

United States District Court District of Massachusetts



Guide to Information Resources for Media Representatives and the Public

Prepared by the Clerk's Office
United States District Court
District of Massachusetts
January 2009

THE COURT'S WEBSITE

The website for the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts (www.mad.uscourts.gov) contains a great deal of information and is the best place to start all searches for local information.

The following is a list of information that is, or that we expect to make available on the Court's website.

- Annual Reports of the Court
- Attorney Handbook
- CM/ECF
- Court Reporter Contact Information
- Court Staff Contacts
- Federal Judicial Center
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Glossary of Terms
- Guide to Information Resources for Media Representatives and the Public
- Journalist's Guide to the Federal Courts
- Opinions Search
- PACER and US Party/Case Index
- Press ID Card Application and Instructions
- Press Releases
- Privacy Information (E-government Act)
- Statistical Information
- Understanding the Federal Courts

ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE COURT

LINK: <http://www.mad.uscourts.gov/resources/guides-pubs.htm>

ATTORNEY HANDBOOK

The Clerk's Office has prepared an Attorney Handbook, intended to provide the public and the Bar of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts with information needed to conduct business with the Court.

This reference guide will also be helpful to the media, answering questions on many topics.

LINK: http://www.mad.uscourts.gov/attorneys/pdf/Attorney_Guide.pdf

CM/ECF

The District Court for the District of Massachusetts uses an electronic case filing system (CM/ECF or Case Management/Electronic Case Files system). Public information entered into CM/ECF is available through PACER.

LINK: (to PACER) <http://ecf.mad.uscourts.gov/>

COURT REPORTER CONTACT INFORMATION

LINK: <http://www.mad.uscourts.gov/utills/documents/phonelistpublic.pdf>

COURT STAFF CONTACTS

A telephone directory is available on the Court's website. This directory is updated quarterly.

LINK: <http://www.mad.uscourts.gov/utills/documents/phonelistpublic.pdf>

FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER

The Federal Judicial Center is the education and research agency for the federal courts. Congress created the FJC in 1967 to promote improvements in judicial administration in the courts. The FJC website contains the results of Center research on federal court operations and procedures and court history, as well as selected educational materials produced for judges and court employees.

LINK: www.fjc.gov

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The current FAQ page is a link to the Administrative Office website.

LINK: <http://www.uscourts.gov/faq.html>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The Court's website has two glossaries: "Glossary of Legal Terms - Criminal" and "Glossary of Legal Terms-General."

LINK: <http://www.mad.uscourts.gov/resources/guides-pubs.htm>

JOURNALIST'S GUIDE TO THE FEDERAL COURTS

The Administrative Office has published a "*A Journalist's Guide to the Federal Courts*," which is intended to assist representatives of the media assigned to court coverage.

LINK: <http://www.uscourts.gov/journalistguide/journalistguideCover.pdf>

OPINIONS SEARCH

The Court makes recent opinions available at no charge. The search may be performed by Judge name, by keyword, by all recent opinions (last 30 days) and by Judge and keyword. Instructions on using the Opinions Search page may be found at <http://pacer.mad.uscourts.gov/opinionhelp.html>.

LINK: <http://pacer.mad.uscourts.gov/opinion.html>

PACER AND US PARTY/CASE INDEX

WHAT IS PACER?

PACER (**P**ublic **A**ccess to **C**ourt **E**lectronic **R**ecords) is an electronic public access service that allows users to obtain case and docket information from Federal Appellate, District and Bankruptcy Courts, and from the U.S. Party/Case Index. Electronic access is available for most courts by registering with the PACER Service Center, the judiciary's centralized registration, billing, and technical support center at <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>.

WHY USE PACER?

The PACER System offers an inexpensive, fast, and comprehensive case information service to any individual with a personal computer (PC) and Internet access. The PACER system permits you to request information about a particular individual or case. The data is displayed directly on your PC screen within a few seconds. The system is simple enough that little user training or documentation is required.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

The PACER System offers electronic access to case dockets to retrieve information such as:

- A listing of all parties and participants including judges, attorneys, and trustees;
- A compilation of case related information such as cause of action, nature of suit, and dollar demand;
- A chronology of dates of case events entered in the case record;
- A claims registry;
- A listing of new cases each day;
- Appellate court opinions;
- Judgments or case status;
- Types of documents filed for certain cases; and
- Imaged copies of documents.

U.S. PARTY/CASE INDEX

The U.S. Party/Case Index is a national index for U.S. district, bankruptcy, and appellate courts. A small subset of information from each case will be transferred to the U.S. Party/Case Index each night. The system serves as a locator index for PACER. You may conduct nationwide searches to determine whether or not a party is involved in federal litigation. For detailed information on cases found while searching the U.S. Party/Case Index, you will need to visit the PACER site for the particular jurisdiction where the case is located.

More information, including related costs and registration forms is available on the PACER web page at <http://www.pacer.uscourts.gov>.

PHOTOGRAPHING, RECORDING AND BROADCASTING

Local Rule 83.3(a) states: “Except as specifically provided in these rules or by order of the court, no person shall take any photograph, make any recording, or make any broadcast by radio, television, or other means, in the course of or in connection with any proceedings in this court, on any floor of any building on which proceedings of this court are or, in the regular course of the business of the court, may be held.”

PRESS ID CARD APPLICATION, INSTRUCTIONS

The non-transferable Media Identification Card provides an exception to the Court’s Policy regarding Electronic Devices. A valid Media Identification Card will entitle an individual to bring to a courtroom a laptop with a silent keyboard and/or a cell phone that must be off or in silent mode while in a courtroom. All Media Identification Cards will be subject to the provisions of Local Rule 83.3 that prohibits photographing, recording and broadcasting.

Instructions and the application are both available on the Court’s website.

PRESS RELEASES

As events warrant, the Clerk of Court, at the direction of the Chief Judge or his designee may issue a press release. Any such release will be distributed to the media via email and posted to the Court’s website.

The Administrative Office of the US Courts also maintains an Office of Public Affairs. The telephone number for that office is 202-502-2600.

PRIVACY INFORMATION (E-GOVERNMENT ACT)

On December 17, 2002, President Bush signed into law the “E-Government Act of 2002,” Pub. L. No. 107-347.

In compliance with Local Rule 5.3, attorneys and *pro se* litigants are not to include sensitive information in any document filed with the Court unless such inclusion is necessary and relevant to the case.

Counsel may be directed to file a redacted version electronically, and a complete document in hard copy.

SPECIAL ORDERS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ACCUSED OR THE LITIGANTS IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED OR SENSATIONAL CRIMINAL OR CIVIL CASES

Local Rule 83.2B states: “In a widely publicized or sensational criminal or civil case, the court, on motion of either party or on its own motion, may issue a special order governing such matters as extrajudicial statements by parties and witnesses likely to interfere with the rights of the accused or the litigants to a fair trial by an impartial jury, the seating and conduct in the courtroom of spectators and news media representatives, the management and sequestration of jurors and witnesses, and any other matters which the court may deem appropriate for inclusion in such an order.”

Any orders issued by the Court regarding such matters will be posted on the Court’s website as soon as possible and made available in the Clerk’s Office.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The Administrative Office of the United States Courts maintains statistical reports on various matters such as:

Annual Report of the Director: Judicial Business of the United States Courts
Federal Court Management Statistics
Federal Judicial Caseload Statistics
Statistical Tables for the Federal Judiciary

See the Administrative Office website for additional information and reports, including a list of statistical publications available through the Government Printing Office.

LINK: <http://www.uscourts.gov/library/statisticalreports.html>

UNDERSTANDING THE FEDERAL COURTS

This publication was developed by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to provide an introduction to the federal judicial system, its organization and administration, and its relationship to the legislative and executive branches of the government.

LINK: <http://www.uscourts.gov/understand03/>