

SURROGATE'S COURT E-FILING PROTOCOL FOR RENSSELAER COUNTY SURROGATE'S COURT

The Administrative Judge of the Third Judicial District, the Surrogate of Rensselaer County, and the Chief Clerk of the Rensselaer County Surrogate Court hereby promulgate local user protocols to assist users in practice of the New York State Courts E-Filing System (hereinafter referred to as "NYSCEF") implemented in the Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court in accordance with the program established by the Chief Administrator of the Courts pursuant to Uniform Rules 207.4a and 207.4aa and provide guidance with respect to local practice and procedures used to process filings, fees, and court calendaring. Users should also review the NYSCEF website (www.nycourts.gov/efile). These Protocols do not supersede any statutory or regulatory provisions regarding electronic filing as those are controlling and take precedence.

1. CASES TYPES ELIGIBLE FOR E-FILING:

MANDATORY E-FILING: E-filing is mandatory in all new proceedings (Administration, Probate and Voluntary Administration. Accounting and Wrongful Deaths, may also be e-filed, if they have not been previously commenced by paper filing) filed in this Court other than guardianships, Supplemental Needs Trusts and adoptions that are commenced in this Court on or after February 16, 2021. Except in limited circumstances, all such proceedings must be commenced by filing with the Court electronically through NYSCEF and all subsequent documents in such proceedings must be e-filed.

HYBRID PROCEEDINGS:

Any proceedings filed prior to February 16, 2021, you will continue to submit any and all documents in paper .

DOCUMENTS MUST BE E-FILED: Unless otherwise provided in the e-filing rules, this protocol, or where a special exemption is granted (e.g., Oversized Exhibits in Section 3, below) all documents to be filed with the Court in a NYSCEF case must be filed with the NYSCEF system.

2. **NON-PARTICIPATION IN E-FILING:** An attorney who certifies in good faith that he or she lacks the equipment or knowledge needed to e-file and has no staff member or employee under his or her direction who has such knowledge and equipment may opt out of e-filing in each mandatory proceeding by filing an opt out

form with the Clerk of the Court. Attorneys also may be exempted by the Court for good cause shown. Proposed intervenors (non-attorneys) and unrepresented non-parties are exempt from e-filing. (Uniform Rule § 207.4aa(e)(1)). Unrepresented litigants are exempt from e-filing, but may choose to participate (CPLR § 2111).

Unrepresented litigants in a consensual proceeding are not required to decline consent or to attach the Notice of Hard Copy Submission – E-Filed Proceeding to any of their hard copy filings.

3. **E-FILING DOCUMENTS IN SURROGATE’S COURT:**

ESSENTIAL STEP PRIOR TO E-FILING: Prior to entering any information into an initial filing, you should run an inquiry on the decedent’s last name, using the first initial, to determine if a file is already open. Due to the numbering system in Surrogate’s Court, an inquiry based on the file number alone may not produce accurate results. In addition, you must contact the Court to ascertain whether there may be another will for the decedent on file with the Court (e.g., filed for safekeeping). Sub-file letters are not recognized by NYSCEF and should not be used.

INITIAL ENTERING OF CASE INFORMATION: Any error in the initial entry of case information can significantly delay the proceeding. Please double check to be sure to select the same county as is shown on your papers.

The case name must be entered as follows for a **PROBATE** proceeding:

- Initial entry must be identical to the signature on the will
- If the name on the death certificate is different, that becomes an “AKA”
- If the name on the will does not match the signature, that becomes an “AKA”
- No punctuation or spaces should be used when entering the name or “AKA”

The case name must be entered as follows for an **ADMINISTRATION** proceeding:

- Initial entry must be identical to the name on the death certificate
- If the name on the petition is different, that becomes and “AKA”
- No punctuation or spaces should be used when entering the name or “AKA”

NOTICE OF HARD-COPY SUBMISSION: Where, within the e-filing rules, an attorney or an unrepresented litigant who is participating in e-filing submits a document in hard copy, the document must bear a Notice of Hard Copy Submission - E-Filed Proceeding (see NYSCEF Forms page). Attorneys who are exempt from e-filing are required to attach this form to all hard copy filings, while unrepresented litigants who are not participating in e-filing are not so required.

REQUEST FOR SURROGATE'S COURT ACTION:

This Court requires the Request for Surrogate's Court Action (see NYSCEF Forms page) as the first document uploaded with each filing. This is to be filed as a stand-alone document. Do not scan any other documents with the Request.

For subsequent filings, do not re-use the original Request form. Prepare a new form for each filing with the appropriate information entered. If requesting court certified documents or Certificates of Appointment, use a Request for Surrogate's Court Action Non-Proceeding Relief (p.2 of the Request form). Do not submit a blank Request for Surrogate's Court Action form.

DEATH CERTIFICATES: **Certified** death certificates must be submitted directly to the Surrogate's Court. It must also be e-filed. It must be filed within three (3) to five (5) business days from the e-filing date.

WILLS:

Original wills must be submitted directly to the Surrogate's Court and a copy be e-filed. It must be filed within three (3) to five (5) business days from the e-filing date. **DO NOT REMOVE STAPLES. YOU MUST PHOTOCOPY THE WILL WITHOUT REMOVING THE STAPLES PRIOR TO SCANNING.**

CITATIONS:

Submit a proposed citation electronically through NYSCEF only. The Court will complete the citation and upload the completed signed version to NYSCEF as quickly as possible. If your proposed citation requires amendment, you will be notified. Otherwise, an e-mail notification will be sent when the completed citation is posted to NYSCEF. After receipt of the notification, print the citation and serve it, in accordance with the SCPA. Service of the Citation should be accompanied by a Notice of Commencement of Proceeding Subject to Mandatory Electronic Filing or a Notice Regarding Availability of Electronic Filing, as the case may be. (See Forms page on NYSCEF site.)

DECREES AND ORDERS:

E-file proposed decrees and orders through NYSCEF only. Once the decree and/or order is signed, the Court will upload the signed version to NYSCEF and notify all consenting parties that the decree and/or order has been signed and posted. Users who have requested a certified copy of the decree and/or order and have paid the appropriate fee via NYSCEF will receive the certified copy by regular mail.

STIPULATIONS:

Stipulations submitted for purposes of being “so ordered” by the Court shall be electronically filed. If the Court requires a working copy, the filer must attach proof that the stipulation has been e-filed (e.g., the thank you page or the e-mail notification) to the back of the stipulation when it is submitted to the Court.

OVERSIZED EXHIBITS: If an exhibit or attachment is unsuited for electronic filing (e.g., a large map or a videotape), it shall be submitted to the Court and served on the other parties in hard copy. Attach a Notice of Hard Copy Submission – E-Filed Proceeding. In addition, a Notice of Hard Copy Exhibit must be completed and electronically filed. (See Forms page on the NYSCEF site.)

4. **PAYMENT:** This Court accepts payment of fees required by the SCPA by credit card payments made via NYSCEF (subject to a fee that will be charged for using a credit card) **or by cash, check or money order directly at the Court within three (3) to five (5) business days from the e-filing date.** Fees are calculated in accordance with SCPA § 2402 based on the documents filed with NYSCEF and the representation of the filing user regarding the size of the estate. Review by the Court may result in a modification of the fees initially anticipated or charged in connection with this transaction. In the event of any such modification, the Court will contact the filing user by e-mail with the proper amount and request an additional fee, if applicable. Some courts will not allow the filing of additional documents by the filer if the filer owes an outstanding fee in that proceeding.

If choosing to pay by credit card at time of filing on NYSCEF website, enter credit card information directly on website. You must insert the credit card information with each filing; your credit card will be charged at the time of filing. Make sure credit limit is large enough to cover anticipated filings.

If choosing to pay at the Court, be aware that documents ARE NOT CONSIDERED “FILED” UNTIL PAYMENT IS RECEIVED. The Court cannot process the filing until payment is received in full and will delete the filing if payment

is not made within a specified amount of time after e-filing. **This must be paid within three (3) to five (5) business days from e-filing the documents.**

5. **NOTIFICATIONS:**

Notification of defective filings will be sent out by e-mail or by telephone, depending on the circumstances. Clerks/staff are available for consultation during regular business hours. The Court's contact information is as follows:

Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court telephone number is (518)285-6100 and the e-mail address is: renselaersurrogate@nycourts.gov.

If you are having problems with e-filing, please contact the NYSCEF Resource Center at nyscef@nycourts.gov.

CERTIFICATES AND LETTERS:

Upon request made via NYSCEF, the Court will mail out Certificates and Letters. Users must request and pay for certificates in advance in any e-filed proceeding.

6. **SIGNATURES:** Documents requiring signatures shall be considered to be signed under the circumstances outlined in Uniform Rule §207.4-a(f). When e-filing a document bearing an actual signature, the e-filer is responsible for maintaining the original, executed document pursuant to Uniform Rule 207.4-a(f)(2).

7. **DECREES, ORDERS, AND JUDGMENTS:**

Decrees, orders, and judgments will be signed in hard copy by the Surrogate and forwarded to the Clerk for filing and scanning into the NYSCEF system, which will then transmit notification to all parties. However, the notification does not constitute service of notice of filing upon any party (see, Uniform Rule § 207.4-a[h]).

Court issued Letters and Certificates of Appointment will be provided in hard copy to the filer via the usual means (SASE, USPS mailing, messenger). The preferred method of contact/return should be noted by the filer on the Request for Surrogate's Court Action form.