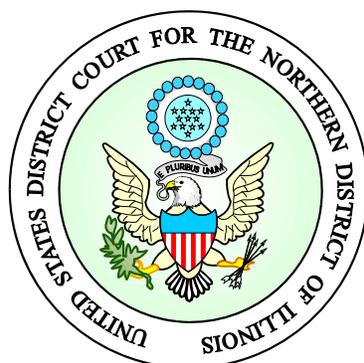


# **FILING A CIVIL CASE WITHOUT AN ATTORNEY: CIVIL RIGHTS FORMS & INSTRUCTIONS**



**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

**(07/13/16)**

### **Personal Identifiers in Paper Filings**

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 5.2 addresses privacy and security concerns over public access to electronic court files. Under this rule, papers filed with the court should not contain anyone's full social-security number or full birth date; the name of a person known to be a minor; or a complete financial-account number. A filing may include only the last four digits of a social-security number or taxpayer identification number; the year of someone's birth; a minor's initials; and the last four digits of a financial-account number. Please review the rule for a complete listing and exceptions.

## Summary of Instructions for Filing a Civil Case

Document	General Information	Number of Copies Required
<b>Complaint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List all plaintiffs and defendants in the caption, the top left of the complaint.</li> <li>• State your case in your own words, using additional pages if you need them.</li> <li>• Your signature, address, and telephone number must appear on the last page of your complaint.</li> <li>• Exhibits may be attached to your complaint.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must provide an original, one copy for the assigned judge, and one copy for <i>each</i> defendant named in your complaint.</li> <li>• If you are suing the federal government or federal agency, you need to provide three extra copies.</li> </ul>
<b>Civil Cover Sheet (JS-44)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a form used by the Court in preparing the docket for your case.</li> <li>• Instructions for completing this form appear on the reverse side of the form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the original is required.</li> </ul>
<b>Appearance Form for Pro Se Litigants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The appearance form, which must be filed, provides your name and address information. It is listed on the case docket. It also identifies where notices of orders and filings in your case are sent. If you have access to email, you should indicate on your appearance form that you wish to receive notices electronically rather than in paper form.</b></li> <li>• If you do not have an attorney and will be proceeding without counsel, fill in the appearance form in accordance with the instructions found on the reverse side of the form, supplying your name and address.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the original is required.</li> </ul>
<b>Filing fees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a fee for the filing of a civil case other than a writ of habeas corpus.</li> <li>• If you are unable to afford the fee, see the information below about in forma pauperis application.</li> <li>• See the Court's current <a href="#">fee schedule</a> for filing fee information.</li> </ul>	
<b>In Forma Pauperis Application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This petition is used by a plaintiff who requests approval by the Court for a civil case to proceed without the prepayment of the filing fee.</li> <li>• Complete all appropriate sections of the application, sign and date.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must provide an original and one copy for the assigned judge.</li> </ul>
<b>Motion for Attorney Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This motion is a request that the Court appoint an attorney.</li> <li>• Complete the motion form in accordance with the instructions attached to the form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must provide an original and one copy for the assigned judge.</li> </ul>
<b>Summons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the original and one copy for service to each defendant.</li> <li>• Your own name and address should appear under the heading labeled "Plaintiff's Attorney."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must provide an original and one copy for <i>each</i> defendant named in your complaint.</li> <li>• If you are suing the federal government or federal agency, you need to provide three extra copies.</li> </ul>

**USM-285**

- This form is designed as a control document for process served by a U.S. Marshal.
- Complete all appropriate sections of the form.
- Submit a completed copy of the form for each defendant named in your complaint.

- You must provide an original for *each* defendant named in your complaint.
- If you are suing the federal government or federal agency, you need to provide two extra copies.