

MDEC

MARYLAND
ELECTRONIC
COURTS



improved caseflow
and trial management
benefits for attorneys

www.mdcourts.gov

MDEC MARYLAND ELECTRONIC COURTS

MDEC Objectives In an effort to use new technologies to increase public safety, ensure the fair and efficient administration of justice and increase access to justice, the Maryland Judiciary has launched a massive effort to create a more unified approach to managing the more than two million cases processed by the courts each year.

Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) will modernize the ways in which justice information is delivered, accessed, processed, and exchanged between attorneys and the courts.

Benefits to the Bar This new system will allow courts to electronically accept, maintain and share documents, as well as offer a number of exciting new services to members of the bar. Additional benefits to the bar will include:

- The opportunity to leverage new electronic tools
- Additional services that will be new or enhanced
- Flexibility, timeliness and certainty in filing



Similar to the federal system, MDEC will include e-filing, e-service and paper on demand. MDEC will bring the clerk's office to the attorney's desktop, as all court records will become fully electronic.

New Options for the Bar While the system is still in the planning stages, the Judiciary's goal is to acquire technology to allow for multiple commercial e-filing service providers to offer a variety of services to the bar for all case types. Attorneys will not be limited to using one service provider. Practitioners can select the certified vendor that best meets their needs.



The Judiciary will also acquire a system to offer attorneys a basic e-filing option with limited features that will be available online at very little cost. Some of these features will include e-service, timely data access and convenient credit card payment options with online or telephone customer support. Both options offered by the Judiciary and commercial service providers will be voluntary.

The Judiciary will also certify independent commercial e-filing service providers that may offer attorneys more enhanced e-filing services, such as providing service to parties by fax, mail and courier; payment by credit card, or at month's end, billing to a firm's account; e-notification of scheduled events and deadlines; automated client and case accounting and billing; integration with law office case management and client billing systems and extended hours of telephone support.



Services and Fees The Judiciary will provide e-filing to attorneys for a proposed \$5 convenience fee, added to the court's current filing fees. Under the commercial vendor option, attorneys will pay the courts' convenience fee plus any premium services fees charged by the company, which include the court's current filing fees.

Proposed Services

This chart represents the proposed e-filing models under consideration by the state, county, local and specialty bars.

Service	Judiciary-provided Service	Certified Vendor Service
e-filing	\$5 per filing, added to the court's current filing fees	\$5 per filing, added to the court's current filing fees, plus any premium service fees
e-service	Free (other than original pleadings) with e-filing	Free (other than original pleadings) plus any fees for enhanced services
Document access	Free for parties to the case. All others, \$.50 per page for downloads/printing	Free for parties to the case. All others, \$.50 per page for downloads/printing, plus any fees for enhanced services
Telephone support	Yes	Determined by each of the vendors
Notifications	Not offered	Determined by each of the vendors
Automated billing	Not offered	Determined by each of the vendors
Integration with law office systems	Not offered	Determined by each of the vendors

Access

Parties to a case will be able to print documents for free online. However, non-parties to a case will pay fifty cents per page to download copies for print. Commercial vendors may add fees for any enhanced services.

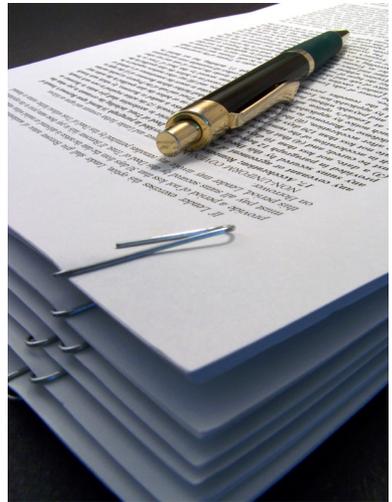


Training

In the beginning, there will be training for the bar. Once implemented, the Judiciary will provide telephone support and training. Each commercial vendor will determine the level of customer service support offered.

Electronic Courts and the Bar The Judiciary sees this as a win-win for members of the bar and their respective clients as this new technology will:

- Provide certainty of filing with electronic confirmation
- Eliminate process delays and offer 24-hour online access to case file documents with timely data for all courts (except Orphans' Court)
- Allow for convenient and efficient e-filing—whether attorneys choose the Judiciary's filing option or a commercial vendor
- Enable e-service of parties
- Provide the ability to download and print documents directly from the court system, reducing the need for paper files
- Give concurrent access to case files by multiple parties
- Offer services on a secure and reliable network
- Allow for free document reviews to attorneys and the public
- Guarantee a tremendous savings in time and expenditures for attorneys, especially with no delays or added expenses associated with mail or courier services
- Allow for expanded search and reporting capabilities to ensure easier tracking of case activity across all four levels of courts
- Operate on a standard Internet browser, so it's easy to use
- Eliminate waiting in line or unavailable files at the courthouse
- Ensure filing anytime: 24/7
- Provide flexible delivery options (electronic in addition to manual)
- Provide timely access to data
- Allow for electronic payment



Next Steps The Judiciary will undertake a competitive procurement process to procure a technology solution. Next, the Judiciary will develop and complete an implementation and internal and external training plan. And finally, we will develop a pilot program with a subsequent statewide rollout.

The Judiciary will also have to consider a number of statutory and rules changes to address many of the new issues presented by e-filing. For more information, visit www.mdcourts.gov/mdec.

Frequently Asked Questions

What will MDEC require for practitioners?

E-filing will require only word processing and basic Internet computing skills. The computing hardware necessary to perform these tasks can be acquired relatively inexpensively, and free options exist for word processing and Internet browsing software. The Judiciary will provide training for attorneys on the use of the e-filing system.

Will it be mandatory?

No, e-filing will not be mandatory.

What will we do with cases that were initially filed in paper form? Will we continue to use paper until those cases are closed?

Closed or inactive case files will most likely not be converted to electronic format, or will be converted on an as-needed basis (most likely due to being reopened or some other demand).

Will e-filing start on a particular day and after that day, will the Judiciary require that all new case submissions be filed electronically?

The pilot site will be Anne Arundel County District Court and Circuit Court, the Court of Special Appeals and the Court of Appeals. While attorneys will still have the option of filing cases manually, the Judiciary plans to scan all paper filings, which will be maintained electronically from Day One of the launch.

Has the Judiciary considered a back-up system or a way to keep the system on-line in the event of a disaster or power outage?

The Judiciary and prospective vendors will be required to provide a plan for a system failure and disaster recovery in the event of a disaster or power outage.

To Learn More

- visit www.mdcourts.gov/mdec
- call the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 410-260-1488
- or email mdec@mdcourts.gov



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web:
mdcourts.gov/mdec
email:
mdec@mdcourts.gov

