

SELF REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

You have a right represent yourself, but with that right comes the responsibility to follow proper procedures.

In **criminal** cases, it is generally better to have a lawyer assist you when you have a pending matter that can result in you being sentenced to jail. If the judge agrees that you cannot afford a lawyer, one can be appointed to represent you.

In **civil** cases, you do not have the right to a court appointed lawyer.

In addition, when representing yourself, you are responsible to follow these rules:

1. Before coming to the courthouse, review and comply with the **Dress, Civility and Court Procedures** document.
2. Stand when speaking in court, and speak loudly and into the microphone. Speak only to the judge or the witness when questioning them.
3. Do not interrupt or argue with others. You will have your turn to present your side of the case, to ask your witnesses questions, and to question the other side's witnesses. You and your witnesses will be questioned by the other side.
4. If you wish to have a witness ordered to appear at the trial, you must make the request in writing to the Clerk of Court, including correct name and address, together with payment of the Clerk's fees. This should be done at least two (2) weeks before the trial.
5. Do not interfere with a witness by making gestures, noises, or by shaking or nodding your head during their testimony. Do not "coach" your witness or tell them what to say.
6. Witnesses may be "sequestered" which will require them to remain outside the courtroom during the trial until it is their turn to testify. The judge will order them not to talk about the case with anyone while the case is going on. When they testify they can only testify about what they know of their own knowledge and not about what they heard you or anyone else say.
7. When you and witnesses testify, questions must be answered truthfully and should only answer the questions asked. Do not ramble or make offensive comments about anyone.
8. Here are some helpful forms:

[Rules for Louisiana District Courts](#)

[17th JDC Court Rule Appendices](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Form](#)

[Request for Interpreter Form](#)

[In Forma Pauperis Affidavit](#)