

Electronic Civil Case Opening for Lawyers

Effective October 9, 2018, lawyers admitted to practice in the Middle District of Florida can electronically file a civil case in CM/ECF. Follow the steps below to electronically open a new civil case in CM/ECF.

Please note:

- A new sealed case **cannot** be electronically filed by an attorney. A new sealed case and any filing in an existing sealed case must be filed in paper format.
- A new miscellaneous case **cannot** be electronically filed by an attorney. A new miscellaneous case must be filed in paper format or submitted through the Court's [Web Portal](#).

Open a New Civil Case

1. Log in to [CM/ECF](#) using your PACER login and password. Click the **Civil** menu and then click, **Open a Civil Case**.



2. **Select the divisional office.**
The Divisional Office is determined by the:
 - i. county in which the incident occurred. If not applicable,
 - ii. county of residence of the first listed plaintiff. If not applicable,
 - iii. county of residence of the first listed defendant.

Case Type default is **cv**. Case Type does not change.

Select **Yes** or **No** from the **Notice of Removal** drop-down. Default selection is No.

Select the **Defendant's County of Residence**.

Note: When “**Out of District**” is selected for the defendant's county of residence, a prompt for the **Plaintiff's County of Residence** will appear.

Select **county where claim for relief arose**.

Select the **division** by highlighting the name.

When accurate, click **Next**.

The screenshot shows the 'Open a Civil Case' form in the CM/ECF system. At the top, there are navigation links: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, Help, and Log Out. The 'Case type' is set to 'CV'. A red arrow points to the 'Is this a removal case?' dropdown, which is set to 'No'. Another red arrow points to the 'Defendant's county of residence' dropdown, which is set to '-Out of District-'. A third red arrow points to the 'Plaintiff's county of residence' dropdown, which is set to 'Brevard'. A fourth red arrow points to the 'County where claim for relief arose' dropdown, which is set to 'Seminole'. Below these fields, a message states: 'Based upon the information provided, in accordance with Local Rule 1.04, this case is eligible to be filed in the the following division(s). Please select one division for this case. If you believe there is statutory authority to file your case in another division other than those listed, please contact the Clerks Office.' A red arrow points to the 'Orlando' division selected in the list. At the bottom, the 'Date filed' is 3/17/2021 and the 'Division' is Orlando. A red arrow points to the 'Next' button.

Sample of a Notice of Removal

Select “**Yes**” from the **Notice of Removal** prompt.

Select the **county** of the court from which the case is being removed.

Enter the **other court name**, including circuit (i.e. Fourth Judicial Circuit for Clay County, FL).

Enter the **other court number**.

Select the division by highlighting the name.

When accurate, click Next.

The screenshot shows the 'Open a Civil Case' form in the CM/ECF system. At the top, there are navigation links: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, Help, and Log Out. The 'Case type' is set to 'CV'. The 'Is this a removal case?' dropdown is set to 'Yes'. Below this, a prompt asks to 'Please select the county of the court from which the case is being removed', with 'Clay' selected in the dropdown. To the right, the 'Other court name' field contains 'Clay County Circuit Court' and the 'Other court number' field contains '2017-CA-1234'. A message states: 'Based on Title 28 Section 1446(a), this case is eligible to be filed in the following division. Please select the division listed below.' A dropdown menu shows 'Jacksonville' selected. At the bottom, it says 'Date filed: 3/17/2021' and 'Division: Jacksonville'. A 'Next' button is at the bottom left. Red arrows point to the 'Is this a removal case?' dropdown, the 'Clay' county dropdown, the 'Other court name' field, the 'Other court number' field, the 'Jacksonville' dropdown, and the 'Next' button.

3. **Review the warning.**

Click on the link to view **Local Rule, Section 1.11**.

Review the Confirmation. Sealed and qui tam cases shall not be filed electronically.

See [Procedures for filing sealed documents in civil cases \(PDF\)](#)

Click **[Next]** to confirm.

CM/ECF Civil Criminal Query Reports Utilities Search Help Log Out

Open a Civil Case

Reference [Local Rule 1.11 - Filing Under Seal in a Civil Action](#) for information on filing sealed documents.

Sealed cases, including qui tam actions, shall **not** be filed electronically.

CONFIRMATION: By clicking Next, you confirm the case being electronically filed is not a sealed case or a qui tam case.

4. Reference the prepared **Civil Cover Sheet (JS-44)** to complete the statistical screen.
 - **Jurisdiction.** There are 5 options.
 - 1 = U.S. Government Plaintiff
 - 2 = U.S. Government Defendant
 - 3 = Federal Question (default)
 - 4 = Diversity (Citizenship plaintiff and Citizenship defendant fields are required)
 - 5 = Local Question
 - **Cause of Action.** Select the appropriate code from the drop-down list or use alpha-numeric codes in the filter fields.
 - **Nature of Suit.** Select the appropriate code from the drop-down list or use alpha-numeric codes in the filter fields.
 - **Origin.**
 - Select 1 (Original Proceeding) if filing an original complaint/case.
 - Select 2 (Removal from State Court) if filing a Notice of Removal.
 - *All additional options are for court use only. Do not use.*
 - **Citizenship Plaintiff / Citizenship Defendant.** Complete these fields only if the jurisdiction selected above was 4 (Diversity). Otherwise, leave this field blank.
 - **Jury Demand.** Select the appropriate code from the drop-down list.
 - n (None) = if Plaintiff does not request a jury demand in the complaint.
 - p (Plaintiff) = if Plaintiff requests a jury demand in the complaint.
 - b (Both) = Notice of Removal cases **only**. If both parties request a jury trial in either court in the complaint, notice of removal, answer, or other filed document.

- d (Defendant) = Notice of Removal cases **only**. If defendant requests a jury trial in either court in the answer, notice of removal or another filed document.
- **Class Action**. Skip this option - do not change this field, for Court use only.
- **Demand (\$000)**. If applicable, enter the monetary demand of the plaintiff. This must be entered in thousands, rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, do **not** include the dollar sign (i.e. \$75,000.00 = 75).
- **Arbitration Code**. Skip this option - do not change this field, for Court use only.
- **County**. Select the county of residence of the first listed plaintiff or if U.S. Government is the plaintiff, select the county of residence of the first listed defendant. For land condemnation cases, select the county of the tract of land.
- **Fee status**. Select the appropriate code from the drop-down list.
 - Fp (in forma pauperis) = *for court use only*
 - None (no fee required) = for U.S. Plaintiff, 28 U.S.C. § 2255, bankruptcy appeal, Jones Act, or Student Loans. **NOTE:** Title 28 U.S.C. § 2255 documents should be filed in the criminal case which the defendant was convicted. The clerk will open the related civil case.
 - Pd (paid) = fee being paid electronically with this filing (default)
 - Pend (IFP Pending) = Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (IFP) being filed immediately after the complaint (motion must be filed same day as complaint)
 - Wv (waived) = *for court use only*

Fee Date. System generated. **Do not modify.**

When accurate, click Next.

The screenshot shows the 'Open a Civil Case' form in the CM/ECF system. The form includes instructions and various input fields. Red 'X' marks are placed over the 'Arbitration code', 'County' (which is set to 'Alachua'), 'Fee date' (set to '11/1/2023'), and 'Date transfer' fields, indicating that these fields should not be modified. Other fields like 'Jurisdiction' (set to '3 (Federal Question)'), 'Cause of action', 'Nature of suit' (set to '0 (zero)'), 'Origin' (set to '1 (Original Proceeding)'), 'Citizenship plaintiff', 'Citizenship defendant', 'Jury demand' (set to 'p (Plaintiff)'), 'Class action' (set to 'n (No Class Action Alleged)'), and 'Demand (\$000)' are visible. The 'Fee status' is set to 'pd (paid)'. The 'Next' and 'Clear' buttons are at the bottom.

5. Add parties. Review warning.

- Do not enter any address information unless a party is proceeding pro se.
- Do not add an email address for any party.
- Do not alter the start date or notice fields when adding a party.
- If filing a **notice of removal**, parties should be taken from the most recent complaint.
- Enter all Parties in sentence case (ex. Jean T. Smith). **DO NOT ENTER NAMES IN ALL CAPS.**
- Click **[Next]** to confirm.

CM/ECF Civil Criminal Query Reports Utilities Search Help Log Out

Open a Civil Case

On the following screens you will be prompted to enter party information.

NOTE: DO NOT ENTER ANY ADDRESS INFORMATION FOR A PARTY UNLESS THAT PARTY IS PROCEEDING PRO SE.

DO NOT ENTER AN EMAIL ADDRESS FOR ANY PARTY.

Do not alter the **Start date** or **Notice** fields.

You may add any interested parties (such as a corporate parent) after adding a new party.

Once all parties are added, click on the **Create Case** button.

Next

6. Enter party names

- The Middle District of Florida has an extensive list of names and businesses stored in the CM/ECF database. To avoid the addition of duplicate parties, search the database for existing party names before adding a new name.
- Add all parties in the manner and order in which they appear on the initiating document.
- Enter the complete Last/Business Name, First Name, and Middle Name, as applicable. **NOTE:** The complete business name is entered in the Last/Business Name field. Use upper- and lower-case letters to input names (e.g. John Doe or XYZ Corporation).
- **Do not enter party names in ALL CAPS.**
- **Do not** include an alias as part of the party name (an alias is entered separately).
- When accurate, click **[Search]**.

CM/ECF Civil Criminal Query Reports Utilities Search Help Log Out

Open a Civil Case

Add New Party Create Case

Collapse All Expand All

6:21-cv-????

Search for a party

Last / Business Name First Name Middle Name

Search

The **Search Results** list will display matching names.

Scroll through the entire list to determine if there is an exact party name match. If the name of the party is found in the party **Search Results**, highlight the name and double-click the party to view the contact information.

- If contact information is listed and it **does not** match your party, select “**Create New Party.**”
- If no contact information is listed and the party name matches, click “**Select Party.**”
- If no match is found, select “**Create New Party.**”

The screenshot shows the 'Open a Civil Case' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, Search, Help, and Log Out. Below these, there are buttons for 'Add New Party' and 'Create Case'. A search bar is present with fields for 'Last / Business Name' (containing 'Smith'), 'First Name' (containing 'Jean'), and 'Middle Name'. A 'Search' button is next to it. Below the search bar, a 'Search Results' dropdown menu is open, showing three results: 'Smith, Jean T.', 'Smith, Jeanette', and 'Smith, Jeanne'. A red box highlights this dropdown. At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Select Party' and 'Create New Party'. Red arrows point to these buttons.

NOTE: Defendants in social security cases, respondents in habeas cases, and any party that is a federal agency should be entered using the title of office, not the individual person’s name.

- **Social security cases** (natures of suit 861, 862, 863, 864 or 865)
 - The defendant should be entered as **Commissioner of Social Security.**
- **Habeas corpus cases** (natures of suit 530 or 535)
 - The respondent should be entered as **Secretary, Department of Corrections.**





7. Enter only the **Role** and **Party Text** on the **Party Information** screen.
 - Select the correct "role" of the party, the default role is Defendant.
 - Enter any "party text" information (e.g., individually, a Florida corporation, etc.).
 - Click **[Add Party]** button.

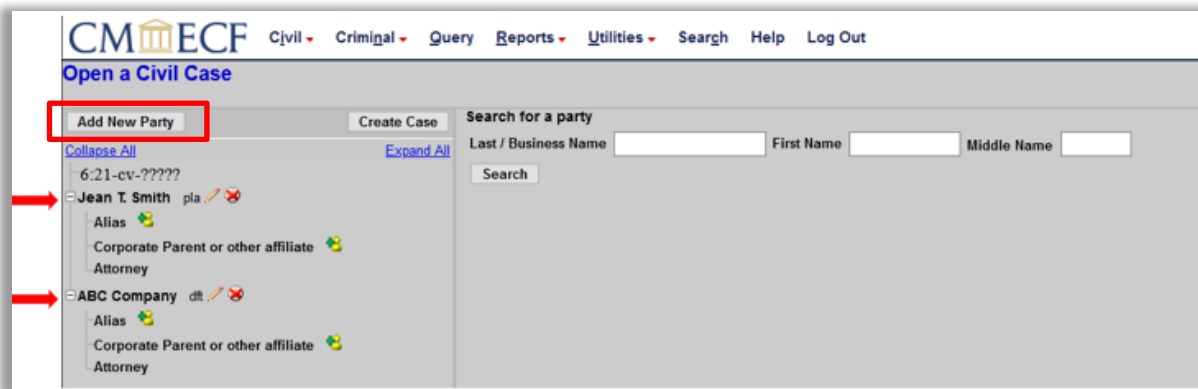
The screenshot shows the 'Party Information' screen for 'Jean T. Smith'. It includes fields for Title, Role (set to 'Defendant (dft:pty)'), Pro se (set to 'No'), Prisoner Id, Office, Address1, Address2, Address3, State, Prison, Phone, and E-mail. A blue box with white text inside says: 'Do not enter address information for any party.' and 'Do not enter an email address for any party.' Below these fields is a 'Party text' field. At the bottom, there are fields for Start date (3/17/2021), End date, Corporation (set to 'no'), and Notice (set to 'yes'). A red arrow points to the 'Add Party' button, and another red arrow points to the 'Start a New Search' link.

- A new search screen will be displayed from which the user can search for and add additional parties as applicable. Repeat the above process until **ALL** parties from the complaint have been entered and added to the case.

8. Party Icons

Parties that are added to civil cases will have control icons (left pane) in the participant tree so the user can add aliases and corporate parents for the party.

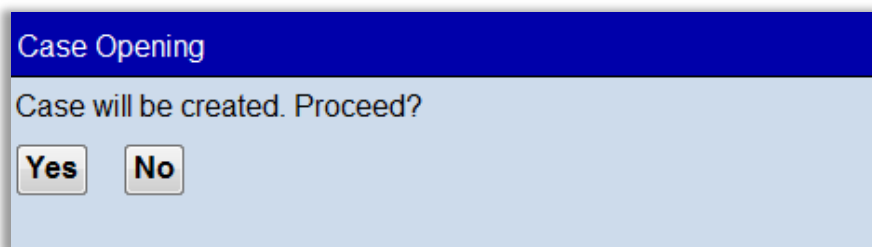
- Users can:
 - Edit the party information by clicking on the pencil  "edit" icon;
 - Delete the party by clicking on the red X  "delete" icon;
 - Add an alias by clicking on the add  icon;
 - Add a corporate parent or other affiliate by clicking on the add  icon
 - Add a new party by clicking on the **[Add New Party]** button on the top left of the screen.



9. Once all parties have been entered, click **[Create Case]**.

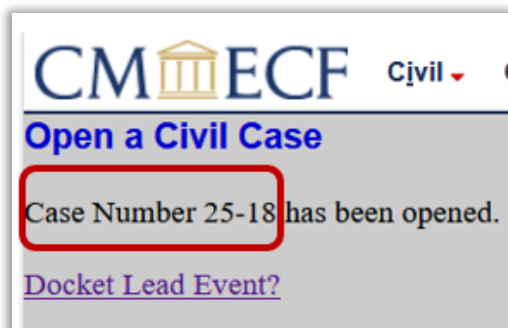


10. Click **[Yes]** to proceed with the case opening or **[No]** to return to the party screen.



11. The assigned case number will display. **Write down or otherwise note the case number before continuing.**

The case number displayed will show only the year and civil case number (i.e. "25-2"). The case number will not display the division in which the case was filed ("2" for Fort Myers; "3" for Jacksonville; "5" for Ocala; "6" for Orlando or "8" for Tampa), nor the type of case ("cv" for civil).



12. Now that the case is open, you can begin filing your documents by clicking on the **Civil** menu.

Revision Log

Date	Comments	By
11/3/25	Updated formatting.	NAS