

Only an Attorney May Provide Legal Advice

Individuals (but not corporations, partnerships, trusts or other business entities) may appear *pro se* in the Bankruptcy Court. An appearance is *pro se* if the party represents himself/herself without an attorney. Bankruptcy can be a difficult area in which to appear *pro se*. **An attorney is the only person who is authorized to give legal advice** regarding a bankruptcy case or proceeding. A party wishing to retain an attorney should review the Court's [Find an Attorney \(Sometimes Available for Free\)](#) information.

- The Court's Clerk's Office and the Court chambers staff may not provide you legal advice. For example, they cannot:
 - ▶ explain the meaning of a statutory provision or rule;
 - ▶ provide an interpretation of case law;
 - ▶ explain the result of taking or not taking action in a case;
 - ▶ help you complete forms or advise you regarding what is legally required when a form requires you to provide information;
 - ▶ tell you whether jurisdiction is proper in a case;
 - ▶ tell you whether a complaint properly presents a claim;
 - ▶ provide advice on the best procedure to accomplish a particular goal;
 - ▶ explain who should receive proper notice or service of papers.

- The Judge cannot provide you with legal advice. The Judge's job is to resolve disputes between parties and supervise the case. The Judge must remain impartial. Here are examples of impermissible contacts with a Judge:
 - ▶ contacting a Judge directly (often referred to as *ex parte*) about a case (*See [Fed. R. Bankr. P. 9003](#)*);
 - ▶ failing to serve all necessary parties when you file a paper with the Court seeking relief (*See [Fed. R. Bankr. P. 2002](#)*).

- Petition preparers **are not authorized** to give legal advice. The role of a petition preparer is strictly limited to transcribing (for a minimal fee) the information that a client provides.
 - ▶ A petition preparer can **not** provide advice regarding which information is legally required to be included on court papers.
 - ▶ Most forms required in a bankruptcy case are available for free on the Court's website (<http://moeb.uscourts.gov/forms.htm>) in a version that allows you to complete the forms using an ordinary computer. The Bankruptcy Court does not provide copies of bankruptcy forms. It provides computers for use when retrieving docket sheets or documents

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that have already been filed, but does not provide computers to use when completing bankruptcy forms. However, your local library may have a computer that you can use.

- Links to free materials with information about bankruptcy are available through [**Additional Resources for Information on Bankruptcy**](#).

The topics discussed on this page, and other topics that may be helpful to parties proceeding *pro se*, are discussed in the sections of the Court's website regarding Chapter 7, Chapter 13, and General Bankruptcy Info. See [Filing Information and Information for Parties without an Attorney](#).