



## YOUR COURT CASE

If you start a non-criminal court case, you are the plaintiff. The plaintiff must follow the court rules for notifying the person on the other side about the case.

If you are responding to a court case, you are the defendant. In many cases, you must file a written answer to the case. If you do not answer, the court file will only include one side of the case. You may also make a claim against the plaintiff, called a counterclaim.

Whether you are the plaintiff or the defendant, every time you file a document with the court you must make sure the other side gets a copy. Keep a copy for yourself.

Both sides must follow all court rules. Look up court rules: [mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/rules-of-court/](http://mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/rules-of-court/)

You must come to your court hearing. If you do not, the judge may rule for the other side.

## EMERGENCY ORDERS

If you have an emergency and you need an order from the court quickly, tell your court. The court Clerk's office or Register's office will tell you what to do next.

## COURT FEES

If you cannot afford court fees, you may ask the court to waive the fees, which means that you will not have to pay them.

Learn more about waiving court fees: [mass.gov/courts/forms/indigency-forms-gen.html](http://mass.gov/courts/forms/indigency-forms-gen.html)

## AGREEMENTS

You may be able to reach an agreement to settle your case without going to trial. Make sure you understand all parts of any agreement before signing it, and do not sign anything you do not understand. Only sign an agreement if you agree to everything it says. Some courts have mediation programs or other programs to help you reach an agreement. Ask your court for more information, or visit: [mass.gov/courts/programs/adr](http://mass.gov/courts/programs/adr)

## COURT RESOURCES

Court staff can give you information, but they cannot give you legal advice.

Some courthouses have Court Service Centers to help you fill out forms. Learn more about Court Service Centers: [mass.gov/courts/court-service-centers](http://mass.gov/courts/court-service-centers)

Trial Court Law Libraries give free legal information. You can contact a law library by text at 617-674-1455 Monday-Friday; by online chat at [mass.gov/lawlib](http://mass.gov/lawlib); or in person at your local law library.

The court website also has self-help information. Go to [mass.gov/courts/selfhelp](http://mass.gov/courts/selfhelp) for self-help information about:

- Contact information for your court
- Court forms
- Abuse and harassment (restraining orders and harassment orders)
- Family, children, and divorce
- Housing
- Small claims
- Traffic tickets

and more.



## LEGAL HELP

The statewide legal aid program provides legal information in multiple languages:

[masslegalhelp.org](http://masslegalhelp.org)

For help finding a lawyer, use the Legal Resource Finder: [massLRF.org](http://massLRF.org)

The Bar Association in your area may have a Lawyer Referral Service to connect people with lawyers: [masslegalservices.org/lawyer-referral-services](http://masslegalservices.org/lawyer-referral-services)

The Massachusetts Bar Association provides free basic legal advice over the phone on the first Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:30pm: 617-338-0610.

Some courts have Lawyer-For-A-Day programs, which provide free legal assistance to eligible people: [mass.gov/courts/programs/legal-assistance/](http://mass.gov/courts/programs/legal-assistance/)

Some courts allow people to hire a lawyer to help with a piece of the case, rather than the whole case. This is called limited assistance representation (LAR). LAR attorneys can draft documents or represent you in court at one or more hearings.

Information about LAR: [mass.gov/courts/programs/legal-assistance/lar-gen.html](http://mass.gov/courts/programs/legal-assistance/lar-gen.html)

## DISABILITY ACCESS

Every courthouse has someone to help with accessibility. If you have a disability and need help at the court, ask staff for the ADA Coordinator. The court also has forms to use for requesting accommodations. For forms and a list of ADA Coordinators by court, go to: [mass.gov/courts/ada](http://mass.gov/courts/ada)

## LANGUAGE ACCESS

This is an official court notice; if you have difficulty reading English, obtain a translation. If you have difficulty speaking English, you have a right to an interpreter, free of charge, for all court events. If you require an interpreter, please let the court staff know.

Esta es una notificación oficial del tribunal que debe mandar a traducir si no entiende inglés. Usted tiene derecho a un(a) intérprete gratis en todos los procedimientos judiciales. Si necesita un(a) intérprete, avísele al personal del tribunal.

Esta é uma notificação judicial. Se não conseguir entender, peça uma tradução. O direito a intérprete gratuito em qualquer audiência judicial é garantido por lei. Se precisar de intérprete, avise na secretaria do fórum.

Se avi ofisyèl tribinal la; si'w gen difikilte pou'w li Anglè, fè yon moun tradwi'l pou ou. Si'w gen difikilte pou'w pale Anglè, ou gen dwa pou'w genyen yon entèprèt gratis, pou tout sa wap regle nan tribinal la. Si'w bezwen yon entèprèt, tanpri fè yon moun kap travay nan tribinal la konnen.

Đây là một thông báo chính thức của tòa án; nếu bạn gặp khó khăn khi đọc tiếng Anh, nên yêu cầu phiên dịch lại. Nếu bạn gặp khó khăn khi nói tiếng Anh, bạn có quyền có thông dịch viên miễn phí, cho tất cả các sự kiện ở tòa. Nếu bạn cần một thông dịch viên, xin vui lòng cho nhân viên tòa án biết.

[www.mass.gov/courts/language-access](http://www.mass.gov/courts/language-access)