

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Sharon Press and Noam Ebner  
FROM: Nancy Welsh (Texas A&M), Jen Shack (RSI) & Stephen Sullivan (RSI)  
RE: Exercise for Resource Share  
DATE: April 10, 2025

This exercise/simulation would work particularly well for students in a mediation course, mediation clinic, or a course that includes significant discussion of ODR. Very simply, it involves assigning the students (individually or in groups) to develop an information packet for their local court to help prepare litigants to participate in a mediation or other dispute resolution procedure. Either before the students begin this project – or after they have produced their first cut – test the students’ understanding of what is required to communicate effectively with self-represented litigants (SRLs) by asking the students to respond to a four-question quiz (see the attached “Quiz: Creating Effective Communications for Self-Represented Litigants” and links contained there).

After debriefing the students’ answers to the quiz questions, make available to the students the tools that RSI has developed for courts’ communications with SRLs. (See the email accompanying this memo and the links there, including a link to a short and very informative video.)

Ultimately, this exercise should make clear to the students: 1) all of the information that SRLs need – and often do not have – in order to exercise true self-determination and 2) how to effectively communicate this information to SRLs (and really, anyone dealing with the complexities of the courts and legal issues!)

## A Bit of Background

Often, ODR is suggested for litigated disputes that are likely to involve self-represented litigants (SRLs) – e.g., debt collection, eviction, etc. One of the great difficulties in advocating for ODR in these contexts is the likelihood that SRLs will not have the information they need to be able to exercise the sort of informed consent that is desirable in mediation or negotiation.

Early in this academic year, a few students and I worked with our local small claims court to revise the information packet then being provided to parties invited to participate in debt collection mediation. We consulted with A2J advocates and made many substantive improvements, including providing information regarding the defenses available to the alleged debtors. We also made many stylistic improvements, including using a Q&A format. You can find the new information packet [here](#). Scroll down to “How to Prepare for Your Case.”

However, based on the tools now available from RSI (again, see the email accompanying this memo and the links contained in the email), I now realize the many other things we should have considered in communicating with SRLs.