

SURROGATE'S COURT E-FILING PROTOCOL

The Administrative Judge of the 10th Judicial District, the Surrogate of Suffolk County, and the Chief Clerk of the Suffolk County Surrogate's Court hereby promulgate local user protocols to assist users in practice of the New York State Courts E-Filing System (hereinafter referred to as "NYSCEF") implemented in the Suffolk County Surrogate's Court in accordance with the program established by the Chief Administrator of the Courts pursuant to Uniform Rules 207.4a and 207.4aa and provide guidance with respect to local practice and procedures used to process filings, fees, and court calendaring. Users should also review the NYSCEF website (www.nycourts.gov/efile). These Protocols do not supersede any statutory or regulatory provisions regarding electronic filing as those are controlling and take precedence.

1) Case Types Eligible for E-Filing:

Mandatory E-Filing: E-filing is mandatory for all new proceedings in the following areas: Probate, Administration, Accounting/Miscellaneous, and in all related and subsequent proceedings thereto, e.g., Small Estates, Petitions/Orders to Examine Safe Deposit Boxes, etc., that are commenced in this court on or after January 24, 2018. Guardianship proceedings, while not mandatory, may be e-filed on a consensual basis. All such proceedings must be commenced by filing with the Court electronically through NYSCEF and all subsequent documents in such proceedings must be e-filed.

Hybrid Proceedings: - The Suffolk County Surrogate's Court chooses to accept E-Filed documents in proceedings that were previously commenced in paper.

Documents Must Be E-Filed: Unless otherwise provided in the e-filing rules, this protocol, or where a special exemption is granted (e.g., Oversized Exhibits in Section 3, below) all documents to be filed with the court in a NYSCEF case must be filed with the NYSCEF system.

2) Non-Participation in E-Filing:

- Exemptions from Mandatory E-Filing: An attorney who certifies in good faith that he or she lacks the equipment or knowledge needed to e-file and has no staff member or employee under his or her direction who has such knowledge and equipment may opt out of e-filing in each mandatory proceeding by filing an opt out form¹ with the Clerk. Attorneys also may be exempted by the court for good cause shown. Proposed intervenors (non-attorneys) and unrepresented non-parties are exempt from e-filing. (Uniform Rule § 207.4-aa(e)(1)). Unrepresented litigants are exempt from e-filing, but may choose to participate. (CPLR § 2111)

¹ All forms referred to in the Protocol are available on the Forms page of the NYSCEF website at <https://iappscontent.courts.state.ny.us/NYSCEF/live/forms.htm>

3) E-Filing Documents in Surrogate's Court:

- Essential Step Prior to E-Filing: Prior to entering any information into an initial filing, you should run an inquiry on the decedent's last name, using the first initial, to determine if a file is already open. Due to the numbering system in Surrogate's Court, an inquiry based on the file number alone may not produce accurate results. In addition, you must contact the Court to ascertain whether there may be another will for the decedent on file with the Court (e.g., filed for safekeeping). **Please do NOT call the court to determine if a proceeding was already filed.**
- Initial Entering of Case Information: Any error in the initial entry of case information can significantly delay the proceeding. **Please double check to be sure to select the same county as is shown on your papers.**

The case name must be entered as follows:

- Initial entry must be identical to the signature on the will
 - If the name on the death certificate is different, that becomes an "AKA"
 - If the name on the will does not match the signature, that becomes an "AKA"
 - No **punctuation** or **spaces** should be used when entering the name or "AKA"
- Notice of Hard-Copy Submission: Where, within the e-filing rules, an attorney or an unrepresented litigant who is participating in e-filing submits a document in hard copy, the document must bear a Notice of Hard Copy Submission – E-Filed Proceeding (see NYSCEF Forms page). Attorneys who are exempt from e-filing are required to attach this form to all hard copy filings, while unrepresented litigants who are not participating in e-filing are not so required.
 - Death Certificates: In addition to e-filing the death certificate, a certified copy must be filed within two (2) business days of e-filing.
 - Wills: The original Will is required to be scanned by the filer; Will must not be unstapled. Scan the original Will, but DO NOT UNSTAPLE. File the original paper Will within two (2) business days of e-filing.
 - Birth Certificates, Medicals and Death Certificates in Guardianship proceedings: In addition to e-filing the birth certificate and medicals, the certified birth certificate and original medicals must be filed within two (2) business days of e-filing. Certified death certificates shall be filed for deceased parties when there is no estate filing in Suffolk County.
 - Citations: Submit a proposed citation electronically through NYSCEF only. The Court will complete the citation and upload the completed version to NYSCEF as quickly as possible. If your proposed citation requires amendment, you will be notified. Otherwise,

an e-mail notification will be sent when the completed citation is posted to NYSCEF. After receipt of the notification, print the citation and serve it in accordance with the SCPA. Service of the Citation should be accompanied by a Notice of Commencement of Proceeding Subject to Mandatory Electronic Filing. (See Forms page on NYSCEF site.)

- Decrees and Orders: E-file proposed decrees and orders through NYSCEF only. Once the decree or order is signed, the court will upload the signed version to NYSCEF and notify all consenting parties that the decree or order has been signed and posted. Users who have requested a certified copy of the decree or order and have paid the appropriate fee via NYSCEF will receive the certified copy by regular mail.
 - Stipulations: Stipulations submitted for purposes of being “so ordered” by the Court shall be electronically filed and e-mailed to sufsur-chiefclerk@nycourts.gov. The filer must attach proof that the stipulation has been e-filed (e.g., the thank you page or the e-mail notification) to the back of the stipulation when it is submitted to the Court.
 - Oversized Exhibits: If an exhibit or attachment is unsuited for electronic filing (e.g., a large map or a videotape), it shall be submitted to the court and served on the other parties in hard copy. Attach a Notice of Hard Copy Submission – E-Filed Proceeding. In addition, a Notice of Hard Copy Exhibit must be completed and electronically filed. (See Forms page on the NYSCEF site.)
 - Working Copies: The court may require submission of hard copies of e-filed documents, also known as working copies. The filer must attach proof that the document has been e-filed (e.g., the thank you page or the e-mail notification) to the back of all working copies submitted to the court. Working copies must be exact hard copy duplicates of the e-filed documents. They do not become part of the official record and will be destroyed by chambers at the disposition of the case.
- 4) Payment: This court accepts payment of fees required by the SCPA by credit card payments made via NYSCEF or by payments made at the court. There are no additional fees to use the NYSCEF System. Fees are calculated in accordance with SCPA § 2402 based on the documents filed with NYSCEF and the representation of the filing user regarding the value of the estate assets. Review by the Court may result in a modification of the fees initially anticipated or charged in connection with this transaction. In the event of any such modification, the Court will contact the filing user by e-mail with the proper amount and request an additional fee, if applicable. The Suffolk County Surrogate’s Court will not allow the filing of additional documents by the filer if the filer owes an outstanding fee in that proceeding.

If choosing to pay by credit card at time of filing on the NYSCEF website, enter credit card information directly on the website. You must input the credit card information with each filing; your credit card will be charged at the time of filing. Make sure credit limit is large enough to cover anticipated filings.

If choosing to pay at the court, be aware that documents are not “filed” until payment is received. The court cannot process the filing until payment is received in full and will delete the filing if payment is not made within two business days after e-filing.

- 5) Notifications: Notification of defective filings will be sent out by e-mail or by telephone, depending on the circumstances.
- Return of Requested Documents: To ensure rapid return of documents you have requested from Surrogate’s Court, the court will keep your pre-paid self-addressed envelopes on file. When filing your Request for Surrogate’s Court Action, you should indicate that the item should be returned to you in the self-addressed envelopes located at the Court. If self-addressed stamped envelopes are not provided, the court will place the documents into the attorney pick-up bin drawer located in our office.
 - Certificates and Letters: Upon request made via NYSCEF, the court will mail out Certificates of Appointment and Letters. When a request for Certificates is made in any e-filed proceeding, please pay at the time of the request. Do NOT choose the pay at court option.
 - General Correspondence: All general correspondence and conference requests shall be delivered/mailed to the court.
 - Envelopes: Self-addressed stamped envelopes with at least 2 ounces of postage or adequate postage for the return of any requested documents **is required**. The Court will not mail documents back to the filer without proper stamped envelopes.
- 6) Signatures: Documents requiring signatures shall be considered to be signed under the circumstances outlined in Uniform Rule §207.4-a(f). When e-filing a document bearing an actual signature, the e-filer is responsible for maintaining the original, executed document pursuant to Uniform Rule 207.4-a(f)(2).
- 7) Decrees, Orders, and Judgments: Decrees, orders, and judgments will be signed in hard copy by the Surrogate and forwarded to the Clerk for filing and scanning into the NYSCEF system, which will then transmit notification to all parties. However, the notification does not constitute service of notice of filing upon any party (see Uniform Rule § 207.4-a[h]).

Court issued Letters and Certificates of Appointment will be provided in hard copy to the filer via the usual means (SASE, USPS mailing, messenger).

PROBLEM FILINGS AND NOTIFICATIONS:

If it is determined that there is an issue with e-filing, the filer will be notified by court staff either by phone or e-mail notification (via the NYSCEF system).

Filers are welcome to call the Court directly for any needed assistance or the E-filing Resource Center at 646-386-3033 or efile@nycourts.gov.