



Michigan Supreme Court

State Court Administrative Office
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State Court Administrator

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2026
TO: All Judges and Court Administrators
FROM: Thomas P. Boyd, State Court Administrator
SUBJECT: Forms Redesign Project and Small Claims Forms

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) is pleased to release the first iteration of the Michigan Court Forms Redesign project. This multi-year initiative aims to increase access to justice and demonstrate our promise of procedural fairness by increasing clarity, readability, and usability in all Michigan court forms. The first set of redesigned forms (Small Claims) are now available on the [Forms webpage](#) and may be used immediately.

Background

In 2022, the Justice for All Commission tasked a committee with reviewing current court forms and identifying opportunities for increasing access to justice. One opportunity was translating court forms from legalese to plain language. To make this change, the SCAO worked with plain-language consultants to translate several forms and test them with members of the public.

User testing showed that plain-language improved understanding of individual words and phrases, but language improvements alone were not enough to increase overall usability of the forms. The SCAO subsequently engaged form design experts to identify additional opportunities for improvement. The design experts conducted extensive interviews and gathered feedback from individuals across the state, including members of the public, court clerks and administrators, judges and magistrates, attorneys, and self-help center staff. This feedback culminated in a completely redesigned court form design system that not only integrated plain language, but also focused on structure, layout, and visual presentation of information for maximum usability and understanding.

Design System

The new design system integrates plain language best practices with user-centered design principles. This means that forms have new formatting, updated structure, and significant layout changes. It also means that some forms previously limited to a single page may span multiple pages; some multi-purpose forms will be separated; and some new forms will be created. All of this was done intentionally to benefit court users and increase clarity.

Other changes to the form design include:

- Consistent, predictable visual patterns.
- Established typographic hierarchy.
- Readable font sizes.
- Generous white space and adequate writing areas.
- Clear, structured sectioning with lettered subsections for navigation.
- Short descriptions of a form's intended use.
- Inclusion of the Seal of the Michigan Supreme Court.
- Clear designation of mandatory-use forms.
- Inclusion of case type information in headers.
- Tagging content for screen reader accessibility.
- Addition of email fields to the caption boxes on case-initiation forms.

Small Claims Forms

Due to their use by self-represented litigants, the SCAO started by redesigning the small claims forms set. The [first attachment](#) of this memo shows the former version of DC 84, Affidavit and Claim. The [second attachment](#) shows the new version for easy comparison. The former versions of the small claim forms are no longer posted on the SCAO website; however, courts and litigants may continue using them through December 31, 2026. This extended transition period allows courts the time to make any necessary programmatic changes to support the new forms.

MiCOURT Forms (JIS Courts Only)

Judicial Information Services is already working to make the new forms accessible from the MiCOURT Platform as MiCOURT Forms and will notify the courts with further guidance when they become available.

Next Steps

The next forms scheduled for redesign include requests (i.e. fee waivers, reasonable accommodations, interpreters) and garnishment. Redesigned forms will be reviewed by a group of subject matter experts for feedback on legal sufficiency, clarity, readability, and overall usability. Feedback will be considered and incorporated as appropriate before the redesigned forms are released for public use.

If you are interested in providing feedback on future redesigned forms as a subject matter expert, please email Sheri Lankheet at formsfeedback@courts.mi.gov. Please include information about your areas of expertise in the email

For a full list of changes, see the [Explanation of Changes memo](#).

ATTACHMENT 1

STATE OF MICHIGAN JUDICIAL DISTRICT	AFFIDAVIT AND CLAIM Small Claims	CASE NUMBER and JUDGE
------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	------------------------------

Court address

Court telephone number

See additional notice and instructions on page 2.

1. Plaintiff _____

 Address _____

 City, state, zip _____ Telephone number _____

2. Defendant _____

 Address _____

 City, state, zip _____ Telephone number _____

NOTICE OF HEARING For Court Use Only	
The plaintiff and the defendant must be in court on	
_____ Day _____ Date _____	
at _____ at <input type="checkbox"/> the court address above.	
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ Time Location	
_____ Process server's name	Fee paid: \$ _____

3. A civil action between these parties or other parties arising out of the transaction or occurrence alleged in this complaint has been previously filed in this court _____ Court. It was given case number _____ and assigned to Judge _____ . The action remains is no longer pending.
4. I have knowledge or belief about all the facts stated in this affidavit and I am the plaintiff or his/her guardian, conservator, or next friend. a partner. a full-time employee of the plaintiff.
5. The plaintiff is an individual. a partnership. a corporation. a sole proprietor. _____ .
6. The defendant is an individual. a partnership. a corporation. a sole proprietor. _____ .
7. The date(s) the claim arose is/are _____ .
Attach separate sheets if necessary
8. Amount of money claimed is \$ _____ . (Note: Plaintiff's costs are determined by the court and awarded as appropriate. They are not part of the amount claimed.)
9. The reasons for the claim are: _____

10. The plaintiff understands and accepts that the claim is limited to \$7,000 by law and that the plaintiff gives up the rights to (a) recover more than this limit, (b) an attorney, (c) a jury trial, and (d) appeal the judge's decision.

11. I believe the defendant is is not mentally competent. I believe the defendant is is not 18 years or older.

12. I do not know whether the defendant is in the military service. The defendant is not in the military service.
 The defendant is in the military service.

Signature

Subscribed and sworn to before me on _____
Date

Deputy clerk/Notary public signature

My commission expires on _____
Name (type or print)

Notary public, State of Michigan, County of _____ Acting in the County of _____

This notarial act was performed using an electronic notarization system or a remote electronic notarization platform.

ADDITIONAL NOTICE AND INSTRUCTIONS

TO BOTH THE PLAINTIFF AND THE DEFENDANT:

- You must bring to the hearing all witnesses, books, papers, and other physical evidence needed to prove or disprove this claim.
- Before the trial (hearing) starts, you have the right to
 1. **remove the case to the general civil division of the district court**, or
 2. have the case heard by a district court judge (if the hearing is scheduled before an attorney magistrate). If the case is heard by an attorney magistrate, you may appeal to the district judge within 7 days after the trial.
- If the case is tried in the small claims division, you give up the right to an attorney, to a jury trial, and to appeal the judge's decision.

If you require accommodations to use the court because of a disability or if you require a foreign language interpreter to help you fully participate in court proceedings, please contact the court immediately to make arrangements.

TO THE DEFENDANT:

- The affidavit and claim you have just received means you are being sued in the small claims division of the district court.
- The court is being asked to decide a matter that the plaintiff says is your obligation and responsibility.
- If you wish to deny this claim or arrange terms of payment, you must make your request by appearing at the date, time, and place stated in the notice of hearing on the front of this form.
- If you do not appear at the date, time, and place stated, a default judgment may be entered against you for the amount stated in item 8, including the costs of this action.
- If the dispute is settled before or at the hearing, you may have to pay the plaintiff's costs.
- In case a judgment is entered against you at the hearing, you should be prepared to pay the amount stated in item 8, including the costs of this action, or to make arrangements for installment payments.

PROOF OF SERVICE

TO PROCESS SERVER: You must serve the affidavit and claim no later than 7 days before the hearing date and file proof of service with the court clerk. If you are unable to complete service, you must return this original and all copies to the court clerk.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE / NONSERVICE

I served personally by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, and delivery restricted to the defendant or the defendant's agent (copy of return receipt attached) a copy of the affidavit and claim, together with the attachments listed below, on:

I have attempted to serve a copy of the affidavit and claim, together with the attachments listed below, and have been unable to complete service on:

Name	Date and time of service
Place or address of service	
Attachments (if any)	

I am a sheriff, deputy sheriff, bailiff, appointed court officer or attorney for a party.

I am a legally competent adult who is not a party or an officer of a corporate party. I declare under the penalties of perjury that this certificate of service has been examined by me and that its contents are true to the best of my information, knowledge, and belief.

Service fee	Miles traveled	Fee	
\$		\$	
Incorrect address fee	Miles traveled	Fee	TOTAL FEE
\$		\$	\$

Signature

Name (type or print)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SERVICE

I acknowledge that I have received service of a copy of the affidavit and claim, together with

Attachments (if any) on _____
Date and time

Signature on behalf of _____

Name (type or print)



Small Claims Affidavit

Court Name _____ Case Number _____
 Court Phone _____ Judge _____
 Court Address _____

FORM USE: This form is used to start a small claims case and gives important case information. It is completed by the plaintiff. For information on small claims, see the *Small Claims Overview* (Form DC 84info).



You must go to court. The date and time of your hearing is set by the court and included on the *Small Claims Notice of Hearing*.

A Information About the Parties

The **plaintiff** is the party starting the case.

Plaintiff Name

Plaintiff Address

Plaintiff Phone

Plaintiff Email

The plaintiff is (select one)

- an individual. a partnership.
 a sole proprietorship. a corporation.
 other _____

The **defendant** is the party being sued.

Defendant Name

Defendant Address

Defendant Phone

Defendant Email

The defendant is (select one)

- an individual. a partnership.
 a sole proprietorship. a corporation.
 other _____

Check here if there are multiple plaintiffs or defendants. Complete and attach *Small Claims Affidavit Addendum* (Form DC 84a).

Note: This question asks whether anyone has previously filed a court case about this dispute.

1. Has a civil action between these parties or other parties arising out of the transaction or occurrence alleged in the affidavit been previously filed? (select one)

- No.
 Yes. (provide case information)

Court Name

Court Case Number

Judge Name

Case Status (select one)

- Pending (active)
 No longer pending (closed)

B

Claim

2. The plaintiff understands and accepts that by filing in small claims, they give up the right to (a) collect more than \$7,000 on the claim, (b) have an attorney, (c) have a jury trial, and (d) appeal a judge’s decision.

3. This claim is because of something that happened on this date or dates: (mm/dd/yyyy)

4. Enter the full amount of the claim.

► The court may award costs to the plaintiff. The amount of costs to award, if any, is determined by the court and is not part of the claim amount.

5. Describe the reasons for the claim. Include dates, amounts, and what happened. (attach more pages if needed)

C Witnessed Signature

 **Wait to sign this form until you are in front of a notary or deputy clerk.**

A notary public or deputy clerk will check your ID, have you swear or affirm that the information in this affidavit is true, and watch you sign. A **notary public** may be found at banks, libraries, shipping and packaging stores, or online. A **deputy clerk** is found at the courthouse.

PLAINTIFF OR PLAINTIFF’S REPRESENTATIVE

I have examined this affidavit and its contents are true to the best of my information, knowledge, and belief.

Plaintiff or Plaintiff’s Representative Signature ▼

Printed Name

NOTARY PUBLIC OR DEPUTY CLERK

Was this notarized using an electronic or remote electronic notarization platform?

Yes No

Notary Public or Deputy Clerk Signature ▼

Subscribed and sworn before me on (date)

Name _____

Notary public, State of Michigan,

County of _____

My commission expires _____

Acting in the County of _____

D Important Information for the Defendant

You are being sued by the plaintiff in small claims for money.

- A. **Court Hearing:** You must appear (go to) a court hearing. You should have received a *Small Claims Notice of Hearing* along with this *Small Claims Affidavit*. It contains the date, time, and location of your hearing. If you did not get this information, contact the court right away.
- B. **Missed Hearing:** If you do not attend the hearing, a default judgment may be entered against you. This means you may be ordered to pay the amount claimed (up to \$7,000) plus the plaintiff's costs.
- C. **Costs:** You may be required to pay the plaintiff's costs even if the case is settled before or at the hearing.
- D. **Judgment Payment:** If a judgment is entered against you, be prepared to pay the claim amount, including any costs. If you cannot pay the total amount at one time, you may ask the judge or magistrate for a payment plan (installment payments).

E Important Information for Both Parties

- E. **No Attorneys:** If your case is heard in the small claims division, you may not be represented by an attorney at any stage of the case.
- F. **Magistrate Hearings:** Your case may be assigned to a magistrate. A magistrate is an attorney appointed to hear cases. You have the right to ask that a judge conduct the hearing instead of a magistrate. You can make this request in writing or at the court before the hearing starts.

If your case is heard by a magistrate, you may appeal the magistrate's decision to the district court judge within 7 days of the date the judgment is signed. If your case is heard by a judge, the judge's decision is final and cannot be appealed.

- G. **Removal Requests:** Having your case heard in the small claims division is optional. The process of moving a case from the small claims division to the general civil division of the district court is called removal. Either party has the right to **remove this case from the small claims division to the general civil division of the district court**. If a case is removed to the general civil division, parties may hire attorneys, have a jury trial, and appeal decisions.

There are two ways to remove the case from the small claims division to the general civil division:

- **Option 1:** Complete a request in writing using the *Small Claims Demand for Removal* (Form DC 86) and return it to the court before the hearing.
 - **Option 2:** Go to the hearing as scheduled. Before it starts, tell the judge or magistrate you want to remove the case to the general civil division.
- H. **Court Hours:** Evening and Saturday court hours may be made available if a written request is submitted and need for the request is shown.
 - I. **Hearing Preparation:** Parties must **bring all evidence** (papers, witnesses, photos, emails, books, etc.) to support or defend this claim to the hearing.
 - J. **Missed Hearing:** If the plaintiff does not appear at the hearing, the court may **dismiss the claim**. If the defendant does not appear, the court may **grant the claim up to \$7,000 plus costs**.
 - K. **Court Forms:** Court forms are available at courts.michigan.gov/SCAO-forms.
 - L. **More information:** More information about small claims is available at michiganlegalhelp.org/smallclaims.



Small Claims Notice of Hearing

This section is completed by the court.

Notice of Hearing

To Both Parties: You must come to court for a hearing on your small claims case.

Day, date, and time of hearing

Name of judge magistrate

Location of hearing (check all that apply):

In person at

Remote by videoconferencing

If both boxes are checked, you may choose to attend the hearing in person or remotely.

A. **Foreign Language Interpreters and ADA Accommodations:** If you need accommodations to fully participate in the hearing, complete one of the following forms and return it to the court's ADA coordinator right away.

- **Foreign language interpreter:** Use *Request and Order for Interpreter* (Form MC 81).
- **Other ADA accommodations,** including a **sign language interpreter:** Use *Request for Reasonable Accommodations and Response* (Form MC 70).

B. **ADA Coordinator Contact Information:** If you are unable to complete a form or have questions about accommodations, contact the court's ADA coordinator.

ADA coordinator name

ADA coordinator phone

C. **Court Forms:** Court forms are available at courts.michigan.gov/SCAO-forms.

D. **More Information:** More information about going to court is available at michiganlegalhelp.org/resources/going-court.