not need fancy clothes, just make sure you are neat and clean.
- Tank tops, shorts, ripped jeans or baseball hats are not acceptable. T-shirts or hats with messages such as “Legalize Marijuana” or “Where’s the Beef,” while funny, are not acceptable for court.

3. Be respectful

- How you act is as important as how you look. Just like an attorney, you must be respectful to everyone in the court, including the judge, court staff and the other party involved in your case.
- Do not speak while others are speaking. Do not get into an argument with the other side. If you disagree with what the other side is saying, wait until he or she is done and then tell the judge.
- Speak to the judge only when you are told it is your turn. Address the judge as “your honor.” Never interrupt the judge.
- Try to control your emotions as much as possible, especially anger.



4. Do not bring children with you to court

It is okay to bring your child if it is a custody or visitation case only when the judge or magistrate needs to talk with your child(ren). In all other cases, find someone to look after your child(ren).

5. Turn off all cell phones and pagers

Turn your phone/pager off when you enter the court. Ringing phones and beeping pagers are very distracting and make some judges very mad, which will not help your case!

What can I expect when I arrive at the Courthouse?

1. Check in at the clerk’s office to find out which courtroom to go to.
2. Go into the courtroom and sit quietly until your case is called. You may have to wait for up to an hour; just be patient.
3. When your case is called, walk to the table or podium for lawyers in front of the judge and stand facing the judge. The judge will tell you when to speak.
4. When the judge asks you to present your case, tell the judge what it is that you are requesting and why you are requesting it.

5. After you are finished, the other side will have a chance to ask you questions.

6. Next, the other side will present his/her case. Don’t forget, if you disagree with something the other side says, do not interrupt. You will have an opportunity to ask the other side questions when he/she is finished talking.

During the hearing the judge or magistrate may ask you questions, so:

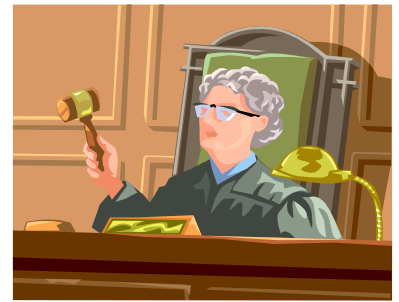
- If you don’t understand the question, say so. Don’t answer until you fully understand the question.
- If you don’t know the answer, say “I do not know.”
- Do not be afraid to admit that you don’t know something.

Decisions are not always made right away. In most cases, you will receive the judge’s decision in the mail within two weeks.

DON’T’S:

Do not try to talk to the judge about your case before your case is called.

- The law prevents the judge from talking to one party if the other party is not present (unless the case is currently before the court).
- This one-sided conversation is called an “ex parte communication” and it is not allowed.
- Any letter, motion, or request you send to the court will be ignored by the judge (because it is an ex parte communication) unless you send a copy of that letter or request to the opposing party as well.
- Otherwise the judge will not even read your letter.



For example:

If you write a letter to the judge requesting that the court date for your divorce be changed, you must also send a copy of this letter to your spouse and let the judge know that you have done this.

Do not ask court staff for legal advice.

- Court staff are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice. More importantly, they are employees of the court and must treat both sides in a case fairly. It is unfair and against the rules for them to help one party and not the other.
- However, court staff can answer questions about court procedure, court rules and the meaning of certain legal terms.

Do not ask law librarians for legal advice.

- Your county may have a law library that keeps legal reference books that are used by judges,

Continued on page 4

Courthouse Navigation *Continued from page 3*

local lawyers and their staffs.

- Most law librarians are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice. Even if a librarian is an attorney, they are not acting as your attorney and cannot give you legal advice.
- They cannot tell you which form you need or what information to put on the form.
- Read the instructions provided and try to figure this out for yourself.

The information in this document is informational only and is not intended as legal advice.

Darella Motley is the Chief Executive Officer of Key Source Pro Se Consulting & Training. More information about the K.E.Y.S. Program can be found at www.neofathering.net or by calling the Reentry Reconnection Grassroots Coalition at 216-431-9000, or by sending an email to infoRRGC@gmail.com. The Reentry Reconnection Center is located at 3631 Perkins, 4th floor Cleveland, OH 44114.

CITIZEN CIRCLES TRAINING

Citizens Circles are always looking for new members!

Mark your Calendars for this training in March

Citizen Circles Training

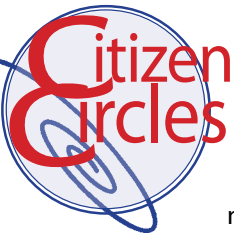
March 3, 2011

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Located at the
Alternate Skills Center
8003 Broadway Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio

To register or get more information please contact Carolyn Perkins, 216-698-3437.

The Citizen Circles Concept



Citizen participation and guidance is essential for correctional practices inside and outside institutions. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has embraced the needs related to offenders returning home from correctional settings and as such one strategy is the implementation of Citizen Circles. i Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community.

Citizen Circles Locations

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle

216.421.0482 ext. 282

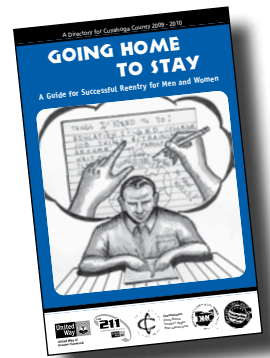
CEOGC

North Star Resource Center

216.751.1382

Mt. Pleasant

216.751.1085



To receive a copy of **Going Home to Stay**

contact First Call for Help at 216.436.2000 or go online and download a copy at www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf

GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGY Cuyahoga County Reentry Review



COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry
email: ReentryInfo@cuyahogacounty.us
phone: 216.698.2501