



Office of Judicial Records - Civil
First Judicial District of Pennsylvania

Informational Guide for Service of Filings

PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY.
YOUR CASE/FILING MAY BE DIMISSED OR DEFERRED UNLESS
SERVED PROPERLY.

All documents filed with the court must be served on the opposing party. This is called service. Service must be completed as provided by the rules of civil procedure. You can access the following for definitions and explanations about service:

- [Guide to Service Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R0-ZYa5oNI) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R0-ZYa5oNI>)
- [Guide to Service PowerPoint Presentation](https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/forms/civil/Guide-to-Service.pdf) (<https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/forms/civil/Guide-to-Service.pdf>)

Types of Service

- **Service of original process:** This refers to the original document that was filed to start the case. For example, a complaint, writ of summons, or Municipal Court appeal filed to begin a civil case in the Court of Common Pleas. **THE CASE WILL NOT GO FORWARD UNLESS THIS TYPE OF SERVICE IS COMPLETED PROPERLY.**
 - This service must be completed as provided by the rules applicable to service of original process in Philadelphia County, as set forth in Pa.R.C.P. 400.1.
 - The Philadelphia Sheriff or a competent adult can serve these papers on your behalf.
 - Pa.R.C.P. 76 defines a competent adult as an individual eighteen years of age or older who is neither a party to the action nor an employee or a relative of a party to the action.
- **Service of all other documents:** All other documents filed in this case may be made by:
 - Regular First-Class Mail
 - Another method authorized by Pa.R.C.P. 440
 - This Office will send filings to all parties via email if the documents are electronically filed and the other parties are signed up for electronic filing. Parties that have not signed up for electronic filing need to be served separately. ***Filings docketed over the counter in the Civil Filing Center, Room 296, City Hall are not electronically filed.***

NOTICE: This document is not intended to be legal advice or take the place of an attorney. If you need assistance finding an attorney, our court staff can give you information on legal service organizations that may be able to help you.



Proof of Service

- Service of original process
 - Once service of original process has been completed, you are required to file an [Return of Service/Affidavit of Service](https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/ROS) (<https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/ROS>) promptly utilizing the First Judicial District's Electronic Filing System at <https://fjdefile.phila.gov> or in the Civil Filing Center, Room 296, City Hall.
- Service of all other documents
 - This type of service should be attached to the document at the time of filing. For example, a certificate of service indicating how the document was sent and list the parties the document was sent to.
 - If you fail to attach a certificate of service to your filing, you can file an [Affidavit of Service](https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/AOS) (<https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/AOS>) promptly utilizing the First Judicial District's Electronic Filing System at <https://fjdefile.phila.gov> or in the Civil Filing Center, Room 296, City Hall.

Problems Completing Service

If service cannot be completed under the applicable rule, the filing party may ask the court for a special order ([P.A.R.C.P. 430 Service Pursuant to Special Order of Court](#)) asking to use a different method of service. The motion shall be accompanied by an affidavit stating the nature and extent of the search which has been made to locate the opposing party and the reasons why service cannot be made. You must make attempts to locate the opposing party.

Here is the Checklist for a Motion for Alternative Service and the Motion for Alternative that would need to be filed asking the court to grant service in a different manner:

- [Checklist for Motion for Alternative Service](https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/MTASC) (<https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/MTASC>)
- [Motion for Alternative Service](https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/MTAS) (<https://www.courts.phila.gov/s/MTAS>)

All forms, guides, and policies referenced in this document are available in the Civil Filing Center, Room 296, City Hall.

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