

# HOW TO REQUEST A FEE WAIVER (CIVIL)

# 1

## FILL OUT AND FILE THE REQUIRED FORMS

To start or respond to most court cases in Illinois, there are fees and other costs including:

- Filing Fees: The fees charged by the Circuit Court Clerk to file documents in a court case.
- Other Fees and Costs: Other parts of the case may have costs which may be waivable, like having the sheriff serve a court document on the other side, or going to mediation.

To ask the judge to let you participate in a court case for free or at a reduced cost, start by filling out the *Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)* and *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*. This form tells the judge about your income, expenses, and any public benefits you receive so that they can decide whether you qualify for a fee waiver.

# 2

## WAIT FOR A DECISION

After filing your forms, the judge will review your *Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)* and decide if you have to pay any court fees. Usually, the judge will be able to make a decision by reviewing your *Application* without a court hearing.

# 3

## RECEIVE SIGNED ORDER OR ATTEND COURT

The court will notify you if you need to provide more information or attend court for a hearing on your *Application*. You may need to bring more information about your financial circumstances to a hearing.

After the judge decides, they will fill out the *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*. This *Order* will say if you must pay none of the court fees, some of the court fees, or all of the court fees.

The judge or the Circuit Clerk will tell you how you will get a copy of the *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*.

Statutes covering these forms: [735 ILCS 5/5-105 and 5/5-105.5](#) and [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 298](#)



This packet is not legal advice. It provides general instructions on how to use these forms in your court case. It cannot and does not try to cover everything that might happen in your court case. Your use of the forms does not guarantee you will be successful in court.

How a judge handles a case can vary from county to county. **Your county may have special requirements that are not covered in these instructions.** Ask the Circuit Clerk if your county has local rules and, if so, where you can get a copy.



# ARE THESE FORMS FOR ME?

You may **use these forms to ask the judge to let you, your minor child, or an incompetent adult participate in a case for free or at a reduced cost** when:

- Your case is a **civil case in circuit court**. For example, divorce cases, family cases, eviction cases, small claims cases, foreclosure cases, and lawsuits for injury or property damage.
- You are asking the judge to expunge or seal a criminal case.

## Do not use these forms if:

- Your case is a **criminal, traffic, or juvenile justice case**. If you need to ask for a fee waiver in a criminal case, use the *Application for Waiver of Criminal Court Assessments* form found at: [ilcourts.info/forms](http://ilcourts.info/forms).
- Your case is in the Appellate or Supreme Court. Use the *Application for Waiver of Court Fees, Appellate or Illinois Supreme Court* found at: [ilcourts.info/forms](http://ilcourts.info/forms).

Forms required:

- **Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)**: Is used to tell the judge whether you get any public benefits and your income and expense information, so they can decide if you can participate in a court case for free or at a reduced cost.
- **Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)**: Is used by the judge to say whether your *Application* is granted or denied.

You can find all of the statewide forms online at: [ilcourts.info/forms](http://ilcourts.info/forms).

## How will I know if there is a fee?

- The Circuit Clerk can tell you if there is a fee for filing a document with the court. Other fees might come up during the case. For example, the judge might tell you about a fee or the sheriff's department might tell you about a fee for delivering (serving) court papers.

## Is there a deadline for filing an *Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*?

- No. You can file an *Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)* at any time during the court case.
- It might take the judge a couple of days to review your *Application* and to decide whether you have to pay fees, so don't wait until the last minute.
- You are responsible for knowing if there are other deadlines to file documents.

## Fee Waiver Easy Form

Illinois Legal Aid Online has an Easy Form program that helps you complete your forms. Easy Forms ask simple questions and put your answers in the right places on the forms. At the end of the program, you can download or email your forms to e-file or print them.



Easy Forms are free to use. Visit [ilcourts.info/fee-waiver-easy-form](http://ilcourts.info/fee-waiver-easy-form) or scan the QR code to use the Easy Form.

# HOW TO FILE THE FORMS

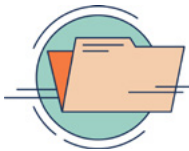
## E-filing



- After you fill out your court forms, file them with the Circuit Clerk. This is done by electronic filing, called 'e-filing'. You do not have to e-file if:
  - You qualify for an exemption (see "Not E-filing" below) or
  - Your case involves a criminal matter.
- Most people e-file their forms using Odyssey eFileIL at [ilcourts.info/efile](http://ilcourts.info/efile).
- There may be fees to file your forms. See the previous Costs & Fees page for more information.
- Follow step-by-step instructions and watch videos that walk you through the steps for e-filing at [ilcourts.info/EfileHowTo](http://ilcourts.info/EfileHowTo).
- E-filing is easier on a computer. It may not work on a cell phone or tablet.
- If you do not have access to a computer or if you need help e-filing, take your completed forms to a public library or a Circuit Clerk, Appellate Clerk, or Supreme Court Clerks' office. These places offer public computers where you can e-file your forms.
  - You can bring your forms on paper or saved on a flash drive. The public computer will have a scanner where you can turn your paper forms into electronic files.
  - Librarians and courthouse staff may be able to help you e-file, but they cannot provide legal advice.

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## Not E-filing



- Some people are not required to e-file, which means they can file paper forms at the courthouse or by mail. People who do not have to e-file are:
  - Inmates in prison or jail who do not have a lawyer.
  - People with a disability that keeps them from e-filing.
- You may also qualify for an exemption from e-filing if you:
  - Do not have internet or computer access in your home, and it is hard for you to travel.
  - Have trouble reading, writing, or speaking English.
  - Are filing documents in a sensitive case, such as an order of protection.
  - Tried to e-file your forms, but you were not able to because the equipment or help you needed was not available.
- To ask for an exemption from e-filing, use the form at [ilcourts.info/ExemptionCircuit](http://ilcourts.info/ExemptionCircuit). If you can't print this form, then ask for it at your local courthouse.
  - File your *Certification for Exemption from E-Filing* form along with your other court forms at the Circuit Clerk's office or by mail.
  - Bring or send your signed court forms and at least two copies of your forms to the Circuit Clerk's office. Ask them to stamp your copies and return them to you.
  - If you need to make copies of your forms, you can do that at the Circuit Clerk's office. They may charge you a fee to make copies.
- There may be fees to file your forms. See the previous Costs & Fees page for more information.
- If you mail your court forms to the Circuit Clerk's office, include a stamped envelope addressed to you. The Circuit Clerk will file your forms and then send your copies back to you in the envelope.



For more information about going to court including how to fill out and file forms, **call or text Illinois Court Help** at 833-411-1121 or go to [ilcourthelp.gov](http://ilcourthelp.gov).

If there are any words or terms used in these instructions that you do not understand, please **visit Illinois Legal Aid Online** at [ilao.info/glossary](http://ilao.info/glossary). You may also find more information, resources, and the location of your local legal self-help center at: [ilao.info/lshc-directory](http://ilao.info/lshc-directory).





# WHAT'S NEXT

## Find out if you need to go to court.

### After filing your forms, the judge will review your *Application*.

The court will notify you if you need to give more information or documents, or if you have to attend court. Usually, the judge will be able to decide if you qualify for a fee waiver just by reviewing your *Application*. You should only have to attend court if the judge needs more information from you ([Supreme Court Rule 298](#)).

### Make sure you know how to attend your court date.

Your court date could be in person, by phone or by video. If it is by phone or video it is called a "Remote Appearance." Call the Circuit Clerk or visit their website for more information. To find the phone number for your Circuit Clerk, visit [ilcourts.info/CircuitClerks](http://ilcourts.info/CircuitClerks).

## If needed, attend court and bring any requested documents.

### If a court date is scheduled, it could be in person, by phone, or by video.

- If your court date is in person:
  - Get to the courthouse at least 30 minutes early so you have enough time to get through security.
  - Go to the courtroom number listed on your court form.
  - If your forms do not have a courtroom number, look for a list of cases at the courthouse or ask someone at the Circuit Clerk's office.
  - Check in with the courtroom staff and wait for your name and case number to be called.
- If your court date is by phone or video:
  - Make sure to have the call-in or login information for your court date and make sure your technology is working.
  - Follow the instructions on the court notice you received. Call the Circuit Clerk or Circuit Court, or visit their websites for specific technology instructions.
  - Start trying to log-in to your courtroom at least 15 minutes before the start time in case you have any problems with technology.
  - Follow these tips to attend court by phone or video: [ilcourts.info/AllRemoteCourtResources](http://ilcourts.info/AllRemoteCourtResources).
- When your case is called, introduce yourself to the judge. If you are attending by phone or video remember to unmute yourself.

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## Get a copy of your *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*. Pay fees, if any.

### After the judge makes a decision, they will fill out the *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees (Civil)*.

- This *Order* will say if you have to pay any court fees.
- Depending on your circumstances, the judge may order that you participate for free, pay part of the fees (from 25%-75%), or pay all of the fees.
- Even if your application is granted, you may have to pay fees if the judge orders it later, for example because your financial situation changed.
- The judge or the Circuit Clerk will tell you:
  - How you will get a copy of the *Order*.
  - When you will get a copy of the *Order*.
- If the judge decides you have to pay all or some of the court fees, you have to pay by the deadline listed in the *Order on Application for Waiver of Court Fees*. If you do not pay by the deadline, the judge may dismiss your case or find against you.
- If the judge decides you qualify for a fee waiver, the order is good for one year. If you still need the fee waiver after it expires, you will need to file a new *Application*.



# APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF COURT FEES (CIVIL)

IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, CIRCUIT COURT

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_  
*County Where You Are Filing the Case*

Enter the case information as it appears on your other court documents.

PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER OR IN RE \_\_\_\_\_  
*Who Started the Case* *First, Middle, and Last Name or Business Name*

Case Number \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Clerk fills in)*

DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT \_\_\_\_\_  
*Who the Case Was Filed Against* *First, Middle, and Last Name or Business Name*



Use this form to ask the judge to **waive your court fees, costs, and charges in a civil court case**. If your case is a criminal case, use the *Application for Waiver of Criminal Court Assessments* form. If you are completing this form on behalf of a minor or an incompetent adult, provide that person's information on this form instead of your own information.

## 1. BASIC INFORMATION

A. I am completing this form (*check one*):

- For myself       On behalf of a minor or incompetent adult  
*(Use the minor or incompetent adult's information on this form)*

B. Your Name (*applicant*): \_\_\_\_\_  
*First* *Middle* *Last Name*

C. Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street, Apt. #* *City* *State* *Zip Code*

D. I cannot afford to pay the court fees, costs, and charges in this case.

## 2. HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

List the number of people who live with you whom you support. Support means the people rely on you financially. If on behalf of a minor or an incompetent adult, use their information.

A. I support \_\_\_\_\_ adults (not counting myself) who live with me.  
*# of Adults*

B. I support \_\_\_\_\_ children under 18 who live with me.  
*# of Children Under 18*

## 3. PUBLIC BENEFITS



Check all the benefits that you currently receive. Be prepared to provide proof that you currently receive at least 1 of the checked benefits if asked.

I currently receive the following public benefits (*check all that apply*):

- SSI (Supplemental Security Income, not Social Security)       AABD (Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled)       General Assistance Program (GA), Transitional Assistance, or State Children and Family Assistance
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/ Food Stamps)       TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)



**STOP:** Read this note to see **what to complete next.**

- I checked one of the public benefit boxes in section 3.
- ▶ Skip section 4 and section 5. Go to section 6 on page 4. You qualify for a full fee waiver ([735 ILCS 5/5-105\(a\)\(2\)\(i\), \(b\)\(1\)](#)).
- OR -
- I did **not** check any of the public benefit boxes in section 3.
- ▶ **Complete section 4 and section 5**, including both columns.

## 4. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Do not fill out this section if you checked any boxes in section 3. Skip to section 6.

If you did **not** check any boxes in section 3, fill out information below for **both** the past month and the past 12 months. Be prepared to provide proof of your income, the value of your belongings (including real estate), and your expenses if asked.

A. I have a **pending application for 1 or more of the benefits** listed in section 3:

- Yes                       No

B. I received the following income (money) in the **past month**. List the gross (before taxes) amount (*check all that apply*):

**MONTHLY INCOME:**

<u>Type</u>	<u>Total received in the past month</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> No income	
<input type="checkbox"/> My employment	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security (not SSI)	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Support	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Pension	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Money from other household members	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other income, including any money received from family and friends that is not listed above ( <i>list type and amount</i> )	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
<b>Total of all money received in the past month</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

C. I received the following income (money) in the past **12 months**. List the gross (before taxes) amount (*check all that apply*):

**YEARLY INCOME:**

<u>Type</u>	<u>Total received in the past 12 months</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> No income	
<input type="checkbox"/> My employment	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security (not SSI)	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Support	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Pension	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Money from other household members	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other income, including any money received from family and friends that is not listed above ( <i>list type and amount</i> )	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
<b>Total of all money received in the past 12 months</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

D. I have the following **monthly expenses**  
(check all that apply. If you share expenses  
with someone, list only the amount you pay):

**MONTHLY EXPENSES:**

<u>Type of expense</u>	<u>Amount per month</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Rent	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Home mortgage	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other mortgage	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Food	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle, including any loans	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Childcare	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child support	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other monthly expenses not listed above (list type and amount)	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
<b>Total of all expenses in the past month</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above	

E. I own the following **items and their value is**  
(check all that apply):

**ITEMS OF VALUE:**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Total value</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Bank accounts and cash	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Home	\$ _____
The total I owe on my home mortgage is	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other real estate (not including the house I live in)	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> 1st vehicle worth	\$ _____
Is the 1st vehicle paid off?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> 2nd vehicle worth	\$ _____
Is the 2nd vehicle paid off?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (list items and value)	
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above	

**5. HARDSHIP INFORMATION (Optional)**

If there is additional information you think the judge should know about why you cannot afford to pay the court fees, include that information here.

It would be a substantial hardship for me or my family if I have to pay the fees, costs, and charges because:

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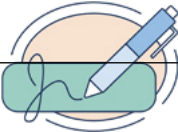


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**6. IF QUESTIONS ABOUT APPLICATION**

If the judge has questions about my *Application* and I have to attend court, I want:

- A remote court date (video or telephone)
- An in-person court date



**SIGN:**

Under [735 ILCS 5/1-109](#), your signature means that you:

1) certify that everything in this document is true and correct, and 2) understand that making a false statement on this form is perjury and has penalties provided by law.

If you are filling out this form online, sign your name by typing it. If you are filling out this form by hand, sign and print your name.

Your Signature */s/* \_\_\_\_\_ Print Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street, Apt. # City State Zip Code*

Your Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Attorney Number (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Email \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure to **check your email every day** so you do not miss important information, court dates, or documents from other parties.



**NEXT STEP:**

File this form at the Circuit Court Clerk's office. You can file this form at any point during your case. More information on how to do that can be found here: [ilcourts.info/forms](http://ilcourts.info/forms).

**THEN:**

You should only have to go to court for a hearing on your *Application* if the judge needs more information from you ([735 ILCS 5/5-105 and 5/5-105.5](#); [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 298](#)). The judge will notify you if you need to go to court or give more information. This may include documents showing your income, value of belongings (including real estate) and expenses.



Learn more about each step in the process by reading through our Instructions document: [ilcourts.info/fee-waiver-instructions](http://ilcourts.info/fee-waiver-instructions).





# ORDER ON APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF COURT FEES (CIVIL)

IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, CIRCUIT COURT

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_  
*County Where You Are Filing the Case*

Enter the case information as it appears on your other court documents.

PLAINTIFF/PETITIONER OR IN RE \_\_\_\_\_  
*Who Started the Case* *First, Middle, and Last Name or Business Name*

Case Number \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Clerk fills in)*

DEFENDANT/RESPONDENT \_\_\_\_\_  
*Who the Case Was Filed Against* *First, Middle, and Last Name or Business Name*

Your Name (applicant): \_\_\_\_\_  
*First Middle Last Name*



**STOP. DO NOT check any boxes or fill in any more blanks on this form.** The judge will complete the rest of the form.

The Court has reviewed the *Application for Waiver of Court Fees* and orders (check 1, 2, 3, or 4):

## 1. GRANTED – FULL WAIVER

The *Application for Waiver of Court Fees* is **granted**, effective on the date the *Application* was first filed. The applicant qualifies for a **full (100%) waiver** and may participate in this case without payment of fees, costs, or charges, because (check A, B, or C):

A. The applicant receives **means-based public benefits** under one or more of the following programs:

- SSI (Supplemental Security Income, not Social Security)
- AABD (Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled)
- TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)
- SNAP (Food Stamps)
- General Assistance (GA), Transitional Assistance, or State Children and Family Assistance

**- OR -**

B. The applicant's personal income is **125% or less of the current poverty level** as established by the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services and the applicant's non-exempt assets under [735 ILCS 5/12-901](#) and [735 ILCS 5/12-1001](#) are such that the applicant is unable to pay the fees, costs, or charges.

**- OR -**

C. Payments of fees, costs, and charges would cause **substantial hardship** for the applicant or their family.

**2. GRANTED – PARTIAL WAIVER**

The *Application for Waiver of Court Fees* is granted, effective on the date the *Application* was first filed. The court finds (*check one*):

**75%** of all fees, costs, and charges are waived. The applicant **must pay 25%** of all fees, costs, and charges because the applicant’s available income is more than 125% but not greater than 150% of the current poverty level.

**50%** of all fees, costs, and charges are waived. The applicant **must pay 50%** of all fees, costs, and charges because the applicant’s available income is more than 150% but not greater than 175% (50% waiver);

**25%** of all fees, costs, and charges are waived. The applicant **must pay 75%** of all fees, costs, and charges because the applicant’s available income is more than 175% but not greater than 200% (25% waiver);

**Income findings are based on the current poverty level** as established by the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, and the applicant’s non-exempt assets under [735 ILCS 5/12-901](#) and [735 ILCS 5/12-1001](#) are such that the applicant is unable to pay the fees, costs, or charges.

**Payment** (*check one*):

The applicant must pay the fees, costs, and charges currently due by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Month, Day, Year

Upon good cause shown, the applicant may make payments as follows (*describe deferral, installment plan, or other reasonable terms*):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. CONTINUED – APPLICATION IS INCOMPLETE OR FACTUAL ISSUE**

*If the court determines that relevant sections of the Application are incomplete or there is a factual issue regarding the applicant’s entitlement to a waiver, the applicant must be notified of the deficiencies and given the opportunity to amend the Application and/or be given a remote hearing in accordance with [Supreme Court Rule 45](#), unless the applicant requests an in-person hearing or will already be present in the courthouse on the date of the hearing.*

Relevant sections of the *Application* are incomplete or there is a factual issue about the applicant’s eligibility for a fee waiver on the face of the *Application*.

The specific eligibility questions are:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The applicant must (*check all that apply*):

**A. File an updated (amended) Application** that includes the missing information listed above.

**B. Attend a court date.**

If a hearing is set, it must be set within **30 days** of the date the Application was filed ([735ILCS 5/5-105](#); [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 298](#)).

The Application for Waiver of Court Fees is **scheduled for court** on (check all that apply):

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Month, Day, Year* *Include AM or PM*

**Remotely** (video or telephone option)

By video conference at: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Video conference website*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Video conference log-in information, meeting ID, password, etc.*

By telephone at: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Call-in number for telephone remote appearance*

**In person** at: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Courtroom Address* *Courtroom Number*

If remote and in-person options are both checked, you may choose either option.

**C. Provide documents.** These documents will **not** be included in the public court file.

Provide documents at the hearing.

Submit documents before the hearing. Instructions about when and how to submit:

\_\_\_\_\_

Required documents are:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. DENIED - DOES NOT QUALIFY**

The Application for Waiver of Court Fees is **denied**. The applicant does not qualify for a fee waiver because (must state specific reason):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The applicant must pay all the fees, costs, and charges currently due by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Month Day, Year*



**If Application was granted, this order expires one year from the date of this order.** The applicant may reapply before or after the expiration date. Fees, costs, and charges included in this waiver are: filing, service of process, publication, mediation, guardian ad litem, and all other fees listed in [735 ILCS 5/5-105\(a\)\(2\)\(1\)](#).

**ENTERED:**

Judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Month, Day, Year*