

# CM/ECF Electronic New Civil Case Opening Quick Reference Guide

for Attorneys and Law Firm Staff

**United States District Court – Western District of Pennsylvania**

## Select the Office:

This is determined by:

- the county in which the claim arose OR any plaintiff or defendant resides (If not applicable, then 2 for Pittsburgh).
- the county of residence of first listed plaintiff (If not applicable, then 2 for Pittsburgh).
- the county of residence of first listed defendant.

## District is divided into 3 divisions::

- Erie** – Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Venango or Warren counties.
- Pittsburgh** – all other cases or matters.
- Johnstown** – Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Clearfield or Somerset counties.

## CV must be selected as the case type

**The following cases may not be commenced on-line through the ECF system, and must be filed in the traditional manner, on paper:**

- Cases sought to be filed under seal;
- False Claims Act cases (*Qui Tam* or “whistleblower” cases) filed pursuant to 31 U.S.C. §3729 *et seq*;
- New civil actions commenced by a *pro se* party;
- Habeas corpus* cases filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §2255 (prisoner in Federal custody) commenced by a *pro se* party.

Enter all STATISTICAL INFORMATION on CM/ECF screens as follows:

### **Jurisdiction: There are five options:**

- U.S. Government Plaintiff
- U.S. Government Defendant
- Federal Question (system default)
- Diversity (Citizenship fields required for both plaintiff & defendant)
- Local Question (do not use this one)

**Cause of Action & Nature of Suit:** Use alpha-numeric codes in the filter fields.

### **Origin (Select One):**

- Original Proceeding or
- Removal from State Court

### **Citizenship plaintiff/defendant:**

Complete these fields only if the Jurisdiction, selected above, was 4 (Diversity).

**Jury Demand:** Select the appropriate code from the drop-down list.

**Class Action:** Yes or No.

**Demand (\$000):** Enter the dollar amount to the nearest thousand without punctuation. Demands over \$10 million should be entered as “9999” (**entering 75 = \$75,000**)

**Arbitration Code:** Leave blank.

**County:** Select the county corresponding with the Office Code selected under divisional office (previous) screen. Scroll to the bottom for outside state/US.

### **Fee Status**

- fp (in forma pauperis): for COURT USE ONLY.**
- none (no fee required): for US Attorney use only.**
- pd (Paid):** if being paid electronically with this filing, through pay.gov.
- pend (IFP pending):** if submitting a motion to proceed in forma pauperis with filing.

**Fee Date:** System generated. Do not modify.

**Date Transfer:** Leave blank.

## **Adding Parties:**

- Add parties** in the **exact order** they are listed on the initiating document.
- Refer to the CM/ECF Party Name Data Conventions Manual as needed.
- Party names** entered in ECF **should exactly match** the party names listed on the complaint or other pleading.
- Search for the party name and highlight the name already in the database to prevent duplicate parties.
- If more than one party matches your search, double click on the name to display any additional details for each.
- Use **ALL CAPITAL** letters to input names.
- Do not enter any address information.
- Modify the party role type to the correct role (defaults to Defendant [dft]).
- Verify all party information, role, and spelling before accepting.
- Use the icons to edit, delete, or add alias, corporate parent & other affiliate information. Adding that information does not replace the need to file a disclosure statement.
- A lead event must be filed next to ensure the case is processed.
- Upload the following documents **in PDF-A format** in the order listed below:  
**Main/Initiating Document**
  - (Complaint, IFP, Notice of Removal, etc.)**Attachments**
  - Civil Cover Sheet
  - Exhibits
  - Other Documents (ex. Summons)

## **Additional Tips**

- Do Not** Click the back button once you begin the process.
- Complete the entire process as instructed in the Attorney Civil Case Opening Guide.
- Enter all necessary information on the CM/ECF screens.
- Docket the lead event and upload all pdf documents as instructed above.
- Enter all necessary information on the pay.gov screens.
- Do not attempt to open the same case twice.
- Refer to the Court’s website for additional reference information:  
[pawd.uscourts.gov](http://pawd.uscourts.gov)  
Additional resources can be found under the “For Attorneys” and “Case Info” drop down menus.

**If you have any questions or need assistance during the case opening process, please contact the Clerk’s Office at 412-208-7500.**