Guide to Using LawHelp Interactive (LHI)

LHI Registration

In order to access saved data, in most cases, the user will need to register for an LHI account. The exception to this is LHI Connect, which is described below. The following basic account types are available:

- Self-Helper
- Court Employee/Advocate (legal aid or pro bono)

LHI Account Management

There are three main approaches to setting up and managing LHI accounts within a self-help center, which are described below. They can all be used depending on the situation. For example, for routine assistance, self-help centers may want to have litigants register for their own accounts. However, for those litigants who need more specialized assistance and/or cannot register for an account on their own, courts may want to have individual or shared employee accounts which can be used to enter data for the litigant.

1. Self-Helper Accounts

Self-represented litigants who register for their own individual accounts will have access to their data at home both before and after their visit to the self-help center and provides the most secure way to handle data. It takes approximately 10 minutes to register for a "self-helper" LHI account and litigants can be asked to do so as pre-workshop "homework" or time can be set aside at the beginning of a workshop for guided assistance with this process. The self-help center may also want to consider establishing a central Court Employee LHI account, which would be managed by a lead attorney. This approach allows litigants to share their answer files with a central account so that the self-help center can provide document review or other remote assistance to the litigant.

Please review: How to Register for a "Self-Helper" LHI Account

2. Court Employee/Advocate Accounts (Individual)

Another approach is to create LHI accounts at the individual staff/volunteer level. Self-help employees would register for a "Court Employee" account, while advocates and volunteers with legal aid and other non-court organizations would register for an "Advocate" account. This set-up is beneficial when there are multiple staff or volunteers providing drop-in assistance, interacting directly with LHI, or leading a small group through a workshop. LHI allows account holders to share answer files with other account holders, which could allow line staff or volunteers to share any files they have generated with a supervisor or the lead attorney. Once an answer file is shared, the lead attorney will have full access to the answer file and if necessary, can make changes and print the documents to complete or reissue the filing.

3. Court Employee/Advocate Accounts (Shared)

Advocates and court employees can create a single LHI account for a particular workshop or timeframe (i.e., an account for Quarter 1, another for Quarter 2, or an account for DV Workshop and another for a Paternity workshop, etc.). Under this model, all employees and litigants would access LHI under this single account. If a shared account is used, it is important to ensure that only staff access the Manage Saved Answers screen. Shared accounts are convenient since they allow self-help center staff to access all answer files and all files are stored in a central location. They also enable staff to easily find saved answer files when litigants return to the self-help center for a second step in their process, such as to complete their default judgment.

Please review: How to Register for a Court Employee and Advocate LHI Account

Accessing Saved Data

LHI users are able to access saved data to 1) finish or update data in an interview they have already started or 2) begin a subsequent interview in a multi-step process, such as in dissolution, where the litigant may have already completed an interview to file the petition and declarations and now needs to complete a default judgment. This HotDocs feature means that litigants only have to enter "new" information for the default judgment, which saves court and litigant time.

Self-helper account data is saved on LHI for 6 months. Court/advocate account data is saved for 12 months.

Please review How to Access and Work with Saved Answers

Support for Remote Assistance

Managing Shared Answer Files

LHI allows account holders to share files with one another. This allows a self-help center to provide remote assistance to self-represented litigants who need help completing their documents for filing. Once an answer file is shared, it may be accessed by the "sharee" from the "Manage Shared Answers" screen. From this page, you may open the shared file in the interview in which it was most recently used. The answer file may be changed and saved and the document may be generated using the shared file. *Please note that there is only one copy of the answer file within LHI.* When an answer file is shared, any changes made by the "sharee" overwrite the original answer file.

LHI Connect

LHI Connect is a feature that court self-help center, legal aid, and other agencies that assist litigants can set up that enables users to securely submit their interview data for review and follow up, without having to create an account. It also enables a coordinator to assign document review to staff. LHI Connect may not be the best solution in a situation where the litigant will be routinely returning to complete additional interviews, for example, with family law cases where litigants return to complete their judgment. In this case, the data needs to be saved by a registered user. However, when it is not expected that the litigant will use the system a second time, such as in guardianship or domestic violence, LHI Connect may be useful by eliminating any barrier posed by the need to register for an account and by providing the litigant with remote assistance.

For more information about LHI Connect, contact Karen Cannata (Karen.cannata@jud.ca.gov) or Diana Glick (diana.glick@jud.ca.gov).