

MISINFORMATION **AND DISTRUST IN** **GOVERNMENT**



INTRODUCTION

Former TV News Reporter



Public Information Officer



SERVING
AND BUILDING
TRUST
IN GOVERNMENT



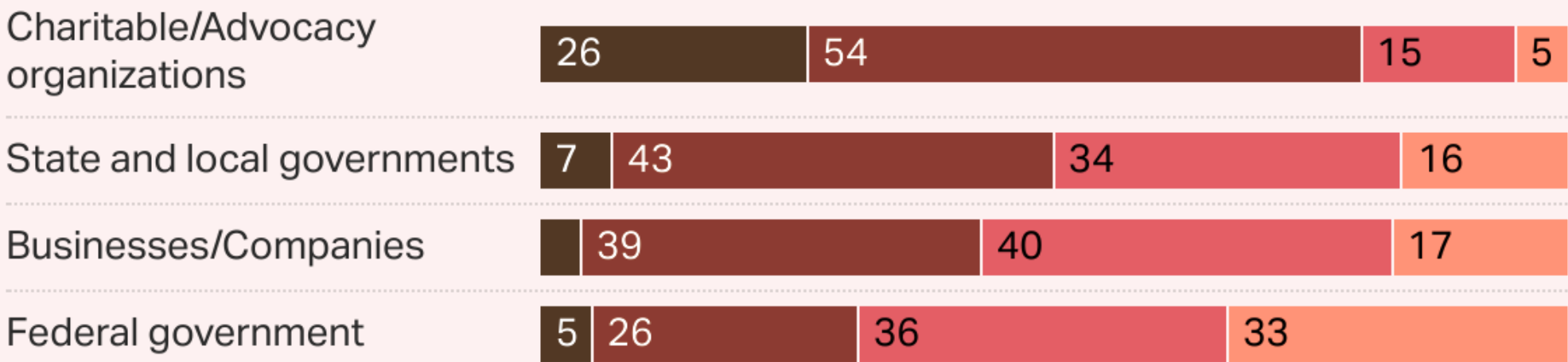
Just under a third of U.S. adults **(31%)** say they have **“a lot” or “some” trust in the federal government** to act in society’s best interest, according to a 2025 survey from Bentley University and Gallup.

This figure is substantially lower than those who say the same about **charitable organizations (80%), state and local governments (50%) and businesses (43%).**

Americans' Trust in Institutions to Act in Society's Best Interests

How much do you trust the following groups to act in the best interest of society?

■ % A lot ■ % Some ■ % Not much ■ % Not at all



May 5-12, 2025
Bentley-Gallup Business in Society Report

GALLUP

SOURCE:
GALLUP



**HOW DO YOU GET
YOUR NEWS?**



News Websites & News Apps



TV News



Radio and Podcasts



Social Media



Friends, Family & Coworkers



News Websites & News Apps



TV News



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Social Media



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MISINFORMATION

Misinformation is false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is shared without necessarily intending to deceive people. But what does it do? It creates **distrust**.

EXAMPLES:

Someone shares
an incorrect
statistic because
they genuinely
believe it's true

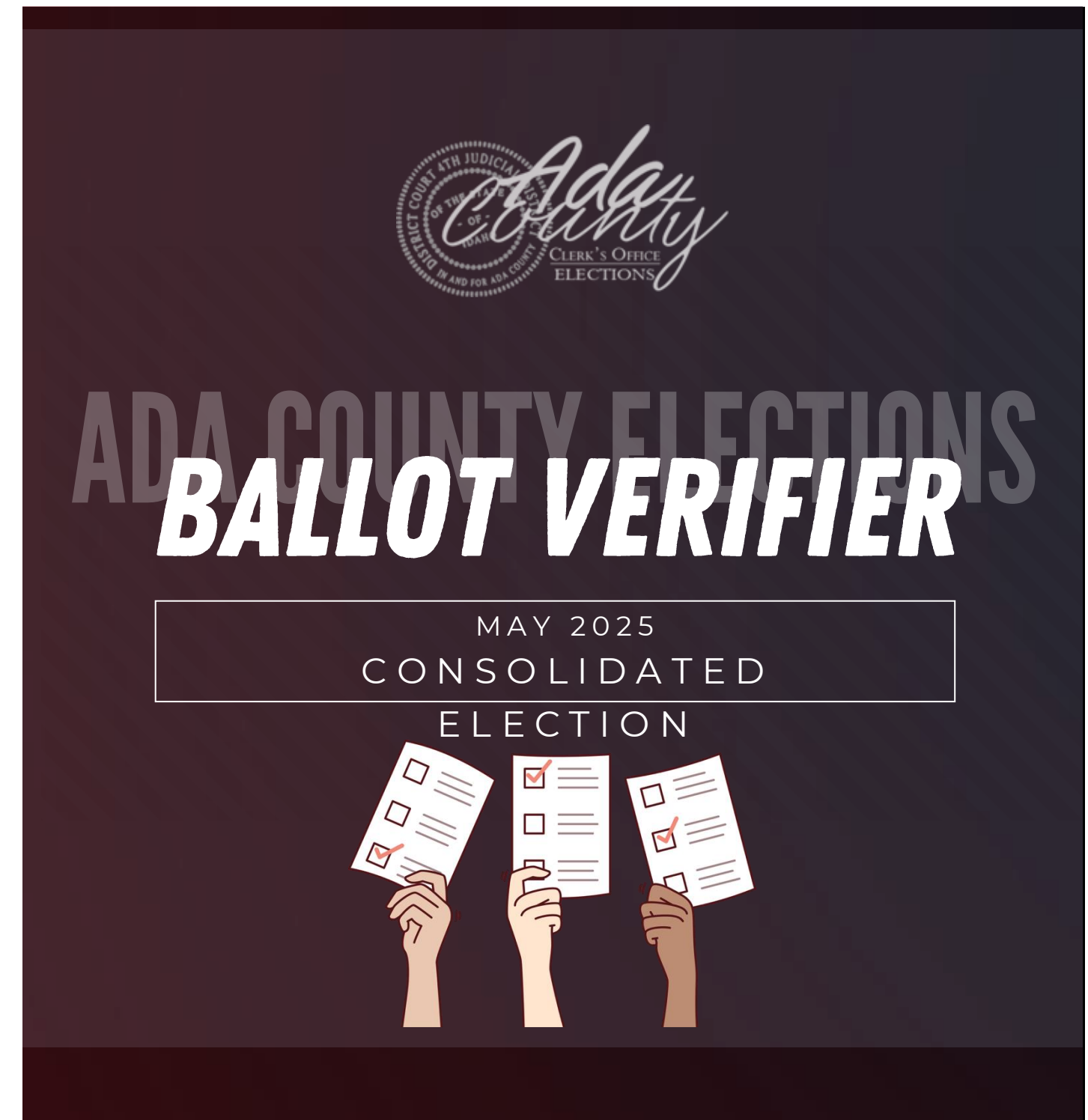
A person reposts a
misleading social
media video
without checking
the context

A real photo is
posted with a false
caption

TRANSPARENT AND PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION

Making election data publicly accessible.

Ada County Elections created the Ballot Verifier, which allows members of the public to view ballot images and corresponding cast-vote records from elections going back to 2022. People don't have to file a public-records request to access this information.



Providing physical visibility into the election process.

The redesigned elections facility uses extensive windows and security cameras so the public can see election workers and ballot-processing areas. Ada County Elections also provides a viewing room and live feeds of ballot counting.



Team up with trusted local news sources.

Use the news to your advantage. Find local reporters you can trust and turn to them for help with spreading accurate information. Don't shy away from media requests!

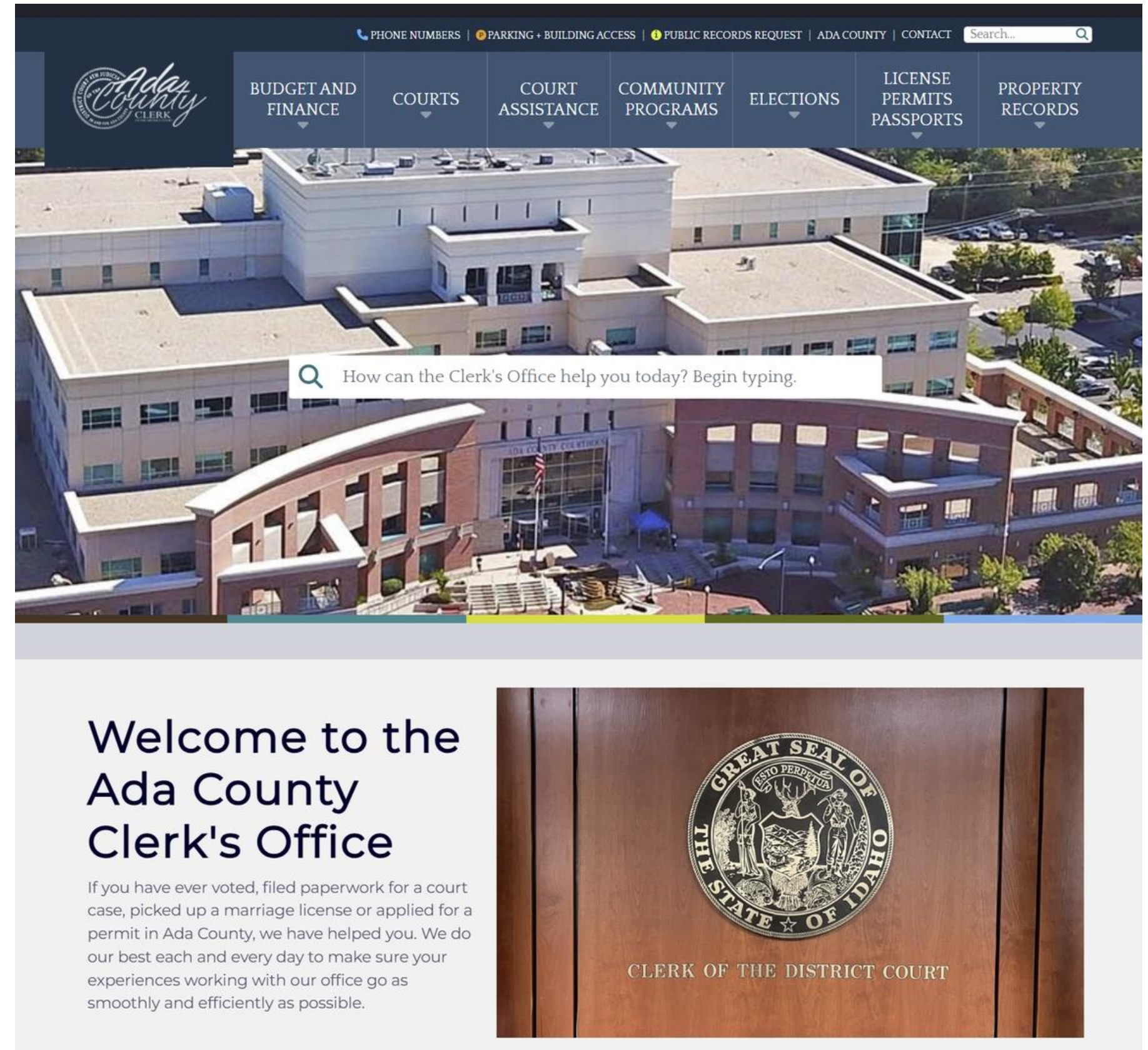
Local news tends to cover when there's controversy. Proactively pushing out positive stories gives reporters something else to work with.



Keep your website up to date.

An updated website is essential as it serves as the first line of defense against misinformation and rumors. Accurate information helps counter false claims and builds public confidence.

Keeping your site current prevents outdated information from creating confusion and distrust. It allows for **proactive communication**, ensuring consistent answers for inquiries from reporters and the public, making it easy to direct them to reliable sources.



Work with other local government agencies to ensure all of your messaging is timely and accurate.

Nurturing good relationships with your fellow agency staff members is essential for ensuring that everyone stays aligned and informed.



Offer help to the public.

Meet people where their confusion actually is. Not everyone will find your website update or news story. Some people will only reach out directly — a call to the clerk's office, a comment on social media, a visit in person.



ONLINE FAMILY LAW PRE-FILING WORKSHOP

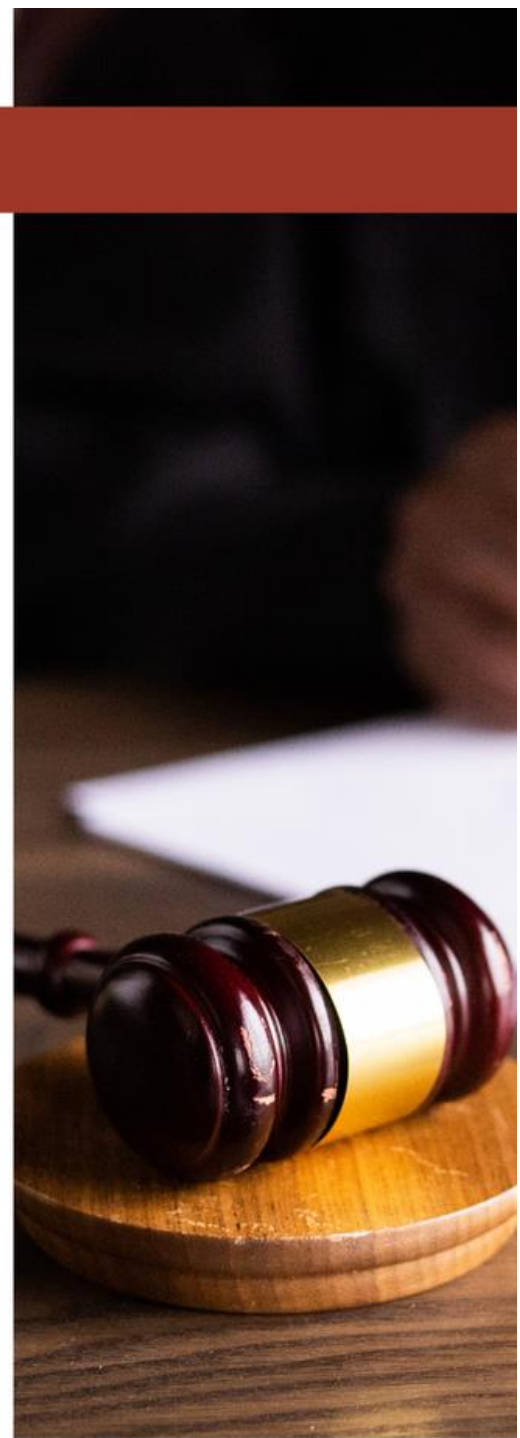
EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY FROM 5:30 P.M. TO 7:00 P.M.

Self-represented litigants looking to file a **divorce with minors, custody and modification** matters are welcome to attend our free online workshop

Workshop topics include:

- Filling out and submitting self-help forms
- Understanding the Court process
- Navigating custody and visitation for children
- Handling child support and getting help with calculations

Visit our website for access to self-help forms and to register for the workshop



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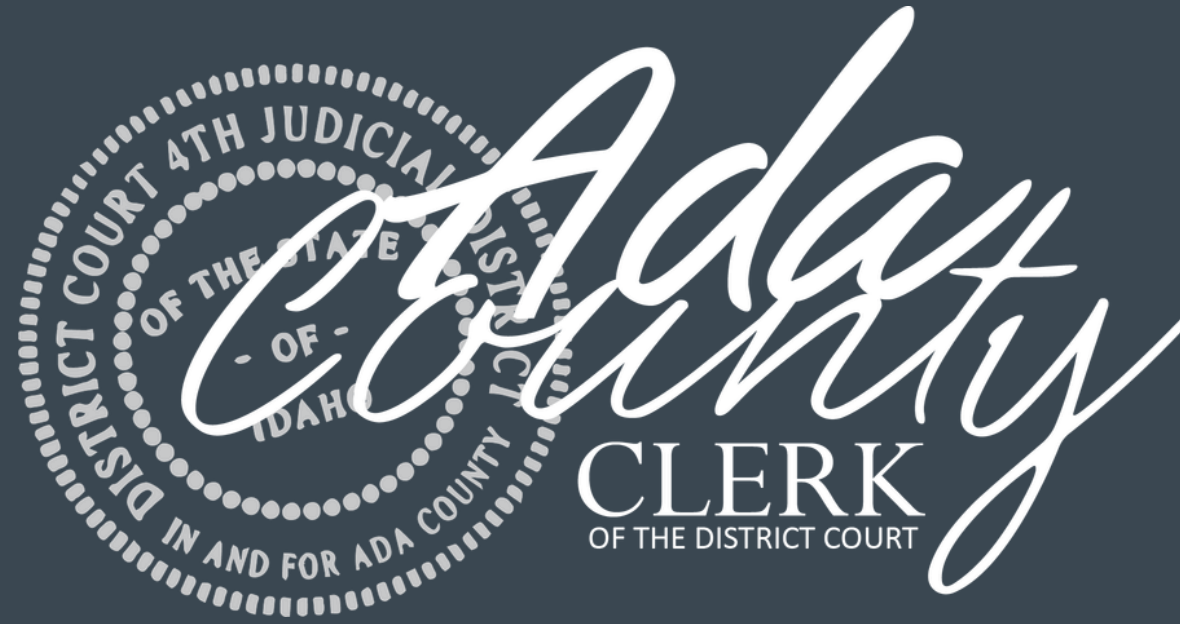


Respond where you need to correct the record.

Not all misinformation requires a response, but if falsehoods gain traction, silence may seem like agreement. Focus on presenting facts rather than becoming defensive. The aim is to clarify the truth without arguing, maintaining your image as a calm and credible source.



QUESTIONS?



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