



UTAH STATE COURTS

Guide to Appealing a Case

**Appealing a District Court or
Juvenile Court (except child welfare cases)
to the
Utah Supreme Court or
Utah Court of Appeals**

Utah Supreme Court

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PO Box 140210
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-0210
801-578-3900
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Utah Court of Appeals

450 S State Street, 5th Floor
PO Box 140230
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-0230
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The Appellate Clerks' Office is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
The office is closed on all state and federal holidays.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Overview | 3 |
| What is an appeal? | 3 |
| Who can appeal? | 3 |
| Final judgment or order | 4 |
| Jurisdiction | 4 |
| Fees..... | 4 |
| Filing | 5 |
| Non-Public Information | 5 |
| Service | 6 |
| Asking for More Time (Motion for Extension of Time) | 7 |
| Appellate Mediation | 7 |
| Procedures | 8 |
| Notice of Appeal Timeline | 8 |
| Notice of Appeal | 9 |
| After the Notice of Appeal is filed | 9 |
| Transcripts | 10 |
| Docketing Statement | 11 |
| After the Docketing Statement is filed | 11 |
| Motion for Summary Disposition | 12 |
| Briefing Process | 12 |
| Appellant’s Brief | 12 |
| Appellee’s Brief | 12 |
| Reply Brief | 13 |
| Example Briefs | 13 |
| Number of copies and service | 13 |
| Oral Argument..... | 13 |
| Appellate Court Decision | 14 |
| Options After the Written Decision is Issued | 15 |
| Petition for Rehearing | 15 |
| Petition for Writ of Certiorari in the Utah Supreme Court | 15 |
| Remittitur | 16 |
| Appellate Rules | 16 |
| Other Resources | 16 |
| Representing Yourself in an Appeal | 17 |

The purpose of this guide

This guide is for cases that are being appealed from a district court or juvenile court case (except child welfare) to the Utah Court of Appeals or the Utah Supreme Court.

There are separate guides for:

- Appealing a child welfare case from juvenile court
- Appealing a decision from an administrative agency (Writ of Review)
- Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Utah Supreme Court

Not all cases are appealed to the Supreme Court or Court of Appeals. Decisions from the justice court (misdemeanor criminal, traffic and small claims cases), for example, are appealed to the district court. Some administrative agency decisions are appealed to the district court. See our [Appeals web page](#) for more information about these kinds of appeals.

Overview

What is an appeal?

[Appellate Rule 3](#)

An appeal is a review by the supreme court or court of appeals to determine if the juvenile or district court made a legal mistake. An appeal is started by filing a Notice of Appeal with the clerk of the court that made the decision to be appealed.

This guide describes the process for appealing a case to one of Utah's two appellate courts: the **Utah Supreme Court** or the **Utah Court of Appeals**.

An appellate court does not retry the case, take evidence, or weigh the credibility of witnesses. The appeal must be based on the record created in the trial court, and the person who is appealing must show that the trial court made a mistake. If there was a mistake, it must have been important enough that it could have made a difference in the outcome of the case.

Who can appeal?

Only a party in the original case can appeal the decision of the trial court. A party can represent himself or herself, but cannot represent anyone else, such as another person or business. Only an attorney who is licensed to practice in Utah can represent someone in an appeal.

Final judgment or order

The final **judgment** or **order** is the final result in a case, and it ends all claims by all parties. There will be no more decisions from the judge.

The judgment or order must be in writing. Sometimes the judge makes an order on the record but there is no written order signed by the judge. A party must then prepare and submit to the trial court a written order for the judge to sign before the appeal can proceed.

Jurisdiction

The Utah Supreme Court and the Utah Court of Appeals have different jurisdiction – or authority – to hear appeals of different types of cases from different trial courts.

The Utah Supreme Court has the right to transfer many of its cases to the Utah Court of Appeals for decision. The appellant might file a case with the Supreme Court, which could then be transferred to the Court of Appeals. The process is sometimes called “pouring” a case. If a case is transferred, the Court of Appeals will be the court that reviews the appeal.

Fees

[Appellate Rule 3](#)

When the Notice of Appeal is filed, the appellant must pay a filing fee of \$240.00 and a cost bond of \$300.00 to the trial court. No filing fee or cost bond is required for criminal cases or juvenile court (except child welfare) cases.

The cost bond is like an insurance policy the appellant is buying to cover expenses the appellee might have to defend against the appeal. The appellant may ask the trial court to return the bond once the appeal is complete.

If the appellant can't pay the required fees, they can ask the trial court to waive the filing fee if they can show that they meet certain financial/income guidelines. The appellant must fill out and file a [Motion to Waive Fees](#) with the trial court. If the appellant also wants to waive the cost bond, they must specifically ask for that in their motion.

Even if a waiver of the filing fee and cost bond is approved by the trial court, the appellant will still have to pay other costs associated with the appeal. For example, if the appellant requests a transcript of the trial court proceedings, then they must pay the court reporter to prepare it. The appellate courts also charge for copies of documents.

Filing

[Appellate Rule 21](#)

To *file* a document means to give it to the [Appellate Clerk's Office](#) in Salt Lake City. Parties can file papers with the court in person or by mail. Parties may also file some documents by email, subject to the following rules:

- If a document other than a brief is delivered by email, a paper copy does not need to be delivered.
- If a brief is delivered by email, paper copies of the brief must be delivered to the court no more than 7 days after filing by email.
- Documents filed by email will be considered timely filed if the email is received before midnight on the last day for filing.
- If a party emails a document to the court as an attachment, an automatic response will be emailed as confirmation of receipt of the document.
- If a party emails a document to the court, the party assumes the risk for any problems that may occur.

Email Addresses:

supremecourt@utcourts.gov

courtofappeals@utcourts.gov

Non-Public Information

Records are classified as public, private, controlled, protected, safeguarded, sealed, juvenile court legal, or juvenile court social by Code of Judicial Administration [Rule 4-202.02](#). The right of public access might also be restricted by [Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act](#), by other statutes, rules, or case law, or by court order.

If a filing, including an addendum, contains non-public information, the filer must also file a public version with all such information removed. Utah Rule of Appellate Procedure 21 (h) requires the filer to file an un-redacted (complete) version for the court and a version for the public that does not contain the confidential information.

See the court's [Non-Public Records page](#) for more information about classification of court records.

Service

[Appellate Rule 21](#)

To serve a document means to give a copy of it to all other parties. Any document you file with the appellate court must also be served on all of the other parties in the appeal. If the other side has an attorney, the attorney must be served. If the other side does not have an attorney, the other party must be served at their last known address or email address provided to the appellate court.

Documents may be served by mail, hand delivery or email.

A [Certificate of Service](#) must be attached to all documents filed with the appellate court. The Certificate of Service tells the court when and how service was made, who was served, and where they were served. The court will not act on any document unless a Certificate of Service is attached to it.

- Copies of all documents filed with the appellate court must, at or before the time of filing, be served on all other parties to the appeal or review.
- A copy of any document required by the rules to be served on a party must be accompanied by a certificate of service when filed with the court.
- The time for filing a response to a document served by email runs from the date the document was emailed to the court.
- The time for filing a response to a document served by mail runs from the date of mailing listed on the certificate of service, and three days will be added to the time. Most often the total time for response to any motion served by mail will be 17 calendar days from the date of mailing.
- In an appeal of a criminal case, the prosecuting attorney must also be served. Misdemeanor appeals must be served on the city or county attorney. Felony appeals must be served on the attorney general:

Attorney General
Appeals Division
160 East 300 South
PO Box 140854
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-0854
uag@agutah.gov

There are special requirements for serving briefs. More information is provided in the **Briefs** section.

Asking for More Time (Motion for Extension of Time)

[Appellate Rule 22\(b\)](#)

In some situations, a party may ask the court for more time to meet a deadline by filing a [Motion for Extension of Time](#). The Motion for Extension of Time is subject to the following requirements:

- The motion must be filed before the deadline.
- The motion must include:
 - a good reason for extending the deadline
 - whether extensions have been requested before, and if so, how many times and how long those extensions were
 - when the deadline is
 - what the party would like the new deadline to be

The appellate courts do not favor requests to extend a deadline by more than 30 days.

If the appellant wants to ask for more time to file the Notice of Appeal, they must file the request in the trial court. Only the trial court can extend the time to file the Notice of Appeal. To ask the trial court for more time, see the forms on the [Motions page](#) on the court's website.

Parties can agree to extend the deadline to file briefs. This agreement is called a “stipulation,” and must be filed with the appellate court. A stipulation cannot extend the time by more than 30 days and will only be allowed if it is filed before the deadline expires.

Appellate Mediation

[Appellate Rule 28A](#)

Some cases filed with the Court of Appeals will be referred to the Appellate Mediation Office to see if it is possible to resolve the disputed issues through mediation. Resolving disputes using mediation is always less expensive than going to court, and parties are able to participate in the resolution process rather than have a resolution imposed on them. This is a free service of the court.

The appellate court mediator schedules parties to a mediation conference either in person or by phone. The mediator will explain the process and identify the issues, interests, and needs of each party.

The mediator will then meet privately with each party to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the case, the risks of proceeding with the appeal, and options for settlement. Following these discussions, the participants will review options for resolution and begin negotiating settlement. If an agreement is reached, the mediator will meet with the participants to discuss the details of settlement.

More information about appellate mediation is available on the court's website:
<https://www.utcourts.gov/en/about/miscellaneous/mediation/med-coa.html>

Procedures

Notice of Appeal Timeline

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Notice of Appeal | Due 30 days after final order of trial court. (Some appeals are due earlier than 30 days.) Filed with the trial court. |
| Transcript Request | Due 14 days after filing of Notice of Appeal. Filed with the appellate court. |
| Docketing Statement | Due 21 days after filing of Notice of Appeal. Filed with the appellate court. |
| Record/Record Index | Prepared by District Court and filed with the appellate court. |
| Appellant's Brief | Due 40 days after District Court's filing of record/record index. Notice will be sent to the parties by mail or email with the record index and due date for the brief. |
| Appellee's Brief | Due 30 days after filing of appellant's brief. |
| Appellant's Reply Brief | Optional, due 30 days after filing of appellee's brief. |
| Placed on Court's Calendar | Court will notify parties if it schedules oral argument. |
| Under Advisement | Court is preparing its decision. |
| Opinion/Decision Filed | Court issues written opinion or decision. |
| Petition for Rehearing | Optional, due 14 days after the decision is issued. (URAP 35) |
| Petition for Writ of Certiorari | Optional, due 30 days after the decision is issued. (URAP 45) (To the Utah Supreme Court from a decision of the Utah Court of Appeals) |
| Remittitur | Generally issued 15 days after the opinion is filed in |

the Supreme Court and 40 days after opinion is filed
in the Court of Appeals

Notice of Appeal

Appellate [Rule 3](#) and [4](#)

The appeal process starts when someone files a Notice of Appeal within the time allowed to appeal. The party filing the Notice of Appeal is called the **appellant**, and the party the appeal is against is called the **appellee**.

The Notice of Appeal is filed with the trial court. If the case was heard in district court, the Notice of Appeal is filed with the district court. If the case was heard in juvenile court, the Notice of Appeal is filed with the juvenile court.

In most cases, the appellant must file the Notice of Appeal with the clerk of the trial court within 30 days after the date of entry of the final judgment or order being appealed.

Some appeals must be filed sooner than 30 days. For example, when an order is entered in an eviction case, the notice of appeal must be filed within 10 days after the date of entry.

If the appellant wants to ask for more time to file the Notice of Appeal, they must file the request in the trial court. Only the trial court can extend the time to file the Notice of Appeal. To ask the trial court for more time, see the forms on the [Motions page](#) on the court's website. [URAP 4\(e\)](#).

The appellant must also pay a filing fee and a cost bond to the trial court, or ask to have those costs waived as described in the **Fees** section above.

After the Notice of Appeal is filed

After the Notice of Appeal is filed and the filing fee and cost bond have been paid to the trial court, the trial court will certify a copy of the Notice of Appeal to the appellate court.

Once the Appellate Clerks' Office receives the Notice of Appeal, it will send a notice to the appellant that will include the appellate case number and the filing deadlines for the required documents. The appellee(s) will also receive a copy of the notice.

Transcripts

[Appellate Rule 11\(c\)\(1\)](#)

Within 14 days of filing the Notice of Appeal, the appellant must ask for the transcript to be prepared.

A transcript is a word-for-word typing of everything that was said on the record during a hearing or the trial held in the trial court. It is **not** the audio recording of a hearing or trial. A transcript is important because it is what the appellate court uses to review the trial court proceedings.

The appellant must request a transcript using the [online request form](#), unless they are incarcerated or otherwise unable to use the online form, in which case they may use a print form to make the request.

The appellant must serve a copy of the automated response from the online transcript request (or a copy of the transcript request form, if using the print form) on the other party by mail, email, or hand delivery.

The appellant must also fill out a Certificate of Service form and file it with the court. The certificate of service tells the court when and how the other party was served with the document, and the name(s) and address(es) of whoever was served.

Cost of Transcripts

The appellant must pay a certified court transcriber the estimated cost of the transcript, and must serve a copy of the transcript on the appellee(s). The cost of transcripts is set by [Utah Code Section 78A-2-408](#) at the following rates:

- \$4.50/page for regular service (within 30 days) Approximately \$250.00/court hour
- \$6.75/page for 1-3 day service
- \$9.00/page for 24 hour service

If the appellant **can't afford the cost of preparing** a transcript, or if a transcript is unavailable, it is possible for the appellant to prepare their own transcript of a court proceeding. The appellant must follow the procedures described in [URAP 11\(e\)](#):

- Appellant prepares a statement of evidence or proceedings. If an audio recording is available, they can use it to put the statement together.
- Appellant must serve the statement on the appellee, who may object or propose amendments within 14 days.
- The statement and any objections or proposed amendments must be submitted to the trial court for approval. If the judge approves, the statement will be sent to the appellate court as a record of the proceedings.

If the appellant is an **indigent prisoner**, the prosecuting agency in the trial court proceeding is responsible for the cost of transcripts in any first appeal of right in a criminal case. See Utah Code Section [78A-2-408](#).

In very rare cases the appellant **does not need a transcript** for the appeal. For example, maybe there was no hearing or trial in the case. If the appellant believes that a transcript is not necessary for the appeal, they must file a Certificate that Transcript is Not Requested with the appellate court. Remember, the transcript is what the appellate court uses to review the lower court's decision. If it is not provided to the appellate court, the chances of winning on appeal drop dramatically.

Docketing Statement

[Appellate Rule 9](#)

The Docketing Statement is the document the appellant uses to show the appellate court that it has jurisdiction to consider the appeal. It is also how the appellant identifies at least one substantial issue for review.

A “substantial issue” is a legal mistake the appellant believes the trial court made. The appellant is focusing the appellate court's attention on a specific and significant error that the trial court made.

Here are two examples of simplified statements of substantial issues in a divorce case:

- The trial court made a mistake in setting the amount of child support.
- The trial court made a mistake in dividing the marital property.

The Docketing Statement is not the place for an explanation of *why* something was a mistake. That should be saved for the briefing stage, which is described later in this guide. Instead, this is where the appellant identifies *what* the mistake was that the appellate court should review.

The appellant must file a Docketing Statement with the appellate court within 21 days from the filing of the Notice of Appeal.

The appellant must also serve a copy of the Docketing Statement on the appellee(s). Failure to file the docketing statement may result in dismissal of the appeal.

After the Docketing Statement is filed

The appellate court will review the Docketing Statement. If the court determines it has jurisdiction and that there are appealable issues, then the case will proceed to the briefing stage.

Motion for Summary Disposition

[Appellate Rule 10](#)

The appellate court may send to the parties a Motion for Summary Disposition which says that the court is considering dismissing or denying the appeal for one or both of these reasons:

- It appears that the appellate court does not have jurisdiction
- It needs clarification about the issue(s) on appeal. URAP 10(a)(2) says the court may dismiss an appeal if there is no “substantial” issue presented.

The parties may each file a response (sometimes called a “memorandum”) explaining why they think the court should – or should not – dismiss or deny the appeal. The court will tell the parties when the response is due and how many copies must be filed with the court.

The court will review the response(s). If the court determines that it does not have jurisdiction or that the appeal is without merit, it will issue a written decision without further proceedings.

Briefing Process

[Appellate Rules 24, 26 & 27](#)

The briefs are the single most important part of the appellate process. Briefs are the written arguments of parties stating the reasons why the appellate court should rule in their favor. This may be the only time the parties will make their argument to the court, so it’s important that the parties make their briefs clear and persuasive.

Appellant’s Brief

The appellant’s brief is what the appellant uses to persuade the appellate court that the trial court made a specific error or errors in law, fact, or procedure that affected the outcome of the case. The brief should focus on the law and the facts, and should explain how the law should apply to the facts. [Rule 24](#) explains what should be included in a brief and how it should be organized.

The appellant must also provide an addendum which includes materials the appellant believes are of central importance to the appeal.

Appellee’s Brief

The appellee’s brief is due 30 days after the appellant’s brief is filed. The appellee can respond to the arguments made by the appellant and explain why the decision in the trial court was correct.

The appellee’s brief must comply with most of the same rules as the appellant’s brief.

[Rule 24](#) explains what should be included in a brief and how it should be organized.

Reply Brief

The appellant may file a reply brief in answer to the appellee's brief. This optional brief must be filed within 30 days after the appellee's brief is served. See Appellate [Rule 24\(b\)](#) for the requirements of this brief. The reply should be limited to answering any new matters set forth in the appellee's brief.

Example Briefs

Parties can review Utah appellate court briefs to see how they are constructed. Briefs are available in print at the Utah State Law Library, the BYU Howard W. Hunter Law Library and the University of Utah James E. Faust Law Library.

Number of copies and service

Multiple briefs must be filed with the court and served on the other party:

- **Court of Appeals:** Six paper copies, one of which shall contain an original signature.
- **Supreme Court:** Eight paper copies, one of which shall contain an original signature.

Briefs are considered **filed** on the date of the postmark if first-class mail is used.

Upon request, two copies of the brief must be served on the other party. The briefs must include a Certificate of Service showing how copies were served on the other party. See the [Checklist for Briefs](#) for more information about briefing requirements.

Oral Argument

[Appellate Rule 29](#)

After the briefs are filed, the appellate court will set the case on the next available calendar for consideration and decision. The court will either make its decision based on the briefs, or will schedule oral argument.

- Most **Court of Appeals** cases are decided solely on the briefs. Oral argument is held only if the court determines that oral argument will significantly help the decision process.
- In cases before the **Supreme Court**, oral argument will be held unless the court decides it will not help the decision process.

The parties use oral argument to present their arguments in person to the judges and to respond to any questions the judges may have.

The appellate judges have read the briefs filed in the case and will be familiar with the facts, issues and law on the case. Parties should not use their argument time to simply repeat what they have written in the briefs. Instead, parties should focus on the legal

question(s) that the appellate court has agreed to review.

- In the **Court of Appeals**, the total time for all arguments is 30 minutes. The appellant and the appellee each get 15 minutes.
- In the **Supreme Court**, the total time for all arguments is 40 minutes. The appellant and the appellee each get 20 minutes.

To prepare for oral argument in the Supreme Court, parties may want to review the [Supreme Court Practitioner’s Guide to Oral Argument](#).

Oral arguments are public. Anyone may observe them in person or listen to archived recordings of previous arguments on the courts’ website to get an idea of the procedure.

- [Oral argument calendars](#)
- [Supreme Court oral argument recordings](#)
- [Court of Appeals oral argument recordings](#)

Appellate Court Decision

[Appellate Rule 30](#)

The appellate court will issue a written decision in every case, regardless of whether oral argument was held. The decision may be an opinion, a memorandum opinion, a *per curiam* (by the court as a whole) decision, or an order.

The decision of the court does not have to be unanimous, but a majority must agree on the outcome. Sometimes judges will write opinions separate from the majority opinion:

- Dissenting opinion – the authoring judge disagrees with the majority opinion.
- Concurring opinion – the authoring judge agrees with the majority opinion, but for different reasons.

Court staff have no way of knowing when a decision will be issued. Depending on the complexity of the case, the decision process takes some time, which means it could be months before a decision is issued. The judges need time to research and debate the issues and write the opinion. The written opinion affects the individuals involved in the case, but it may also have a broader impact on the law in Utah.

The appellate court could make one of the following decisions in a case, or a combination of these decisions (such as reversed in part and affirmed in part):

- Affirm – the court has concluded that the trial court was correct, and its decision stands.

- Remand – the court is returning the case to the trial court to make a finding of fact in one or more aspects of the case.
- Reverse – the court has decided that the trial court’s decision was in error, and has undone the decision of the trial court.

[Appellate court opinions](#) are available on the court’s website.

Options After the Written Decision is Issued

Once the Court of Appeals has issued its decision, the parties have several options:

- Accept the decision of the Court of Appeals
- File a Petition for Rehearing
- File a Petition for Writ of Certiorari with Utah Supreme Court

Once the Supreme Court has issued its decision, the parties have two options:

- Accept the decision of the Supreme Court
- File a Petition for Rehearing

Petition for Rehearing

[Appellate Rule 35](#)

If one of the parties believes the appellate court made an error in its written decision, they can ask the court to reconsider its decision by filing a Petition for Rehearing.

The petition should not simply repeat the arguments already made. It must include the points of law or fact the party thinks the court has overlooked or misunderstood. A Petition for Rehearing must be made in good faith; it cannot be made for delay. See [URAP 27](#) for format requirements.

The petition must be filed with the clerk within 14 days after the court’s decision is entered. The court will not accept the Petition for Rehearing if it is not filed by the

deadline. The court will not accept more than one Petition for Rehearing. Most petitions for rehearing are not granted.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari in the Utah Supreme Court

[Appellate Rule 49](#)

If a party’s Petition for Rehearing is denied by the Court of Appeals the party may file a Petition for Writ of Certiorari in the Utah Supreme Court.

A party may also file the Petition for Writ of Certiorari directly after the Court of Appeals

decision is entered— they do not have to first file a Petition for Rehearing in the Court of Appeals.

The Petition for Writ of Certiorari must be filed in the Supreme Court within 30 days of the final decision of the Court of Appeals. See our separate [Guide to Filing a Petition for Writ of Certiorari](#) on the courts' website for more information.

The Supreme Court is the court of last resort in Utah. If a party's Petition for Writ of Certiorari is denied by the Utah Supreme Court, there are no more appeals available in the Utah State Courts.

Remittitur

[Appellate Rule 36](#)

Once the case is completely finished in the appellate court, the appellate court returns the record to the trial court and gives up its jurisdiction. This process is called remittitur.

The Supreme Court generally issues the remittitur 15 days after the decision is filed. The Court of Appeals generally issues the remittitur 40 days after the decision is filed.

Appellate Rules

The Utah Rules of Appellate Procedure (also called Appellate Rules or URAP) govern appeals cases. The Appellate Rules specify the documents which are required, deadlines for filing documents, document format, etc. This guide explains some of the basic rules that you must follow in an appeal, but it does not explain all of them. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the Appellate Rules and following them.

The current [Utah Rules of Appellate Procedure](#) are available on the courts' website. The Appellate Rules are also available in print at the law libraries listed below, and at some public libraries.

Utah State Law Library
450 S. State Street, Rm W-13
Salt Lake City
801-238-7990
<https://www.utcourts.gov/en/about/miscellaneous/law-library.html>

Brigham Young University
Howard W. Hunter Law Library
801-422-3593
<https://lawlibrary.byu.edu/>

University of Utah
James E. Faust Law Library
383 S. University Street
801-581-6184
<https://squinney.utah.edu/library/>

Other Resources

General information about Appeals is available on the court's [Appeals web page](#).

Representing Yourself in an Appeal

People who represent themselves in court without the help of an attorney are called *pro se* or self-represented parties. Self-represented parties are responsible for learning about and following the rules and procedures that govern the court process.

The appellate process is very detailed and can be confusing. The appellate courts highly recommend that parties get the help of an attorney.

Appellate clerks' staff can provide general information about court rules and procedures, but they cannot draft documents or participate directly or indirectly in any court action. Court staff cannot provide advice about what the law is or how it applies to someone's situation.

A self-represented party can only represent himself or herself. They may not represent another person, company, or entity such as a club or association that includes other individuals.

See the court's [Finding Legal Help web page](#) for information about ways to get the help of an attorney.