Self-Represented Parties

Filing Guidelines

THE MISSOURI COURT OF APPEALS
WESTERN DISTRICT

1300 Oak Street
Kansas City, MO 64106

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(When making telephone inquiries about a case, please refer to the WD Number)

**These guidelines are prepared for use as a reference tool for litigants appearing before this Court. It is not to be used as a substitute for the Missouri Court Rules, the Western District Special Rules, or the judicial decisions interpreting those Rules. These rules explain only the general procedures. Should there be a conflict between information within this document and the Missouri Court Rules, the Western District Special Rules, or case law, the Rules and case law are controlling.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Self-represented parties are often referred to as representing themselves *pro se* or as *pro se* litigants.

The electronic case management system for Missouri Courts is Case.net and is available at www.courts.mo.gov/casenet. Self-represented parties are ineligible to file electronically through the Case.net system. Self-represented parties can, however, monitor filings in most cases through the "Track this Case" feature of Case.net.

The Court sends self-represented parties notices, opinions, and other documents by mailing a copy to the party. Rule 43.01(h) and Western District Special Rule 12(E). It is a party's responsibility to make sure the Court has a valid mailing address.

Self-represented parties shall comply with Missouri Supreme Court Rules 81 to 84 for filings, except to the extent the requirements in Rule 81.21 replace them for formatting and filing the documents.

HOW TO FILE

Self-represented parties are not eligible to electronically file through Case.net. They can, however, file legal files, supplemental legal files, transcripts, briefs, correspondence, and motions by e-mail to: wdcoa@courts.mo.gov. Western District Special Rule 13(D). They must be submitted in .pdf format and comply with all rules. If filing a brief by e-mail, within five (5) days of an e-mail submission, one paper copy need to be provided to the Court. Paper copies need to be securely bound. A clip or rubber band is not considered securely bound. **Motions and correspondence do not require paper copies.**

Self-represented parties may also file routine motions, correspondence, and pleadings by fax if the document, together with any supporting documentation, does not constitute more than twenty (20) pages. Western District Special Rule 13(A).

Filings are also accepted by mail to: 1300 Oak Street, Kansas City, MO 64106. Parties are also welcome to file in person at the same address.

All motions, suggestions, and pleadings must be signed either by original signature or electronic signature (e.g. /s/ John Doe). Rule 84.01(a). Unsigned filings will be returned unfiled.

REDACTION

Documents filed in cases are generally open and available to the public unless they are set at a higher security level by statute, rule, or court order. Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, all filers shall redact information that is confidential pursuant to statute, court rule or order, or other law. Rule 84.015(a). Supreme Court Operating Rule 4.24(b) states that the following information shall be confidential:

(1) The full date of birth of any party, full social security number of any party or any child, full motor vehicle operator license number, or any other full state identification number, under section 509.520, RSMo;

(2) The full credit card number, financial institution account number, personal identification number, or password used to secure an account of any party, under section 509.520, RSMo;

(3) The name and address of any individual who is a minor and, if applicable, any next friend of the minor, under section 509.520, RSMo; provided, however, that the term "minor" shall mean any person under 18 years of age, except for:

(A) An emancipated minor as defined in section 302.178, RSMo;

(B) A juvenile who has been certified to stand trial as an adult for juvenile offenses pursuant to section 211.071, RSMo; or

(C) A juvenile who is alleged to have violated a state or municipal ordinance or regulation, as described in section 211.031.1(2)(e), RSMo;

(4) The identity of and all references to the identity of any child involved in a juvenile court proceeding described in subsection 1 of section 211.319, RSMo, except the perpetrator, and all information that may identify or lead to the disclosure of the identity of a reporter of child abuse, as required under section 211.319, RSMo;

(5) Any information that would be likely to publicly reveal the identity or location of a party protected under an order of protection or restraining order, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. section 2265(d)(3);

(6) Any information relative to the identity of an applicant or recipient of IV-D services, under sections 208.120 and 454.440, RSMO;

(7) Any information that could be used to identify or locate a victim of a sexual offense under chapter 566, RSMo, or a victim of domestic assault or stalking, under section 595.226, RSMo; and

(8) The personal information of a court-related officer or judicial officer, under sections 476.1300 to 476.131, RSMo.

Filers should also exercise caution when filing documents that include medical records, employment history, financial records, proprietary information, or trade secrets.

Missouri Supreme Court Operating Rule 2.02; Rule 84.015(a). **The responsibility for redacting confidential information rests solely with the party filing the document. Rule 84.015(b).**

All redactions must be done in a manner that makes it clear that information has been redacted. This may be done by using generic descriptors to refer to redacted information. Rule 84.015(c). When a filer redacts information from a document filed with this Court,

the filer must at the same time file either (1) a confidential unredacted version of the filing; or (2) a confidential redacted information filing sheet that sets out the information redacted from the filing with an explanation as to where the information was redacted in the filing or the generic descriptors used in the filing to reference the redacted information. Rule 84.015(a). A sample redacted information filing sheet is attached to these guidelines.

All filers shall affirmatively certify compliance with the redaction requirements in Rule 84.015 when a document is filed. Rule 84.015(e). The certification may be by paper form attached to the document or on the document itself. Rule 84.015(e). A sample certification is attached to these guidelines.

The Court cannot answer any questions filers have about what should or should not be redacted from a document.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The electronic filing system does not serve the initial filings on parties. Rule 84.026(a). For any new notice of appeal filed, filed at the circuit court, service must be made pursuant to Rule 43.01. Rule 84.026(a). Service made pursuant to Rule 43.01 is also required for motions seeking special orders permitting a late filing of the notice of appeal, applications for transfer, appeals from orders granting or denying class certifications, and filings of original writs. Rule 84.026(a). After service of the notice of appeal or other initial filing, any filer shall serve documents on every party not represented by an attorney as provided in Rule 43.01. After service of the notice of appeal or other initial filing, no service is required for parties represented by an attorney because that is automatically done through the electronic filing system. Rule 84.026(c)(2). The same rules of service apply to criminal cases. Rule 30.006.

If the opposing party in a case is self-represented and has an **order of protection** against the filer, the filer must provide a certificate of service stating the date on which a copy of the filing and a stamped envelope, containing sufficient postage, was provided to this Court. This Court will then address the envelope and mail the filing to the opposing party.

RECORD ON APPEAL

The record on appeal must contain a legal file. It may also include a transcript if the Appellant chooses. Rule 81.12. Generally, if the record on appeal consists of only a legal file, it must be filed with this Court thirty (30) days from the date the filing of the notice of appeal in the trial court. Rule 81.19(a). If the record on appeal consists of both a legal file and transcript, it is due within ninety (90) days from the date of the filing of

the notice of appeal in the trial court. Rule 81.19(b). If additional time is needed, the Appellant may request additional time by filing a motion. Rule 81.20.

In all appeals from actions for **termination of parental rights or adoption**, the record on appeal shall be filed with this Court within thirty (30) days of the filing of the notice of appeal. Western District Special Rule 30(A). In all other actions where there is a judgment or order affecting the **custody of a child**, and the record contains both a legal file and transcript, the record on appeal shall be filed with this Court within sixty (60) days of the filing of the notice of appeal. Western District Special Rule 30(A).

In appeals taken from the Labor and Industrial Relations Commission, the Commission files the record on appeal. Missouri Revised Statute 288.210.

LEGAL FILE

Appellant shall prepare the legal file. Rule 81.12(b)(2) and Rule 30.04(b).

(a) If appellant cannot create a system-generated legal file, the appellant (unless the parties file a written agreement regarding the legal file as provided in Rule 81.15(a)) shall order certified copies of any documents that are needed for the legal file from the clerk of the trial court within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. Rule 81.12(b)(2)(B) and Rule 30.04(b).

(b) The legal file shall contain certified clearly reproduced exact copies of the pleadings and other portions of the trial record previously reduced to written form. Rule 81.12(b)(2)(C) and Rule 30.04(b).

(c) Parties may agree in writing upon an abbreviated or partial record on appeal or upon a statement of the case as provided in Rule 81.13. Rule 81.12(b)(2)(C).

(d) The non-system generated legal file shall be labeled with a cover page numbered as page one. The documents in the legal file shall begin with the docket sheet or case record and then the oldest document shall follow the docket sheet, with the remaining documents arranged in chronological order and ending with the notice of appeal. The page numbers shall be numbered consecutively and shall contain a complete index at the front designating the specific volumes and pages where the documents may be found. If the legal file exceeds one volume, a complete index shall be included at the beginning of each volume. The cover page and index shall conform to the format requirements of Rule 81.18. Rule 81.12(b)(2)(E).

(e) Unless the parties file a written agreement regarding the legal file as provide in Rule 81.15, the clerk of the trial court shall certify copies of the documents ordered for

the legal file. The legal file must be certified by the clerk of the trial court to consist of true copies of the portions of the record filed in the trial court. Rule 81.12(b)(2)(F).

TRANSCRIPT

A self-represented party may file their transcript in electronic or paper form. A party who files a paper transcript shall also file an electronic copy either by filing the electronic medium provided by the court reporter or e-mailing a copy of the electronic version provided by the court reporter. Electronic versions of transcripts must be submitted one page per sheet. Western District Special Rule 13(D).

SUPPLEMENTAL LEGAL FILES

Guidelines for preparing a legal file apply to supplemental legal files. This includes the need for a cover page and index regardless of the number of documents included in the supplemental legal file.

BRIEFS

Briefs are controlled generally by Rule 84.04, 84.05, and Rule 84.06. The length of the briefs is set forth in Western District Special Rule 41.

APPELLANT'S BRIEF

Appellant's briefs should have all the sections listed in 84.04(a). The brief must also have an appendix with the required documents attached. Rule 84.04(h). The appendix shall be filed as a separate document and have a separate cover page and table of contents. Rule 84.04(h) and Western District Special Rule 38. Failure to comply with the rules may result in your brief being struck.

Generally, the Appellant's brief is due sixty (60) days after the date the Record on Appeal is filed. Rule 84.05(a). However, **in cases involving the termination of parental rights, adoptions, guardianships, and other appeals affecting the custody of a child, the Appellant's brief shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the record on appeal**. Western District Special Rule 30(B).

RESPONDENT'S BRIEF

Respondent's brief is due thirty (30) days after the date the Appellant's Brief is filed in this Court. Rule 84.05(a) and Western District Special Rule 30. A Respondent is not required to file a brief but, if no brief is filed, Respondent will not be allowed to participate in oral argument unless permitted by the court for good cause shown. Rule 84.12(b).

REPLY BRIEF

Appellant may file a reply brief after the Respondent's brief. It is not required. The Appellant's reply brief is due fifteen (15) days after the Respondent's Brief is filed in this Court. Rule 84.05(a) and Western District Special Rule 30.

ALL BRIEFS

If filed by e-mail, the filing party must file one (1) paper copy of the brief no later than five (5) days after the date of filing. Western District Special Rule 13.

All briefs must contain a cover page with the style of the case, WD case number, and name and address of the filing party. The brief must be signed either by original signature or electronic signature (e.g. /s/ John Doe). Rule 84.01(a).

All briefs must contain a certificate of compliance. Rule 84.06(c) and Rule 30.06(a). The certificate must specify the number of words contained in the brief. Rule 84.06(c)(4). Or, if the brief is prepared on a typewriter, or the party was given prior permission to handwrite the brief, the certificate must state the number of pages contained in the brief. Rule 81.21(e). The brief must also contain a certification as to how the brief was served on the opposing party. Rule 43.01(c) or Rule 103.08 (see Certificate of Service above).

For specific instructions regarding briefs on cross-appeals, refer to Rule 84.04(i), Rule 84.05(b), and Rule 30.06(c).

All briefs shall be prepared in accordance with Rule 84.06, provided however that the following word limitations set forth in Western District Special Rule 41 shall apply to briefs prepared pursuant to Rule 84.06(a):

a. Appellant's initial brief and all briefs in a cross appeal, except for the final reply brief, shall not exceed 15,500 words.

b. Respondent's brief shall not exceed 13,950 words.

c. Any reply brief shall not exceed 5115 words.

In calculating the limits set forth in this rule, this court shall not count the words or lines of text of a brief's table of contents, table of authorities or appendix. Western District Special Rule 41(D).

Persons unable to produce briefs according to the format requirements set forth in Rule 84.06 may file a typewritten document on a typewriter. A typewritten brief should be

prepared pursuant to Rule 81.21(e). The following page limitations shall apply to typewritten briefs (written on a typewriter) (Western District Special Rule 41(B)):

a. Appellant's initial brief and all briefs in a cross appeal except the reply brief shall not exceed 50 pages.

b. Respondent's brief shall not exceed 45 pages.

c. Any reply brief shall not exceed 15 pages.

A party may file a motion requesting the court's permission to file a brief that exceeds the limits set forth in this rule. Such motion shall be filed at least ten (10) days before the due date on which the brief is due. The court may grant such a request only on a showing of good cause. Western District Special Rule 41(C).

Handwritten briefs will not be accepted unless the filer requested and was granted permission to do so **prior** to the filing.

EXHIBITS

Rule 81.16 allows original exhibits previously filed in the trial court to be filed with this Court. Original exhibits should be placed inside of an envelope which has been labeled with the WD number and style or caption of the case; the name and address of the party submitting the exhibits to the Court; an index of the exhibits enclosed; and a statement signed by the party certifying that the envelope in fact contains the documents listed in the index and certifying that the exhibits are in fact the original exhibits, or true and accurate copies thereof, submitted to the court or agency from which the appeal is taken. Western District Special Rule 4 and Supreme Court Rule 81.16.

In both civil and criminal cases, the parties shall submit their exhibits no later than the date on which they file their initial briefs in this Court. Western District Special Rule 4.

ORAL ARGUMENTS

Cases may be assigned to the oral argument docket or the submitted on briefs docket. If a party wants to be assigned a time to orally argue their case to the court, they must request to be assigned to the oral argument docket. Prior to the filing of respondent's brief, any party may request oral argument by filing a written request to the court. After the respondent's brief is filed, the court will notify the parties that they have 10 days to request oral argument or the case will be submitted on the briefs. Western District Special Rule 44.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

For self-represented parties, if you want a file stamped copy of your filing returned to you send an extra copy along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Extra copies will not be returned unless a self-addressed envelope is included.

If you leave extra copies either leave a self-addressed stamped envelope or a note attached stating they will be picked up. Copies are held for one week only.

All motions are held for five business days to allow the opposing party or parties to file suggestions in opposition if they choose. Rule 84.01(b).

For more information, self-represented parties may want to review the Quick Guide to Appellate Practice available on the Court's website: www.courts.mo.gov.

Revised July 2025

IN THE
MISSOURI COURT OF APPEALS
WESTERN DISTRICT

_____, Appellant,

v. Case Number: WD_____

_____, Respondent.

Redaction Certification

The filer certifies that all documents in this submission for filing with the court comply with all redaction requirements of Rules 19.10, 55.025, and 84.015; See also, Court Operating Rule 2.

COR 2.02

The responsibility for redacting confidential information rests solely with the counsel, parties, or any other person filing the document. Courts will not review each case document to ensure compliance and will not refuse to accept or file a document on that basis.

On and after the Expanded Remote Access Implementation Date: July 1, 2023

1. All redactions shall be done in a manner that makes it clear that information has been redacted. If necessary to reference the redacted information in a redacted document, filers shall use generic descriptors.

2. When a filer redacts information from a document offered for filing in any court, the filer also must file a confidential redacted information filing sheet that either:

   - has the unredacted version of the document attached; or

   - sets out the information redacted from the document with an explanation referencing where the information was redacted from in the document or the generic descriptors used in the document to reference the redacted information.

3. All filers shall affirmatively certify compliance with the redaction requirements in Rules 19.10, 55.025, and 84.015 when a document is filed. This certification shall be accomplished through an automated process implemented in the electronic filing system for its authorized users or, for filers who are not authorized users of the electronic filing system, by a paper form attached to the document or on the document itself.

4. When a motion is filed alleging a document filed with the court contains insufficiently redacted confidential information, the clerk shall raise the document's security level to a confidential setting. The court shall dispose of the motion within 30 days. If the court determines the document is sufficiently redacted, the clerk shall reset the document's security level to allow for proper public access.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE.

_____ _____
Date Filer's Signature

_____
Printed Name

Confidential Redacted Information Filing Sheet

Party Name:	**Case Number:**
Address:	Case Type:
	Style of Case:
Email Address:	☐ The unredacted document is attached to this filing sheet in place of listing the redacted information identifiers below.
Filing Date:	
Document Filed:	

(Date File Stamp)

REDACTED INFORMATION:

Redacted Information Identifier	Redacted Information

Submitted by: _____ Bar ID (required if attorney): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

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