

A Maryland Judiciary Production
My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland
Access to Court Records: How Do I Get a Copy of a Criminal Case?

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Title – HOW DO I GET A COPY OF A CRIMINAL CASE?

Hello and welcome. There are a couple of steps required to get a copy of an adult criminal case. I'm here to walk you through step by step.

Before we get started, it is important to note that criminal records are kept in many places. Courts keep records, but state's attorneys, law enforcement, correctional facilities, and private background check companies may also have copies. This video only covers how to find records held by the courts. For a criminal background check, contact the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services at 1-888-795-0011 or visit their website at dpsc.maryland.gov.

I also want to mention expungement. You may wish to have your criminal case removed from public records. This process, called expungement, is discussed in a separate video series. To find these videos go to mdcourts.gov/videos.

To get copies of your criminal case from Maryland Courts there are three steps. First, find your case number, second go to the courthouse, and third, pay for the copies. Now, let's talk about

Step One: How to Find Your Case Number.

CHAPTER HEADING: STEP ONE: FIND YOUR CASE NUMBER

Each criminal case has a different case number. If you were involved in more than one case, then you will need to find more than one case number. Your records may be spread across multiple files and even multiple court locations. Let's discuss the two ways you can look for the case number.

First, you can call the appropriate clerk's office for help. A clerk can look up the Case number for you.

You may need to call more than one courthouse if you are looking for cases in different counties or cases that were appealed from one court to another.

The second way to find a case number is to use Maryland Judiciary's online database called, Case Search. It can be found at mdcourts.gov/casesearch. Most, but not all criminal cases are available online.

For instance, certain cases involving possession of cannabis are not available. Additionally, the website will not show cases where the outcome of all charges was nolle prosequi, dismissal, acquittal, or not guilty. Furthermore, cases with these outcomes may be automatically expunged by the court after three years. This means the case will be permanently removed from court and police records.

Begin your search by entering your name. For best results, narrow your search by county, case type, or filing date. Case Search will then show you a list of cases. Click on a case number to see more information about that case. The name and address of the courthouse where the file is kept is at the top of the page. Case Search will only show a summary of information. For instance, you may see names of people involved, dates of hearings, and names of documents. Copies of documents are not available through Case Search.

CHAPTER HEADING: STEP TWO: GO TO THE COURTHOUSE

Once you have the case number, your next step is to go to the courthouse where each file is located.

You may call the courthouse in advance to confirm the file is at that location. Calling ahead is recommended for older cases, as the file may need to be retrieved from storage.

When you arrive, go to the clerk's office. Give the staff the case number and let them know you would like to view the file. They may ask you to complete a request form and to see your identification.

You may then look through the case file in the presence of a clerk or other court staff member. If the documents are online, the clerk may direct you to a computer terminal. Court staff members are there to help you by answering questions and identifying documents.

CHAPTER HEADING: STEP THREE: PAY FOR THE COPIES

Once you have located all the documents you need, ask the clerk to make you a copy. They will charge you a fee based on the number of pages. You may also request that the clerk make you a true test copy or certified copy of the documents. The court will charge an extra fee for this.

Let's review.

CHAPTER HEADING: LET'S REVIEW

Look up the case number on Case Search or by calling the courthouse. Then visit the courthouse where the case was heard. Tell the clerks what documents you need and pay for the copies. More information about court records and other common legal topics is available online at mdcourts.gov/courthelp. I hope this information was helpful. Thanks for watching.