

**FROM: Debra K. Halford, Chancellor
Fourth Chancery District**

TO: All Pro Se Litigants

You have the right to represent yourself in any Court matter except guardianships, conservatorships, and estates and even in those actions there are circumstances where you may represent yourself. (Please refer to prior Guardianship memo dated February 17, 2015.)

If you choose to represent yourself, you must do so without assistance from anyone unless that person is a licensed attorney. The Chancery Clerk and staff cannot practice law by advising you about your case. You are allowed to look through the files in the Chancery Clerk's office which are public record to find papers to go by but the staff cannot supply particular papers for you or to check the accuracy of your paperwork. If you represent yourself, you have the same responsibility to prepare and file your paperwork in accordance with the law as an attorney does. The laws governing your case and rules about the proceedings are available on the Mississippi Attorney General's website. You are further required to prepare and have issued the correct form of summons and subpoena for witnesses.

If you represent yourself, you are further required to make sure your case is properly set through the Court Administrator, Stacey Campbell. Her telephone number is 601-384-3833. *Neither Mrs. Campbell, the law clerk, Ben Weathers (both of whom work with me), nor any of the deputy clerks are authorized to give you any advice or assistance in proper preparation of your case.* The Clerks do issue process but they only issue the process that you prepare so you are responsible for getting it right.

If your divorce is a joint complaint on the grounds of irreconcilable differences, you are responsible for notifying the Court Administrator when the sixty (60) day waiting period is up to have your case put on the docket. Your file will not be reviewed or presented to the Court until you request a setting. Pursuant to Court Rules, pleadings are not to be filed and orders are not to be submitted that contain blanks or that have handwritten data inserted in the blanks. *Therefore fill-in-the- blank pleadings completed with handwritten information are not accepted for filing.*

Since the law is a specialized field and your business is important, you are encouraged to get advice from an attorney. I am not trying to discourage you from representing yourself, but it is important for you to understand that none of the Court personnel can give you legal advice or provide any assistance to you beyond the scope of their job duties. Specifically they are prohibited from advising you or consulting with you on how you prepare or file your case.

If you are not able to afford an attorney, please refer to the numbers below:

MS Center for Legal Services

800-498-1804

MS Volunteer Lawyers Project

601-960-9577