

# **Philadelphia Orphans' Court Rule 3.7.A.**

## **Electronic Filing and Service of Legal Papers**

### **(1) Authorization for Electronic Filing.**

(a) Effective immediately, parties may file all legal papers with the Clerk by means of electronic filing in portable document format ("pdf").

(b) Commencing July 1, 2005, parties shall file all legal papers with the Clerk by means of electronic filing in pdf.

(c) Effective immediately, in the event any legal paper or exhibit is submitted in hard-copy format, the Clerk shall convert such legal paper or exhibit into pdf, without changing the content or format of the legal paper or exhibit, and shall accept the legal paper or exhibit for filing in pdf. The Clerk shall return the hard-copy legal paper or exhibit to the filing party for retention as required by Pa.O.C.R. 3.7(c)(3).

### **(2) Website, Username and Password.**

(a) Website. The Orphans' Court Electronic Filing System shall be available at all times at the Court's website address, <http://courts.phila.gov>, or at such other website as the Court may designate from time to time.

(b) Username and Password. To obtain access to the Orphans' Court Electronic Filing System, counsel or a party not represented by counsel ("filing party") shall apply for a Username and Password at the Court's website.

### **(3) Electronic Filing of Legal Paper.**

(a) A filing party shall file all legal papers and exhibits in pdf at the Court's website.

(b) In the event an exhibit is not available in pdf and the filing party is unable to convert the exhibit to pdf, the filing party shall submit the exhibit via facsimile utilizing the Electronic Filing Transmittal Form generated by the Electronic Filing System.

(c) The Clerk shall not maintain a hard copy of any legal paper or exhibit filed electronically under this rule.

(d) A hard copy of the legal paper shall be signed and, as required, verified prior to the electronic filing of the legal paper, and the filing party shall retain such hard copy as required by Pa.O.C.R. 3.7(b)(4) and 3.7(c)(3).

### **(4) Redaction and Access.**

(a) All legal papers and exhibits filed electronically shall be available electronically to the filing parties, as the Court may provide from time to time. The Clerk shall maintain computer terminals in the Clerk's office for this purpose.

(b) The Clerk shall provide public access to a redacted copy of electronically-filed legal papers and exhibits, as the Court may provide from time to time. The Clerk shall maintain computer terminals in the Clerk's office for this purpose.

(c) The Clerk shall redact the following personal data identifiers from electronically-filed legal papers, including the Cover Sheet but excluding exhibits, for public access:

- i. The name of the minor in minors' estates.
- ii. Social Security numbers.
- iii. Dates of birth.
- iv. Financial account numbers.
- v. Home addresses.

(d) A filing party shall redact the personal data identifiers listed in subsection (c) from all exhibits to a legal paper. The Clerk shall not review exhibits to determine whether personal data identifiers have been redacted.

#### **(5) Filing Date.**

(a) Immediately upon receipt of the legal paper, the Court shall provide the filing party with email notification that the legal paper has been received by the Court's Electronic Filing System.

(b) Within six (6) business hours of receipt of the legal paper, the Clerk shall provide the filing party with email notification that the legal paper has been accepted for filing or rejected.

(c) A legal paper accepted for filing shall be deemed to have been filed as of the date and time it was received by the Court's Electronic Filing System. If a legal paper is rejected, the Clerk shall specify the reason. Subject to the provisions of subsection (d), a rejected legal paper shall be deemed as not having been filed.

(d) Any filing party for whom the failure of the Court's website or the erroneous rejection of a legal paper resulted in an untimely filing may file a petition requesting that the legal paper be deemed filed as of the submission date. Such petition shall state the date and time of the alleged failure or rejection. A petition alleging failure of the Court's website shall state why the legal paper could not be timely filed in person in the Clerk's office. A petition alleging erroneous rejection of a legal paper shall state why the rejection was erroneous and why the legal paper could not be timely resubmitted.

#### **(6) Automation Fee. Payment of Filing Fees.**

(a) Effective immediately, the Clerk shall collect, in addition to all other applicable fees, an automation fee of \$10.00 for each legal paper for which a filing fee is now charged.

(b) Commencing July 1, 2005, the Clerk is authorized to charge the sum of \$1.00 per page for each page of a legal document or exhibit which is not filed in pdf.

(c) All fees collected pursuant to this rule shall be set aside by the Clerk and remitted monthly to the First Judicial District's Procurement Unit.

(d) The Clerk shall not accept a legal paper as filed prior to payment of the required filing fee.

**(7) Local Procedures.** The Court may develop further administrative procedures, as needed, to implement this rule and to provide for security of the electronic filing system, as required by changing technology. All such administrative procedures shall be posted on the Court's website.

**Probate Section Comment:**

The Clerk's staff has traditionally functioned as the Court's gatekeeper by reviewing legal papers presented for filing to insure conformity with applicable rules and procedures. Any legal paper which did not comply with the Rules of Court was returned to the filing party. No change in the gatekeeper function is intended by reason of implementation of electronic filing. Instead, communication between the Clerk's staff and the filing party may now occur electronically as set forth in Local Rule 3.7.A(5)(c) and (d). Filing parties are encouraged to allow sufficient time to correct deficiencies in time-sensitive matters. The Clerk's staff will continue to be available to review the hard copy of any legal paper prior to electronic filing to assure conformity with applicable rules and procedures.

**Adopted by the Board of Judges of the Court of Common Pleas on February 17, 2005, and effective May 2, 2005.**