The California JusticeCorps program recruits and trains 310 undergraduate college students from the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses annually. These students serve in the court’s legal access self-help centers providing information to people who come to court to resolve family, housing and financial matters, but who cannot afford an attorney to represent them.

NEED: In California, more than four million people go to local courthouses each year to resolve important civil legal issues. Many of these people do not have access to attorneys. The State Bar reports that two out of every three meritorious cases are turned away from legal aid assistance because of lack of resources. This is not just a California issue. National data indicates that 60 to 90 percent of family law cases nationally involve at least one self-represented litigant.

EFFICIENCY: JusticeCorps is a prime example of how efficient and effective AmeriCorps services can be to Americans. During 2009-10, 285 JusticeCorps members assisted 60,000 litigants across six counties, provided 24,942 referrals to related services and helped to complete 38,900 legal forms. At a cost of approximately $1 million in federal AmeriCorps and local matching funds, that’s $16 per instance of assistance to litigants.

EFFECTIVENESS: JusticeCorps members provided assistance to litigants who may not otherwise have received legal help due to a lack of court resources. JusticeCorps support helps people in several ways, some of which are: it allows people to take less time off of work to be in court; helps reduce the number of continuances; keeps people from being evicted before they can find replacement housing, and helps to finalize parenting plans to support family stability.

The impact on the students who participate is also significant. More than two-thirds of the 1,000 JusticeCorps alumni are attending, or have completed law school, and many of those are first generation college graduates.

* A CSU Long Beach student said: “I had the opportunity to not only learn about law, but to make a difference in the lives of individual people.”
* A Cal Poly Pomona student commented, “Amazing is the only word that would describe my experience with JusticeCorps. I was able to provide litigants with legal information to help them understand and resolve their legal issues. At the end of each service day, I have a sense of satisfaction and pride.”
* A student from CSU Dominguez Hills noted that “It means the world to people to figure out a complicated form that will help them get their child back or help them save their home.”

CSU PARTNERS: Approximately 100 CSU students participate each year across eight CSU campuses: Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Long Beach, Northridge, Pomona, San Francisco, San Jose, and San Marcos.