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.

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.

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.

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 <u>court use only</u>. 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.

o **Class Action.** *Skip this option - do not change this field, for Court use only.*

o **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).

o **Arbitration Code.** *Skip this option - do not change this field, for Court use only.*

o **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.

o **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.

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

6. **Enter party names**
   o 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.
   o Add all parties in the manner and order in which they appear on the initiating document.
   o 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).
   o **Do not enter party names in ALL CAPS.**
   o **Do not** include an alias as part of the party name (an alias is entered separately).
   o When accurate, click **[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.

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

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

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

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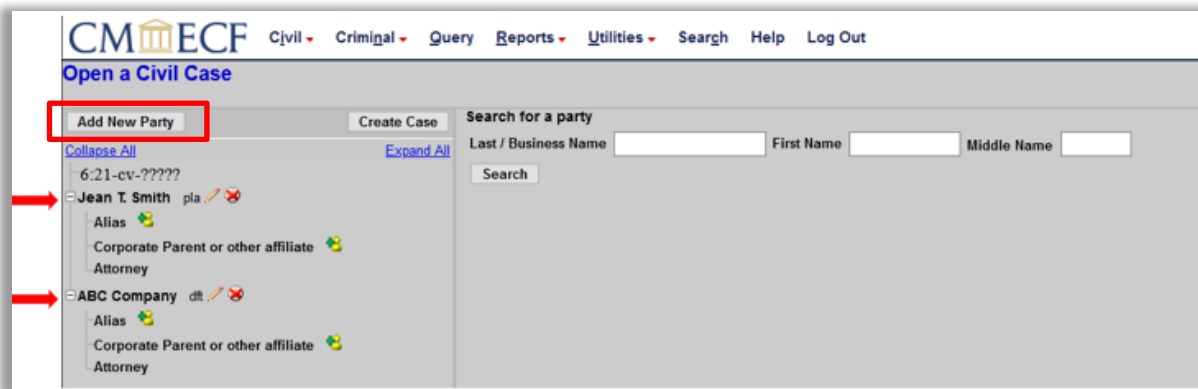
9. Once all parties have been entered, click **[Create Case]**.

10. Click **[Yes]** to proceed with the case opening or **[No]** to return to the party screen.
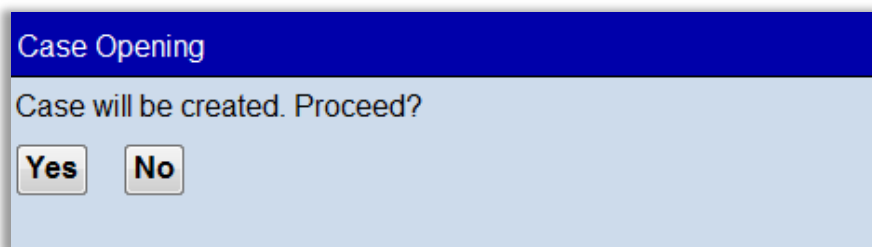
11. The assigned case number will display. **Write down or otherwise note the case number before continuing**.
The case number displayed will show only the year and civil case number (i.e. "25-2"). The case number will not display the division in which the case was filed ("2" for Fort Myers; "3" for Jacksonville; "5" for Ocala; "6" for Orlando or "8" for Tampa), nor the type of case ("cv" for civil).
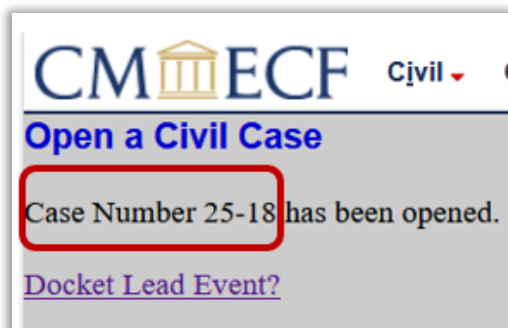
12. Now that the case is open, you can begin filing your documents by clicking on the **Civil** menu.

Revision Log

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