Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

Family Law efiling - Frequently Asked Questions

I. Getting Started with Efiling

1. **What is efile and is it mandatory?**
    - Efiling is the electronic submission of court documents through an Electronic Filing Service Provider (EFSP). Efiling replaces older methods like fax and email.
    - It's **mandatory for attorneys, including court appointed attorneys** unless the document is exempt by court order.
    - **Self-represented litigants** can choose to efile or file in paper.
2. **Where can I find the rules and technical requirements for efiling?**
    - Refer to the General Order Re Mandatory Electronic Filing for Family law on the court's website. It details requirements like PDF format, document size limits, etc.
3. **How do I choose and register with an EFSP?**
    - You can find a list of approved EFSPs on the court's website. http://www.lacourt.org/division/efiling/civil_providers.aspx
    - You may choose any EFSP and can change providers at any time. Registration is required to establish an account for your efiled documents, track their status, and receive documents back from the court.
4. **Who can I contact with questions or technical issues related to efiling?**
    - Contact your EFSP for technical support. For other questions, you may contact the court at 213-633-6363.
5. **Can a legal service provider efile on behalf of a self-represented party?**
    - Yes.

II. Efiling Requirements and Exemptions

6. **What documents are exempt from efiling and how do I submit them?**
    - Exempt documents include:
        a. Peremptory challenges
        b. Bonds/undertakings
        c. Exhibits

d. Documents submitted under seal.

e. MSC Briefs

- See the General Order for a complete list. **Exempt documents must be filed by mail or in person at the courthouse.**

7. **How do I efile different types of documents (e.g., judgment packets, surrogacy packets, RFOs, proposed orders, ex parte applications, restraining orders)?**

    - Judgment packets and surrogacy packets must be efiled.
    - When efiling an RFO, submit the RFO and any supporting documents as separate PDFs in the same envelope.
    - Proposed orders should be submitted as a separate PDF in the same envelope as the related motion or request.
    - To efile an ex parte application, select "ex parte" as the document type during the efiling process.
    - Restraining order requests and responses can be efiled or filed conventionally.

8. **Can I efile confidential documents or documents under seal?**

    - You cannot designate a document as confidential yourself. The court determines confidentiality. To file a document under seal, you must first obtain a court order.

9. **Can I efile child custody evaluation reports, evidence exhibits, or my MSC statement?**

    - Confidential child custody evaluation reports can be efiled. Evidence exhibits and MSC statements are exempt and must be submitted in paper.

III. Fees and Processing

10. **Are there fees for efiling, and what if my document is rejected?**

    - Yes, both the court and the EFSP charge fees, which are collected upon submission.
    - If your document is rejected, a Notice of Rejection or comment in the efiling system will explain why. Correct the error and resubmit.

11. **What forms of payment are typically accepted for efiling fees?**

    - Credit cards and electronic checks; confirm with your EFSP.

12. **How are filing fees assessed for efiled documents?**

    - Some are automatically assessed; verify before submitting.
    - EFSP fees must be reasonable.

13. **What is the procedure for requesting a refund of efiling fees?**

    - Use the Request for Refund, form LACIV150 on the Court's website.

14. **If I have a fee waiver, does that waive all efiling related fees?**

    - Court fees are waived; check with your EFSP for their fees.

15. **Are there fees for efiling domestic violence requests of responses?**
    - No fees for domestic violence filings.
16. **Will filing fees be automatically assessed during the efiling process?**
    - Some common fees are automatically assessed, but it is important to verify the fees before submitting your filing.
17. **What are the filing hours, processing times, and public availability of efiled documents?**
    - You can efile 24/7.
    - Filings received before midnight are deemed filed that business day.
    - The court aims to process filings within two business days, but times vary.
    - Efiled documents are available to the public after the court accepts the filing.
18. **How does efiling affect deadlines, and are efiled documents printed?**
    - Efiling does not change "last day to file" requirements. Efiled documents are not printed. The electronic record is the official record.
19. **How are hearings scheduled for RFOs, and what if the date doesn't work for me?**
    - The efiling system automatically assigns the next available hearing date for RFOs, which is typically 45 days from the file date.
    - If the date does not work, please refer to the How to Reschedule a Hearing in a Family Court for requirements to reschedule your hearing date.
    - $20 Continuance fees may apply but are waived with an approved fee waiver.
20. **How will I receive the signed order, and what is the cut-off time for efiling ex parte applications?**
    - Signed orders are returned electronically. The moving party is responsible for serving them. The cut-off time for efiling ex parte applications is in local rule 5.3(2)(A).
21. **How do I request certified copies of a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO)?**
    - To request certified QDRO copies, include the $40 fee with your proposed order.
22. **How do I obtain a certified copy of any other efiled document?**
    - You may make the request through the Records Unit. Call (213) 830-0845 for more information.

IV. Technical Requirements

23. **What is an EFSP and an "electronic envelope"?**

- An EFSP is an independent service provider that facilitates efiling. You must use one to efile. An "electronic envelope" is a transaction containing one or more PDFs related to the same case.

24. **What is a "lead document" and a "Filing Document Name" (FDN)?**
    - When filing multiple documents, the "lead document" is the most important one (e.g., the RFO). An FDN refers to the type of document you're filing. Use the correct FDN.
25. **What if the correct FDN is not listed?**
    - Use the name that most closely describes your filing. As a last resort, use a generic name and specify the document title in the comments. **Note:** Using a generic name may cause your document to route incorrectly.
26. **What is the file size limit for efiling?**
    - The court has no limit, but EFSPs may have restrictions, which may require that you break the file into volumes.
27. **Are there specific scanning requirements for documents to be efiled?**
    - Ensure the document is formatted correctly and saved as a text-searchable PDF. In addition, the document cannot be password protected. Contact your EFSP for assistance.
28. **Can I efile documents completed using third-party legal software?**
    - Yes, if converted to text-searchable PDFs. Your EFSP can help convert your documents.
29. **What is the court's policy on color copies in efiled documents?**
    - Colored copies are allowed.
30. **Can I cancel an efiling transaction after it has been submitted?**
    - No.
31. **Are there specific rules about redacting information from efiled documents?**
    - Yes, filers are responsible for redacting confidential information.
32. **What is the court's policy on hyperlinks within a document?**
    - Only hyperlinks within the same PDF are accepted.

V. Procedural Guidelines

33. **How do I know which courtroom my case is assigned to, and what if I select the wrong location?**
    - The assigned courtroom and judicial officer will appear on the first page of the accepted document. If you select the wrong location, your filing will be rejected. In some cases, the court can route the document to the correct court location.

34. **Can I use an EFSP to electronically serve documents, and what are the rules?**

    - Yes, EFSPs offer electronic service for a fee. Refer to California Rules of Court, rule 2.251, and Code of Civil Procedure Section 1010.6.

35. **Does efiling mean I consent to electronic service?**

    - Yes, for attorneys. Self-represented litigants must affirmatively consent.

36. **Do I need to submit a printed courtesy copy?**

    - Generally, no, unless requested by a judicial officer.

37. **If I file an ex parte application electronically, am I still required to appear in court?**

    - You will be notified of the ruling and will only need to appear if a hearing is set.

38. **What are common reasons for efiled documents being rejected?**

    - Incorrect document type, mismatched case numbers, incorrect payment selections, and formatting issues.

39. **Where will the "filed" stamp and any case information appear on an efiled document?**

    - The “filed” stamp, including any case information, will appear at the top of the first page of the document.

40. **If a document is “received” by the court, but not filed, what type of stamp will be on the document?**

    - A "received" stamp will appear along the left margin.

41. **If you need to correct an error on a filed document, what are the options?**

    - File an amended pleading, apply for court relief, or simply correct the error.

42. **Can I send a confirmation email of my filing to another party?**

    - Your EFSP may allow this, but it's not considered legal service.

43. **What is considered an electronic signature?**

    - Pursuant to California Rules of Court, CRC 2.257, An electronic signature is an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with an electronic record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign a document or record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored electronically.

44. **How can a document signed under penalty of perjury be filed electronically?**

    A document is considered signed if:

    - The declarant uses an electronic signature that is unique, verifiable, under their sole control, and invalidated if altered.

- The declarant physically signs a printed copy before electronic filing. The filer certifies the original is available upon request.

45. **How are documents not signed under penalty of perjury handled?**

    - If a signature under penalty of perjury is **not required**, it is considered **signed** by the person who electronically files it.
    - For documents needing multiple signatures (e.g., stipulations):
        a. The opposing party signs a printed copy before filing, and the filer retains the original.
        b. The opposing party uses a unique, verifiable electronic signature.

46. **What if someone requests to inspect the original signed document?**

    - Any party may demand the original, and it must be made available within five days.
    - The court may order production of the original for inspection.
    - Local child support agencies may maintain electronic copies and destroy paper originals after the retention period.

47. **Is a digital signature required for electronically filed documents?**

    - No, parties are not required to use a digital signature on electronically filed documents.

48. **How are judicial signatures handled on electronically filed documents?**

    - If a document requires a signature from a court or judicial officer, it may be electronically signed in any manner permitted by law.