



## Mariyana T. Spyropoulos

Clerk of the Circuit Court Cook County

# Filing a Civil Suit

The Civil Division hears actions in which the amount of the claim is less than \$30,000 and the event surrounding the suit occurred in Chicago. These cases include breach of contract, personal injury, housing, and evictions.

Civil Division, Room 601  
Daley Center, 50 W. Washington  
Chicago, IL  
(312) 603-5030

### What forms do I need to file a lawsuit and where can I get them?

To file a lawsuit, you must complete Complaint and Summons forms, and use the Civil Action Cover Sheet to determine the type of case you are filing. These forms are available from the Civil Division of our Office or our website. You will have to serve the Defendant either through the Sheriff's Office or through Certified Mail, if you qualify.

#### SPECIAL NOTE: CERTIFIED MAIL

You may only choose to serve by Certified Mail if your case is under \$10,000 and the Defendant is in the state of Illinois. You must make service through Certified Mail to an actual address, not a PO Box. If your case is an Eviction case or your claim exceeds \$10,000, service may NOT be made by Certified Mail.

### Will I have to pay for service by Certified Mail?

Yes. The Certified Mail fee is subject to charge by the U.S. Postal Service. If serving by Certified Mail, leave the originals and copies of the Complaint and Summons forms with the cashier, and keep a set of copies for your records.

### Will I have to pay a filing fee, and if so, for what amount?

Yes, the fee will vary depending on the amount of your claim. You may pick up a schedule of filing fees at the Customer Service Counter in the Civil Division in Room 602 of the Daley Center, or you may download the schedule from our website on the Civil Division page.

### What must I do after I have completed the Complaint, Summons and the Optional Civil Action Cover Sheet forms?

After you have completed the Complaint and Summons forms, a court date will be issued. If you are filing your case onsite with an eFile Exemption Form, you will need to put a Status Hearing Date on both the Complaint and Summons forms. If you are filing your case electronically, the system will provide you with the Status Hearing Date which will be placed on the completed forms you must upload.

***The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County is barred by law from providing legal advice.  
This document is not legal advice.***

Self Represented Litigant Center: (872) 529-1093  
Customer Service: (312) 603-5030  
[www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org](http://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org)

 CookCountyClerkofCourt  
 ClerkCook  [clerkofthecircuitcourt](https://www.instagram.com/clerkofthecircuitcourt)  
 The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County



## Mariyana T. Spyropoulos

Clerk of the Circuit Court Cook County

# Filing a Civil Suit

### How do I serve the Defendant?

You may serve the Defendant through the Sheriff's Office or by Certified Mail through the Clerk's Office.

- Service by the Sheriff's Office: If you want the Sheriff's Office to serve the Defendant then you must take one copy of the Complaint and Summons to the Sheriff's Office in Room 701 of the Daley Center, or you may file electronically by going to the Cook County Sheriff's website. You will be required to pay a fee, which can be determined by visiting the Sheriff's Office in Room 701 in the Daley Center, calling (312) 603-3365 or visiting the Sheriff's website at [www.cookcountysheriff.org/courts/civil-services/](http://www.cookcountysheriff.org/courts/civil-services/). A \$5.00 will apply when a summons or alias summons is filed.
- Service by Certified Mail: If you qualify and wish the Clerk's Office to serve the Defendant by Certified Mail, leave the originals and copies of the Complaint and Summons forms with the cashier, and keep a set of copies for your records. The Clerk's Office will charge you a nominal fee for service by Certified Mail. If you are filing electronically, you will pay the certified mail fees by selecting Optional Services.

### How can I find out if the Defendant was served within the filing period?

If you served through the Sheriff's Office, you can learn if the Defendant was served by calling (312) 603-3365. If you served by Certified Mail through the Clerk's Office, you can find out if the Defendant was served by calling (312) 603-5030 or check your case on our website.

### What happens if the Defendant is not served before the status hearing date?

If the defendant is not served before the status hearing date, the first summons (or a previous summons) will then have expired. If this is the case, you must then complete, file and issue a second summons known as an Alias Summons. Thus, if the Defendant has not been served you have three options:

- You may complete an Alias Summons (regular Summons form, with "Alias" checked or written) and serve the Defendant through the Sheriff's Office.
- You may do a motion asking the Judge for a Special Process Server (SPS)
- You may complete an Alias Summons (regular Summons form, with "Alias and serve the Defendant by Certified Mail if your filing qualifies. You may get a Summons form from the Clerk's Office in Room 602 of the Daley Center or you may download the form from our website.

***The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County is barred by law from providing legal advice.  
This document is not legal advice.***

**Self Represented Litigant Center: (872) 529-1093**  
**Customer Service: (312) 603-5030**  
**[www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org](http://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org)**

 **CookCountyClerkofCourt**  
 **ClerkCook**  **clerkofthecircuitcourt**  
 **The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County**