

# How Can Clerks Best Assist Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs) with E-filing?



## Provide SRLs with e-filing information:

- where to find and select an Electronic Filing Service Provider (EFSP);
- how to **register** for an EFSP account and set up an email address;
- how to **sign into** the EFSP or how to reset an account;
- how to **file into a case** including information about: searching for an existing case by case number or party; creating a payment account; **selecting location, case category, and case type**; entering party information; uploading documents to file in the correct format and size; **selecting filing code**; and differentiating between lead documents and attachments;
- how a document can be **converted to the required file type (PDF)** through equipment available within the courthouse; and
- **why a filing was rejected.**

## What can an EFSP Support Hotline help with?

- How to get a document into PDF format
- How to get an email address
- How to register/sign in/get a new password
- How to search for existing cases
- How to navigate through the EFSP
- How to upload documents
- How to submit an e-filing envelope

## Provide information about the e-filing exemption and copies of the certification form:

Filers are exempt from e-filing automatically if they:

- Are an SRL incarcerated in a jail or correctional facility;
- Are filing a Will or something under Juvenile Court Act; or
- Have a disability that makes it hard to e-file.

Filers are exempt from e-filing for good cause if they turn in a Certification of Exemption from E-filing form stating they:

- Are SRLs and don't have a computer or internet in their home;
- Are SRLs and have difficulty reading or writing in English; or
- Are filing a sensitive pleading like an Order for Protection.

### Note:

- **The Certification does not require court approval**
- **Clerks must accept paper filings with a completed certification form for good cause reasons and without a form for automatic reasons**
- **Judges retain discretion to order someone to e-file or not (for subsequent filings)**

This form is approved by the Illinois Supreme Court and is required to be accepted in all Illinois Circuit Courts.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, CIRCUIT COURT COUNTY	CERTIFICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM E-FILING	For Court Use Only
<p><b>Instructions</b></p> <p>Directly above, enter the name of the county where the case was filed.</p> <p>Enter the name of the person who started the lawsuit as Plaintiff/Petitioner.</p> <p>Enter the name of the person being sued as Defendant/Respondent.</p> <p>Enter the Case Number given by the Circuit Clerk or leave this blank if you do not have one.</p>	<p>Plaintiff / Petitioner (First, middle, last name)</p> <p>v.</p> <p>Defendant / Respondent (First, middle, last name)</p>	<p>Case Number</p>
<p>In 1, check the reasons you are asking to file by mail or in person. You should check all that apply.</p> <p>You are exempt from e-filing and you do not need to file this Certification if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you are in jail or prison;</li> <li>• you are filing a will;</li> <li>• you are filing into a juvenile case; OR</li> <li>• your disability prevents you from e-filing.</li> </ul>	<p>1. I am not able to e-file documents in this case for the following reasons (check all that apply):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am representing myself and do not have the Internet or a computer in my home. My only access is through a public terminal at a courthouse, library, or other location. This poses a financial or other hardship.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am representing myself and have trouble reading, writing, or speaking in English.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am filing a document in a sensitive case, such as a petition for an order of protection or a civil no contact/stalking order.</p> <p>2. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 9(c)(5) allows for an exemption from e-filing for good cause. For the above reasons, I need a good cause exemption from e-filing for my entire case or until I am able to e-file.</p>	
<p>Under the Code of Civil Procedure, 735 ILCS 5/1-109, making a statement on this form that you know to be false is perjury, a Class 3 Felony.</p> <p>After you finish this form, sign and print your name.</p> <p>Enter your complete address and telephone number.</p>	<p>I certify that everything in the Certification for Exemption from E-filing is true and correct. I understand that making a false statement on this form is perjury and has penalties provided by law under 735 ILCS 5/1-109.</p> <p>Your Signature _____</p> <p>Print Your Name _____</p>	<p>Street Address _____</p> <p>City, State, ZIP _____</p> <p>Telephone _____</p>

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## Statewide Self-Help Resources for E-filing

eFileIL information	<a href="http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/">http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/</a>
Statewide E-filing Guides	<a href="http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/CivilJustice/Resources/Self-Represented_Litigants/self-represented.asp">http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/CivilJustice/Resources/Self-Represented_Litigants/self-represented.asp</a>
Odyssey Filer Support	1-800-297-5377 (note: every EFSP has a call number or email address for system questions)
Legal Self-Help Centers	List of programs in Illinois: <a href="https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/get-legal-help/lshc-directory">https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/get-legal-help/lshc-directory</a>
Standardized Forms	Statewide forms and instructions available in six languages: <a href="http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/Forms/approved/">http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/Forms/approved/</a>
Public & Law Libraries	Check your local resources
Illinois Legal Aid Online	Free legal information and forms for e-filing and civil, expungement, and traffic legal problems: <a href="https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/">https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/</a>

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE



### E-Filing Guide for Self-Represented Litigants

How to E-File in Odyssey  
Step 1: Prepare your Documents



**E-filing Steps**

- 1 • Prepare Documents
- 2 • Register
- 3 • Sign In
- 4 • Create New Password
- 5 • Add Payment Account
- 6 • Case Information
- 7 • Party Information
- 8 • Upload Filings
- 9 • Pay Fees
- 10 • Review Summary / Submit

Need Help? Call Odyssey's Filer Support Number: 1-800-297-5377

## County-Specific Self-Help Resources for E-filing

**CASE INFORMATION FOR E-FILING A NEW CASE**  
If you do not see your legal issue on this chart, please ask a clerk for assistance.

Your area of the law and legal issue	What to select on the E-filing website			
My legal issue is...	Location	Category	Case Type	
<b>I have a... FAMILY LAW CASE</b> 	<b>Divorce</b>	Cook County – Domestic Relations – District 1 – Chicago	General Proceedings	Petition for Dissolution
	<b>Custody</b>	Cook County – Domestic Relations – District 1 – Chicago	General Proceedings	Petition for Allocation of Parental Responsibilities
<b>I need a... PROTECTIVE ORDER</b> 	<b>Order of Protection</b>	Cook County – Domestic Violence – District 1 – Chicago	Civil Protection Order	Petition for Independent Order of Protection
<b>I have an... EVICTION CASE</b> 	<b>Evicting a Tenant</b>	Cook County – Civil – District 1 – Chicago	Civil	Eviction (Possession)

Consider creating county-specific e-filing resources such as:

- Posters or handouts explaining the Case Category and Case Types ( ← see example)
- Posters or handouts explaining Filing Codes
- Information about how fee waiver applications are processed
- How to use the scanners and find their documents
- FAQ document addressing the issues you hear most often
- Post all resources on court website and have available in courthouse



**The AOIC Can Help!** For more information on access to justice resources including e-filing resources; Safe Harbor Policy; standardized forms; language access tools; and courthouse signs, please contact Jill Roberts at [jroberts@illinoiscourts.gov](mailto:jroberts@illinoiscourts.gov) or (312) 793-2305.