



Fact Sheet for filing a Civil Lawsuit without an Attorney

To file a civil complaint, a plaintiff must submit the following documents to the Clerk's Office:

1. Original Complaint
2. Civil Cover Sheet
3. Summons or Request to Proceed Without Prepayment of the Filing Fee also referred to as a Motion to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis* (IFP). If the Motion to Proceed IFP is granted, the Court will direct service.
4. Filing fee **OR** Motion to Proceed IFP in the following form:
 - a. Payment of \$405.00. The Clerk's Office accepts checks and money orders payable to: Clerk, U.S. District Court; **OR**
 - b. Completed Motion to Proceed IFP.

All of the forms that you need to start a civil lawsuit are available on the Court's website at www.arwd.uscourts.gov.

Complaint

The Western District of Arkansas has a general complaint form, a civil rights complaint form for prisoners, an employment discrimination complaint form, a Fair Labor Standards Act complaint form, and a social security appeal complaint form. These complaint forms are available on the Court's [website](http://www.arwd.uscourts.gov). For more guidance on how to complete a complaint, see the Pro Se Civil Guidebook, available on the Court's [website](http://www.arwd.uscourts.gov).

Civil Cover Sheet

A civil cover sheet must be filed with each civil complaint and is used for administrative purposes by the Court. The civil cover sheet is available on the Court's [website](http://www.arwd.uscourts.gov).

Summons

The original summons must be filed with an original civil complaint. A summons directs a defendant to serve an answer on the plaintiff within a certain amount of time. The summons must be signed and dated by the Clerk's Office to be effective. A summons form is available on the Court's [website](http://www.arwd.uscourts.gov).

The summons caption (or case title) must match the case title provided on the complaint. *Do not fill out a separate summons for each named defendant – complete only one summons naming all defendants.*

After the summons is issued by the Clerk's Office, the plaintiff should provide sufficient copies of the summons and complaint for the service of all defendants. More information on service of process may be found in Chapter Two of the [Pro Se Civil Guidebook](#).

Filing Fee

To initiate a civil case, the Clerk's Office must collect a \$405.00 filing fee. The filing fee may only be waived if a judge grants a Motion to Proceed IFP.

To proceed without paying the filing fee, you must submit a Motion to Proceed IFP. This form is available on the Court's [website](#). A magistrate judge will review your request and you will be notified of the judge's decision. If the judge grants your request, you will be proceeding *in forma pauperis* or IFP. Permission to proceed IFP entitles a non-prisoner plaintiff to file an action without paying filing fees or costs of service of the complaint upon the defendant(s). Proceeding IFP *does not* waive most subsequent costs of litigation such as fees for copies, for interpreters, for witnesses, or for transcripts.

Privacy Notice of Electronic Availability of Case File Information

The following privacy policies relate to civil case file information in the United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas. (Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2)

- Documents in civil cases are available electronically as they are available at the courthouse, with the following exceptions: Documents sealed or otherwise restricted by court order or policy of the Judicial Conference of the United States; and o Documents in Social Security cases will be excluded from electronic access.
- SENSITIVE INFORMATION SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN ANY otherwise DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO THE COURT. If sensitive information must be included, the following personal data identifiers must be partially redacted from the pleading, including exhibits, unless ordered by the court.

- o Social Security numbers to the last four digits;
- o Names of minor children to the initials;
- o Dates of birth to the year; and
- o Financial account numbers to the last four digits.