

eCourts FAQs for Attorneys: eFiling

Updated June 13, 2023

Type	Question	Response
Registration / Accounts / Access	What is the actual website address / URL for eCourts / Odyssey? In other words, on day one, what website does one visit to actually register and then file something?	You can register for an account with File & Serve here: https://efilenc.tylertech.cloud/OfsEfsp/ui/landing Please note that you cannot begin to eFile until go-live. This is not a test site. It is a production ready website that you can use to eFile on day one.
Registration / Accounts / Access	When do members of the bar register? On the go-live date? Or before?	Registration for File & Serve can happen before go live from this website: https://efilenc.tylertech.cloud/OfsEfsp/ui/landing . Registration for Portal is not possible until after go-live. Please note that you cannot begin to eFile until go-live.
Registration / Accounts / Access	For users that have to submit filings in File & Serve but do not file financials, do they have to file a waiver every time since they don't file financials? (Example: Probation, Child Support Enforcement)	Yes, a Payment Account has to be selected for every filing. A 'Waiver' account is a dummy payment account that needs to be set up before filings without fees can be submitted.
Registration / Accounts / Access	Will the government agency have a single username, or will each attorney require an individual username?	A government agency will need to first create a Firm Account by the Firm Admin. The Firm Admin can then add individual Firm Users and attorneys to the Firm Account. Once added, they will receive two (2) emails. One email will indicate they were added to their Firm Account, and one email to change the default password (by clicking the individual link in the 2nd email). In short, there is one Firm Account that houses the Payment Account information, User List, Admin List, Attorney List, etc., and there can be multiple individual registrations tied to that single Firm Account.
Filing	For purposes of filing deadlines, when is a document considered filed?	See General Rules of Practice: Rule 5(b)(4) (Time). A document is filed when it is received by the court's electronic-filing system, as evidenced by the file stamp on the face of the document.
Filing	When is a summons considered filed?	A summons is considered filed at the time of acceptance by the clerk.

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Case Search	How do I search for a case number?	<p>Case numbers in Odyssey can be broken down into four parts: year, case type, case number, and county identifier.</p> <p>EX 21CR000003-910</p> <p>Year: The first two numbers signify the year in which the case was established.</p> <p>Case type: The two letters signify the case type.</p> <p>Sequence number: The set of numbers signifies the sequential order or numbering (must equal 6 digits).</p> <p>County Identifier: The hyphen plus the last three numbers is the county identifier. Each county has their own.</p>
Filing	How will an attorney know where a document is in the process / how can they track the progress of what they submitted?	<p>If documents have been filed using File & Serve or Guide & File, the filer will get email notifications when the submissions are successful and when the clerk accepts or returns the filing. After the clerk accepts the filing, File & Serve is no longer involved and handoff to Odyssey occurs. Filings can be viewed in Portal once the filing is in Odyssey (elevated access is required for confidential, documents, etc.).</p>
Filing	How will the e-filing system work for cases involving self-represented litigants?	<p>See General Rules of Practice: GRP 5(b)(2). "A person who is not represented by an attorney is encouraged to file pleadings and other documents electronically but is not required to do so."</p> <p>A self-represented litigant can set up an individual account if they chose to eFile.</p>
Filing	What are the filing fees for filing electronically?	<p>The fees in addition to the filing fee would be as listed below depending on method of payment: 1. Credit Cards (Visa, Mastercard, Discover) - 2.89% transaction fee / with minimum \$1.00 per transaction; 2. eChecks - \$0.25 transaction fee.</p>
Filing	Who receives the credit card convenience fee?	<p>Our current merchant vendor is NIC. When a county goes live, the merchant vendor will be Chase Bank.</p>
Filing	Can you pay with a check or is it credit / debit only?	<p>Filer can pay online with an e-check or credit card.</p>

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Filing	What are the megabyte limits for court filings when e-filed? Are there limits per page or per filing, including all exhibits?	The file size limit is 26.21 MB (per filing). There can be multiple filings within a single envelope (i.e., per submission).
Filing	Can the attorneys track the progress of where the filing is in the workflow queue after the handoff to Odyssey occurs?	If documents have been filed using File & Serve or Guide & File, the filer will get email notifications when the submissions are successful and when the clerk accepts or returns the filing. After the clerk accepts the filing, File & Serve is no longer involved and handoff to Odyssey occurs. Filings can be viewed in Portal once the filing is in Odyssey (elevated access is required for confidential), documents, etc.
Filing	Are documents converted to PDFs that are attached or submitted during File & Serve?	No. Documents are not automatically converted to PDF when attaching to a filing via File & Serve. The filer will have to make sure to select a PDF version of the document before attaching. All AOC forms are a .pdf file.
Filing	If an attorney uploads a time-sensitive motion, how quickly does it get in front of a judge? Current practice is that the motion is brought to the judge's office, after being signed by the DA, and the judge reviews so the person doesn't get arrested.	Once a filing is done in File & Serve, it will appear in the clerk queue for review and acceptance. Once the filing is accepted, then time standards and task queues can be created (and in most instances are already created) to facilitate the filing / flow within Odyssey.
Reports	Is there a capability in File & Serve for bulk entry?	No. Filings can only be done one at a time but File & Serve does help with reducing repetitive data entry for similar filings. One could create and save templates that can be used to do multiple but separate filings with only minor tweaks for each filing.
Filing	What will be the process for issuing summons when a case is initiated by e-filing?	After the party e-files the complaint and summons, the clerk will electronically issue the summons. The filer will receive a link to an electronic copy of the issued summons and the file stamped complaint. The filer is then responsible for serving the summons in any manner authorized by law.

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File & Serve	After the summons and complaint have been filed electronically, who is responsible for getting those documents to the sheriff's office for service and is that still by paper documents? Or, will the sheriff get documents electronically from the clerk or lawyer?	The e-filer will receive a link to an electronic copy of the issued summons and the file stamped complaint. The filer is then responsible for serving the summons in any manner authorized by law.
File & Serve	How does the filer pay the service fee to the sheriff's office?	The filer will be responsible for arranging payment to the sheriff's office should they choose to have the sheriff provide service. At this time, this payment cannot be received or transmitted to sheriff's offices through Odyssey.
File & Serve	Is there a way to designate a service email address that is different from the individual email address used to login?	Service needs to be sent to the email on the case record in Odyssey and that belongs to a single person / attorney and this information comes to Odyssey from the North Carolina Bar.
Criminal Cases	Expunctions / Limited Driving Privileges / Civil Revocations / Restitution Payment of Fees: Assuming that expunctions / Limited Driving Privileges will be uploaded via File & Serve, how will attorneys pay the filing fees using trust funds and upload those documents? Will you upload first and then it won't be processed until there is a later payment in the system made by attorneys in person via Trust check at the courthouse? We do not utilize operating funds to pay for client fees; we only use the IOLTA entrusted funds and the payment / filing occur contemporaneously. Expunctions require the DA's office to accept service before it can be filed. How will that be handled?	Petitions that require payment have been set up in File & Serve. The petitioner has the ability to serve and file simultaneously. Any account with a routing number and account number can be set up as a payment account, and multiple payment accounts can be created in File & Serve.
Criminal Cases	Will we still have "gold sheets" to pull up a file from the clerk's office to resolve it? Or utilize a "gold sheet" between courtrooms? If a judge doesn't want to accept the negotiated plea in a given courtroom, they will often give us the opportunity to "shop" around and ask other judges on the same floor. How are we to be able to move a case down the hall to a different courtroom for resolution?	NCAOC does not recommend "paper" outside of Odyssey. If a Judge / DA from another courtroom agrees to hear a case from another courtroom, they can send a task to the original courtroom queue requesting the case be added to their session.

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Filing	Once e-filing goes live, does it apply to all cases in the county, including cases that have been filed previously? Or does it apply only to new cases initiated after the date e-filing goes live?	Yes. It applies to all cases, including cases commenced prior to go live.
Filing	What is the contingency plan for filing if an attorney can't eFile?	From the General Rules of Practice - Rule 5(b)(5) (Relief if Emergency Prevents Timely Filing): If an Odyssey service outage, natural disaster, or other emergency prevents an attorney from filing a document in a timely manner by use of the electronic-filing system, then the attorney may file a motion in paper that asks the court for permission to file the document in paper or for any other relief that is permitted by law. The attorney must attach the document that he or she was prevented from filing to the motion.
Filing	If the system goes down, can we revert back to doing things in paper and add it later?	Yes.
File & Serve	Can private attorneys use File & Serve to serve the DA?	Yes, for subsequent filings on existing cases.
Misc	Can a litigant obtain a certified copy from the clerk?	They can request a certified copy when they file a pleading through File & Serve or they can go to the Clerk's office and pay for a certified copy.
Filing	What is the process by which an ex parte communication may occur with a judge - for example, ex parte witness application by criminal defense attorney?	The pilot counties process builder committees have worked on a process to address these filings where they can be filed through File & Serve and routed to the judge (or judge's office) for review / signature if needed; these are only for ex parte requests that are permitted by law. The system shall not be used to attempt impermissible ex parte communication.
Filing	If notice of appeal is given, either orally in court or later in writing, will the clerk's office still prepare a hard copy of the Appellate Entries form and will it be filed by the clerk electronically?	Appellate activities will continue outside of Odyssey.

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Courtroom Practices	If a defense attorney needs to scan something in court, what happens?	We recommend defense attorneys eFile ahead of time or scan in court if it's an item that isn't known prior to court. Prosecutors will have the ability to scan into Attorney Manager-Prosecutor and send the document to Clerks.
Courtroom Practices	What about scanning for pro se litigants?	Pro se litigants are not required to eFile and can file over the counter if necessary.
Courtroom Practices	What if you're in a trial and can't access any of the needed documents in the virtual file?	We recommend you access documents in Portal.
Confidentiality	Whose responsibility is it to redact information on documents submitted to court?	Documents should be eFiled if submitted by an attorney and the attorney acknowledges that they are responsible for redaction. If it is a Pro Se defendant, the clerk would complete manual redaction. Document security and/or auto redaction may play a role with different cases as well.
Confidentiality	Can an attorney make a document confidential?	An attorney can make a document initially public or confidential when eFiling. Note: A judicial official can have the clerk change the security level of a document.
Confidentiality	What happens if an attorney or party accidentally uploads an item that is confidential to File & Serve? Can it be removed? What is that process?	<p>Accidental uploads of documents in File & Serve can be reversed (i.e., documents removed) up until the filing has been submitted / eFiled. If the filing is submitted, then the document goes to the Clerk / Reviewer who can change the Document Security to Confidential before it gets to Odyssey. Regardless of whether the Clerk / Reviewer changes the Document Security, once filed, it becomes part of the case record.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a document security within Odyssey to address any confidentiality that is needed. A document can be sealed or confidential by order of a Judge, pursuant to GRP Rule 27. This security works with the Odyssey Rights and Roles and only allows those users with the correct rights to see the documents. A clerk can set a document to confidential at a later time if necessary.</p>

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Confidentiality	If we have clients who provide us their substance abuse treatment on the day of court, and we submit it, will that information be marked “confidential” due to the personal medical records of the client? Usually, in this situation, Counsel provides the proof to the court, and we are given the client’s materials back once the judge has had the opportunity to review those materials. That still seems to be the best practice.	The filer can mark a filing confidential but a judicial official can change the security. If a document is public per Public Records Law but is sensitive, it can be classified as Public not Portal and it will not be viewable online but would be viewable at a public access device in the courthouse.
Filing	The Recommended System Requirements eFiling User Guide (2021) states that Adobe PDF document format is supported. Is this only for registered / licensed version of Adobe or can documents converted into PDF that are not on the Adobe system work as well?	Adobe is preferred but MS Word can be used to save a PDF. Images can be converted to a PDF as well or can be copied into MS Word and then be saved as a PDF. Below is a list of 3rd party websites to assist with creating PDF files. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.smallpdf.com - www.cutepdf.com - www.primopdf.com - www.pdf995.com - www.freepdfconvert.com
File & Serve	If a private attorney doesn’t have a scanner, how do they eFile orders?	A smartphone can be used to take a picture of the paper documents and turn them into PDFs. There are apps that can be downloaded and which will let you use your smartphone’s camera for this purpose.
File & Serve	Can we take pictures using our phones and then upload?	A smartphone can be used to take a picture of the paper documents and turn them into PDFs. There are apps that can be downloaded and which will let you use your smartphone’s camera for this purpose.
File & Serve	Will File & Serve accept photos?	Photos need to be converted to PDF to file into File & Serve. There are apps that can be downloaded and which will let you use your smartphone’s camera for this purpose.
Exhibits	Can attorneys scan exhibits to Odyssey?	The eRules of Recordkeeping (eRRK) discourage scanning exhibits.
Misc	What PDF is the system most compatible with?	Adobe is preferred but MS Word can be used to save a PDF.
Filing	What if you need to submit a document to the clerk but not have it file stamped (Motion for Order to Continue, clerk's divorce, report to vital records)? Can this be done in File & Serve?	File & Serve does allow for the acceptance of documents that will need to be file stamped after a judge’s signature. The clerk would accept the filing without adding the additional FILED stamp.

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Filing	What about time sensitive documents?	Clerks have 24 working hours to process. Documents will be stamped as to the time submitted and there will be a record of when it is accepted by the clerk. For timely filing considerations, the date and time the filing is submitted to the electronic filing system is the filed date and time.
Filing	Who gets notified of a filing? Specifically, is there a mechanism for e-filed documents to automatically flow to the case coordinator or a sheriff or an adoption clerk.	Once a filing is done in File & Serve, it will appear in the clerk queue for review and acceptance. Once the filing is accepted, then time standards and task queues can be created (and in most instances are already created) to facilitate the filing / flow within Odyssey. (It is recommended that filings are reviewed and accepted within a 24-hour turn around time.) If documents have been filed using File & Serve or Guide & File, the filer will get email notifications when the submissions are successful and when the clerk accepts or returns the filing. After the clerk accepts the filing, File & Serve is no longer involved and handoff to Odyssey occurs. Filings can be viewed in Portal once the filing is in Odyssey (elevated access is required for confidential documents, etc.)
Filing	Do all documents get e-filed, even documents previously requiring an original (such as a Petition for Adoption)?	Yes. With the exception of those that are specifically statutorily required.
Misc	What about Federal Court? Did they have problems with the PACER system?	AOC is not affiliated with this system.
Filing	Are outside agencies like Child Support required to eFile?	Attorneys are required to eFile. The agency as a whole isn't required to eFile but attorneys filing pleadings on behalf of the agency are required to eFile.
Filing	How are emergency custody cases handled?	Same way as they are today; however, filings are submitted via File & Serve.

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Support for Bar / Help	What type of assistance is available to the Bar?	<p>Tyler Technologies File & Serve support tools: https://odysseyfileandservecloud.zendesk.com/hc/en-us.</p> <p>Tyler Technologies File & Serve technical support: https://odysseyfileandservecloud.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new.</p>
Support for Bar / Help	What is the expected response time for assistance to the Bar?	<p>Typical reply time is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation, videos, etc., are available online - Chat is within seconds - Email is within a day - Call wait time is 3 to 5 minutes
Support for Bar / Help	Who will be the main point of contact to answer e-filing questions after the program goes live?	<p>Tyler Technologies acts as the primary source to intake and triage questions. Tyler Technologies will respond to technical issues and may redirect business questions to the NCAOC Help Desk. It is not expected for the File & Serve filing community to contact NCAOC Help Desk directly.</p>
Support for Bar / Help	Will there be after-hours assistance available to the Bar?	<p>Tyler Technologies support via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chat is available Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. EST - Email is available everyday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. EST - Call is available everyday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. EST
Service	In what instances are filings served by File & Serve?	<p>If the filer selects "File & Serve" (not "File Only" or "Serve Only"), and if the filer elects to serve persons listed as "Service Contacts", those "Service Contacts" (and no one else) will receive service. Otherwise, the parties do not know if something was filed in their case. They must check Portal periodically to see and/or wait for other (non eCourts) forms of service to arrive.</p>

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Service	To whom are they served upon?	Only if a person is registered as a Service Contact will they receive service, and even then, only if the filer elects to serve that Service Contact via File & Serve. (i.e., I can add myself as a Service Contact to all my cases, but if opposing counsel does not check the box to serve me via File & Serve for each and every filing, I will not receive service via File & Serve.)
Service	In each instance of service above, is a "Notification of Service" automatically generated?	Yes, if the filer selects File & Serve, a Notification of Service will be sent to the party being served, but not the party doing the serving.
Service	When the Notification of Service is generated, to whom is it sent? Only to the party doing the serving? Or to other parties as well?	Notification of Service will be sent to the party being served, not the party doing the serving. WORKAROUND: A filer may elect to serve himself with the filing/service, and as a result will receive the Notification of Service.
Service	Under Rule 5, the "Notification of Service" constitutes the Certificate of Service. Where are the Notifications of Service viewed by the parties (and the Court for that matter) to confirm exactly who was served with what, and when?	Notifications of Service are NOT visible in Portal by the parties or the Court. The only way to view/save the Notification of Service is to serve yourself as indicated in workaround above. In the File & Serve "Filing History Envelope Details", the filer/server can see the date and time of service, but not the Notification of Service itself.
Service	Hardcopy Certificates of Service are still required for cases involving Pro-se parties. When the attorney files the Certificate of Service, he/she is required to date the Certificate, indicating the date of service. For the pro-se parties, service is complete upon mailing, so the attorney can accurately state the date he/she filed & mailed the certificate. However, the same certificate which is being served on the eCourts registrants is not served until accepted by clerk, which may occur at a later date. What date should the attorney list on the Cert of Service?	The Certificate of Service should include broad language to the effect of: the filing was submitted to the eCourts File & Serve platform, and will be served electronically by the system upon acceptance by the Clerk (and then whatever the date is, it is).

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Service	<p>When Orders are entered by the Court/Clerk, and sent to only one party to then serve on other parties, is there a way that serving party can serve the Order on eCourts registrants electronically and have the system generate a "Notification of Service"? Or does the attorney have to create a new Certificate of Service, then file/serve it electronically, thus creating a "Notification of Service" (which equates to a Certificate of Service under the rule), which seems a bit circular. It seems the better practice would be for the Court and/or Clerk and/or File & Serve system itself serve it on eCourts registrants upon filing, but that goes back to the question #1 above.</p>	<p>(a) Odyssey and File & Serve are not integrated such that Odyssey has the functionality to serve Orders on parties properly registered as Service Contacts in File & Serve.</p> <p>(b) Upon a party's receipt of the emailed Order to be served, the party could use the Serve Only function of File & Serve to serve the Order (on proper Service Contacts) and create a Notification of Service, but note the update needed to the language included in Notification of Service as stated above.</p>
