

The 26th Judicial District SelfServe Center

2007: The Annual Glance



Elisa Chinn-Gary, Family Court Administrator
Darwin F. Rice, SelfServe Center Coordinator

will be able to create properly formatted pleadings while learning the required steps needed to bring their case before the court. At this time, the only forms available on the program for the litigants to use are the divorce forms and name change for minor/adult. The program allows the litigants to build an account, answer simple questions related to their issue and print completed forms for filing. The litigant, during this process, will be given a password which will allow them to return to the module they used and change / update data, and reprint forms. The program allows litigants who read and comprehend Spanish to utilize the interactive court forms to prepare forms as well.

ATTORNEYS PROVIDING LIMITED SCOPE OR UNBUNDLED SERVICES

One of the SelfServe Center's primary missions is to link litigants with attorneys who are willing to provide "limited scope services." This term is used to describe the wide range of discreet tasks that an attorney might provide short of full representation. Limited Scope Services makes the total cost of legal assistance more affordable as litigants elect whether to use counsel at each phase of the case. The SelfServe Center Coordinator maintains profiles of attorneys willing to provide unbundled services. This information is routinely provided to customers visiting the Center. This year, three new attorneys were added to the list of providers.

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

The SelfServe Center routinely offers family law videos as a tool to equip and educate pro se litigants. During operational hours, a rotation of videos is played to provide litigants the opportunity to gain a basic knowledge of the SelfServe Center and how it can serve them. Additionally, the following titles are available in the Center for private viewing:

- Custody or Visitation and/or Support
- Absolute Divorce
- Modification of Custody/Visitation
- Contempt
- Domestic Violence

With the exception of the domestic violence video, titles are available in English and Spanish. No appointment is necessary. Customers visiting the Center are encouraged to view the video corresponding to the form packet requested. If unable to view the video upon their initial visit to the Center, customers are invited to return at a more convenient time.

FREE LEGAL CLINICS

The SelfServe Center offers monthly legal clinics on the topics of Absolute Divorce, Custody, Visitation, and Support. The clinics are held on the first and third Wednesday of every month. The clinics are used as a means to educate the public on the most commonly used packets in the center. The attorney and/or certified paralegal conducting the clinic inform litigants of step-by-step procedures, explain how to complete the forms, and review

forms for completeness. In 2007, twenty-four clinics were held. In 2007, attendance was steady and the feedback gathered from the evaluation forms reflects a high level of customer satisfaction. Of the 396 customers who pre-registered for clinics, 281 of the customers attended.

WEBSITE

With the public's ever increasing access to the internet, the SelfServe Center website helps reach a greater volume of people. Forms and instructions are conveniently available for download online. On average, 384 disclosure forms were completed online each month. This figure does not include those who visit the website without filling out the disclosure to access forms. Plans are currently under development to upgrade the site to include streaming video and virtual court tours.

STAFFING

Still faced with critical staffing challenges, the Center continues to operate without any dedicated funding. Currently, resources from the Family Court Administrator's Office are utilized to operate the Center during limited hours. In 2006, Darwin Rice, the SelfServe Center Coordinator, reported to active military duty, and returned in May of 2007., Shirley Nelson and Darwin Rice did overlap for a couple of weeks before actually turning all duties over to Darwin Rice. The SelfServe Center has continued to rely heavily on interns and volunteers to help cover the duties in the center and provide coverage during Family Court staff shortages and mandatory trainings. The Family Court Administrator's Office lacks the resources to restore the full operational hours of the Center. Each day customers who arrive after closing are advised to return during operational hours or visit the website. And though volunteering within the Center has remained constant, the staff-to-customer ratio challenges efforts to provide comprehensive services.

DISTRIBUTION OF FORM PACKETS

To date the following form packets are available in the SelfServe Center and on the website.

- Absolute Divorce (*Instructions also available in Spanish*)
- Custody/Visitation (*Instructions also available in Spanish*)
- Child Support
- Answer and Counterclaim for Custody/Visitation and/or Support
- Modification of Custody/Visitation
- Modification of Child Support
- Contempt
- Domestic Violence
- Civil No-Contact

Motion in the Cause for Visitation
 Child Custody Agreement for School Enrollment
 Name Change –Adult
 Name Change –Child (Uncontested)
 Small Claims –Money or Property Owed
 Small Claims –Summary Ejectment
 Limited Driving Privileges (*Instructions also available in Spanish*)
 Expungement
 Motion to Appoint a Guardian Ad Litem

The following figures reflect the number of form packets distributed in the SelfServe Center in 2007:

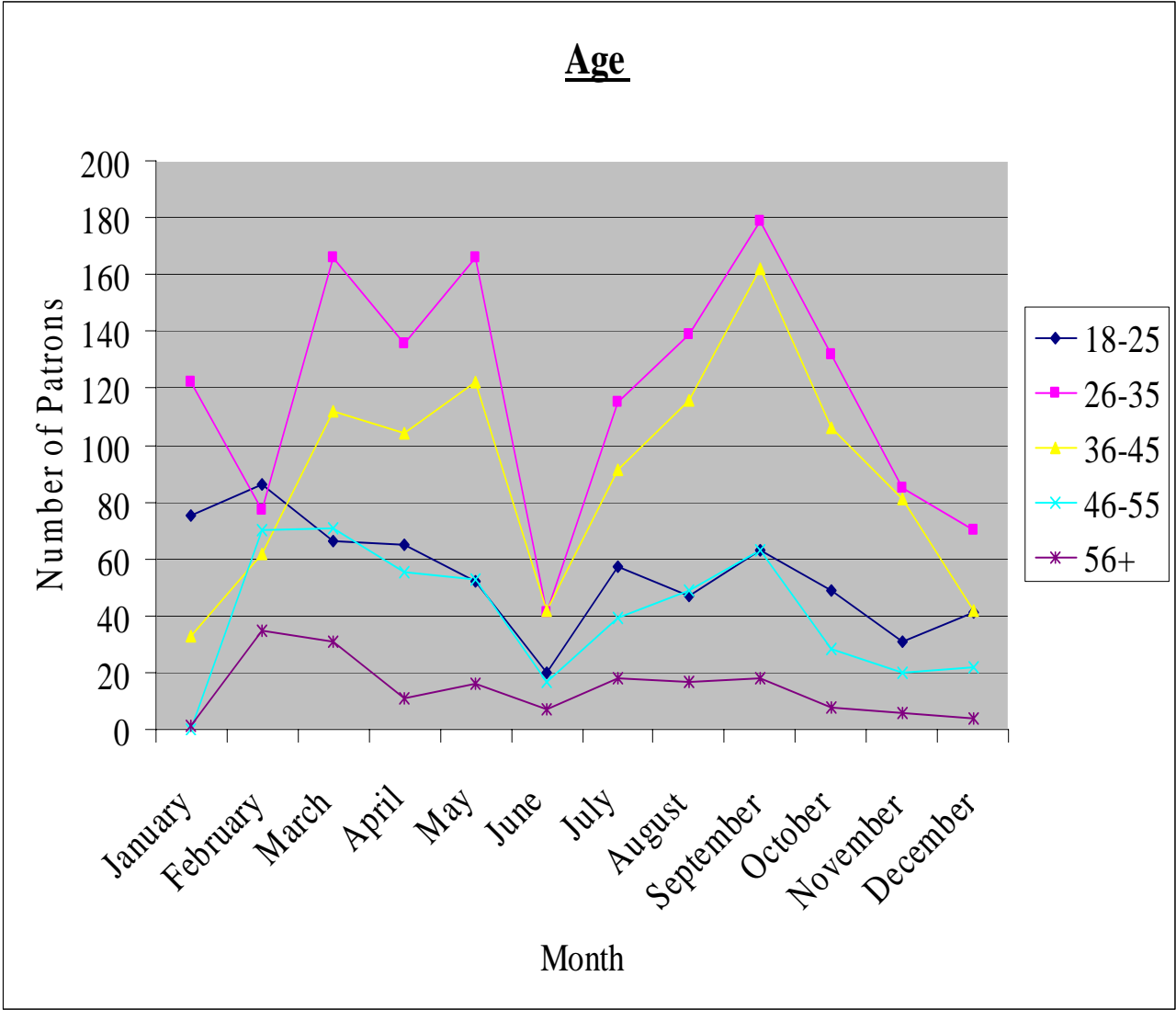
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
523	810	997	586	782	587	465	457	560	446	291	256	6760

The following figures reflect the number of form packets accessed from the SelfServe Center Website in 2007:

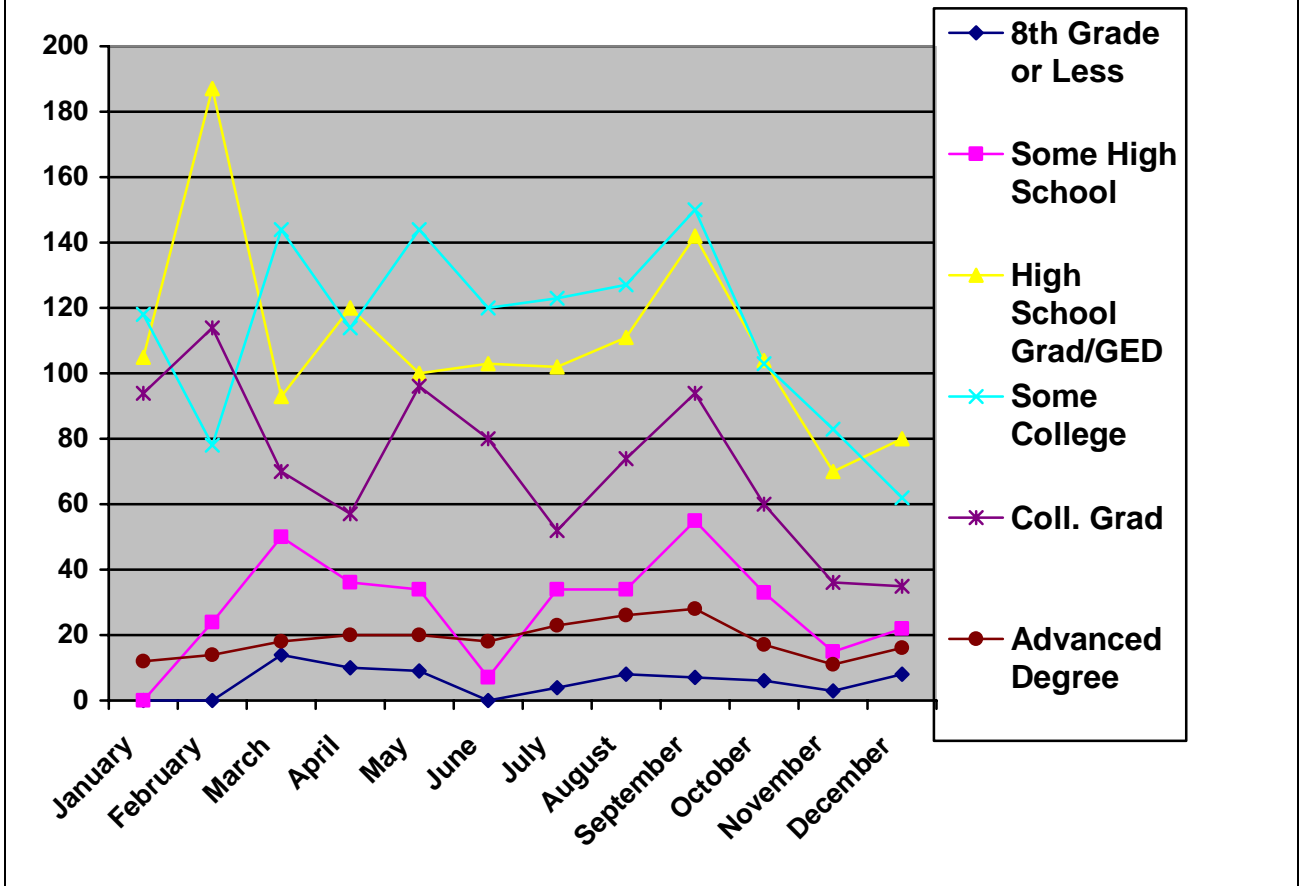
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
289	160	140	300	127	350	458	316	386	362	352	418	4608

CUSTOMER VOLUME

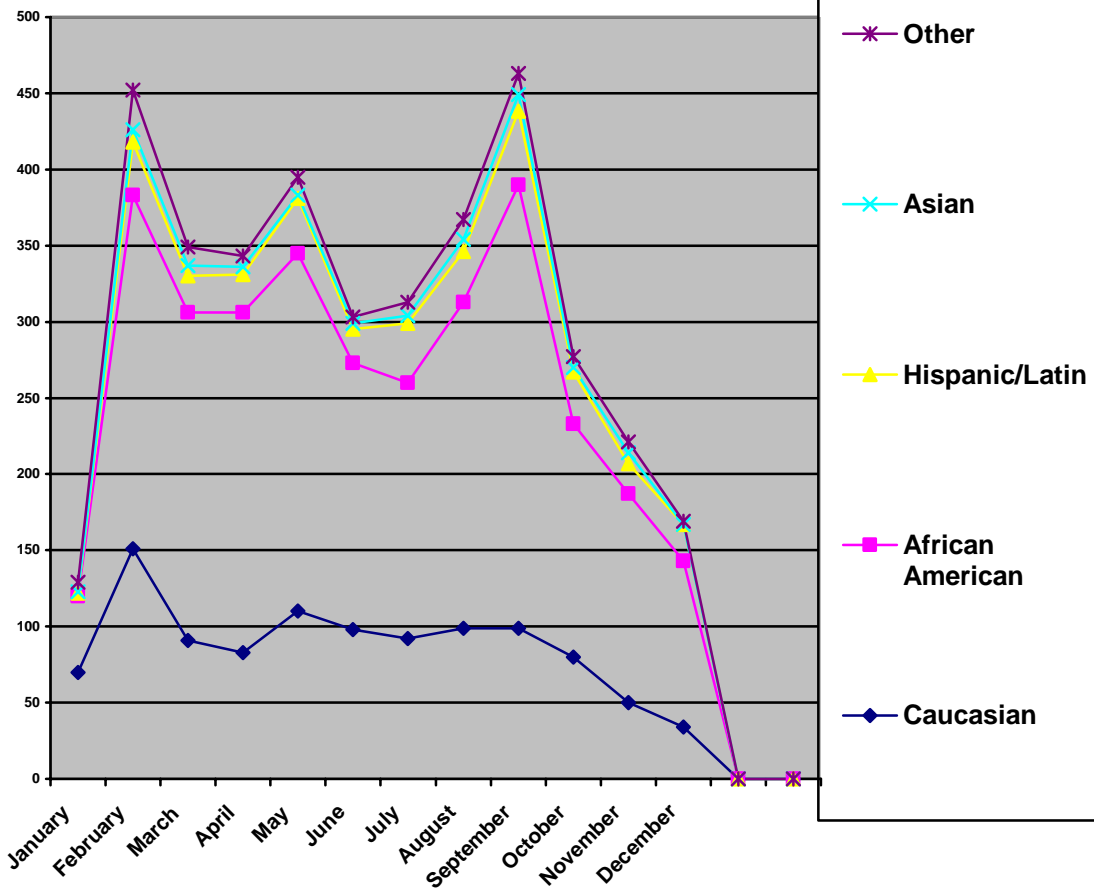
In addition to customers who request a form packet, others simply visit the Center or contact the general information telephone line. In 2007, the Center assisted an average of fifty-five walk-in customers per month seeking general information. Also for 2007, the SelfServe Center has upgraded all telephone informational lines to better serve the needs for both English and Spanish speaking litigants.



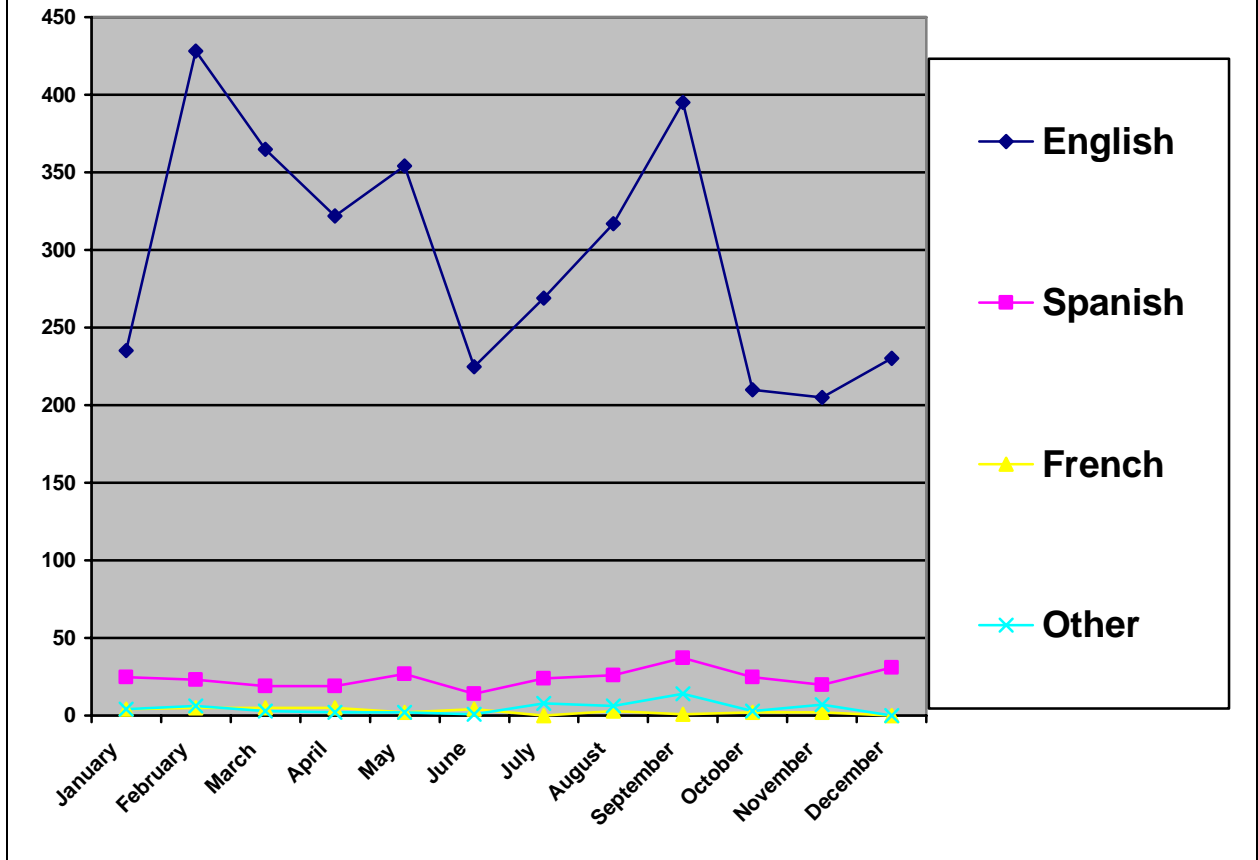
Education



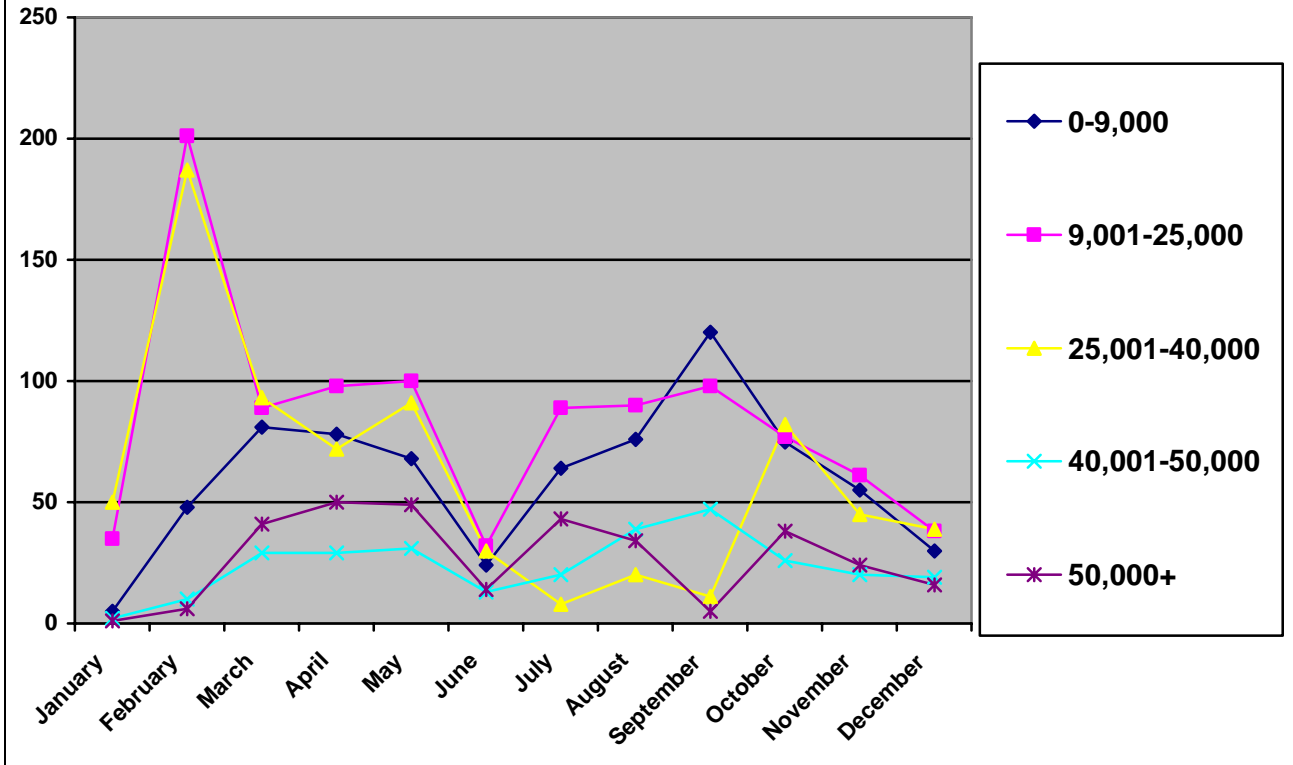
Ethnicity Group



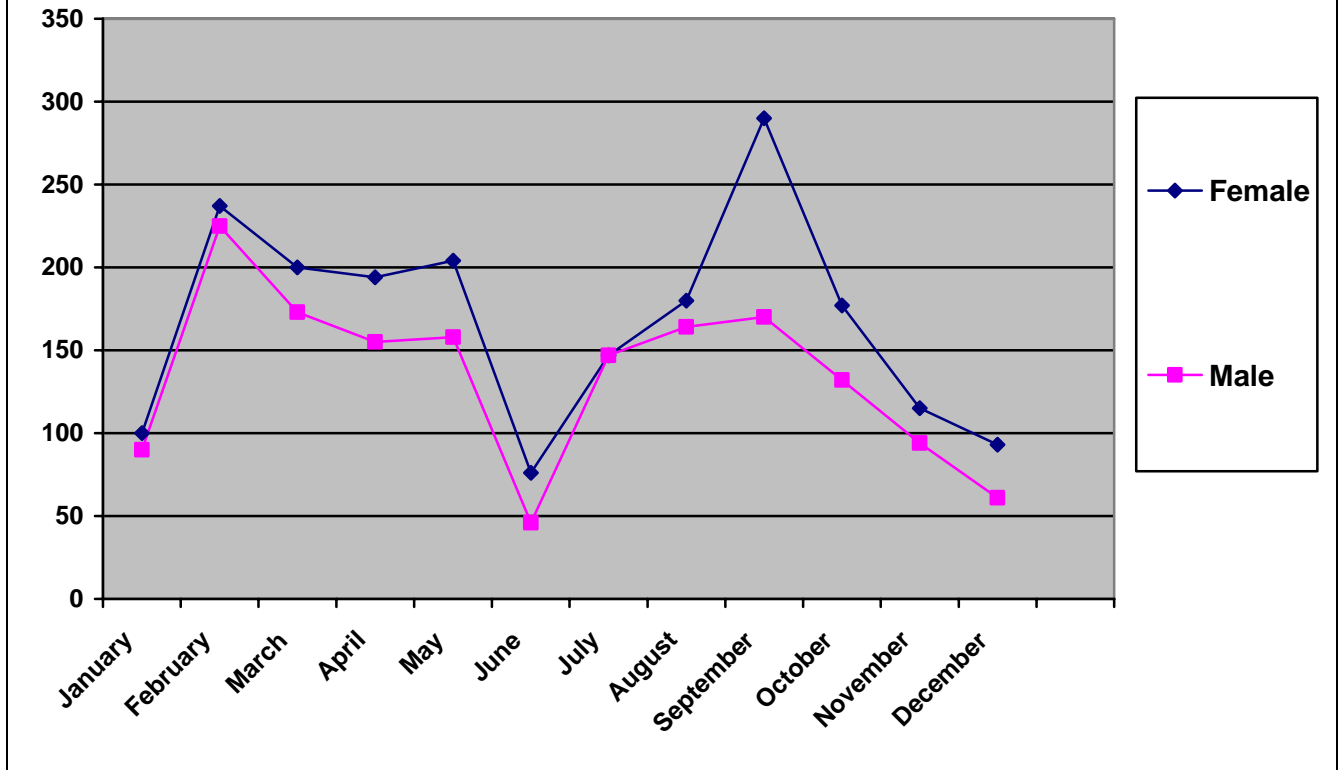
Language



Income



Gender



ANECDOTAL COMMENTS SELSERVE CENTER 2007

“I am glad for this clinic because there are some people afford legal services.” – March 2007
Clinic Evaluation Form

“Very friendly and helpful”---October 2007 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Very helpful.”--- April 2007 Clinic Evaluation Form

“I think the SelfServe Center does a great job. It should promote/communicate out to the
general public more.”--- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Always have good experience in the SelfServe Center.” --- December 2007
Disclosure/Intake Form

“Upfront great help!” --- December 2007 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Clean and efficient.” --- August 2007 Disclosure/Intake Forms

“They have excellent service.” --- August 2007 Disclosure/Intake Form