
**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

Effective Date: December 15, 2011

Number: B-0217

Electronic Signing and Filing of Court Reports

Purpose	To provide guidelines for electronically signing (e-signing) and electronically filing (e-filing) court report documents.
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Approved	This policy was approved by Gary Taylor, Director of CFS, on December 15, 2011. <i>Signature on file.</i>
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Most Recent Revision	New.
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Background	<p>Current technology allows for e-signing court report documents and e-filing them with the Orange County Juvenile Court. Orange County Children and Family Services (CFS) supports the use of e-signing and e-filing as it increases efficiency by: simplifying the court report approval process, allowing for social work staff to complete the court report approval process from remote locations, and facilitating timely filing of court report documents.</p>
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The Orange County Juvenile Court also supports e-signing court reports and e-filing with the Juvenile Court pursuant to the guidelines outlined in this Policy and Procedure (P&P).

Legal Mandates	<p>Government Code Section (§) 16.5 provides for the use of a digital signature (e.g., e-signature) and states that e-signature has the same force and effect of a manual signature only if:</p>
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- It is unique to the person using it
- It is capable of verification
- It is under the sole control of the person using it
- It is linked to data in such a manner that if the data are changed, the e-signature is invalidated

~~–AND–~~

- It conforms to regulations adopted by the Secretary of State

[Government Code § 16.5](#) also states that the use or acceptance of an e-signature is at the option of the parties to the transaction and nothing in the law requires a public entity to use or accept the submission of a document containing an e-signature.

[California Rules of Court Rule 2.252\(a\)](#) indicates that a court may permit e-filing of a document in any action or proceeding unless otherwise prohibited.

[California Rules of Court Rule 2.252\(f\)](#) states that a document that the court or a party e-files has the same legal effect as a document in paper form and that e-filing a document does not alter any filing deadline.

Definitions

E-Signing: The process of applying a computer generated signature created from a hand written version of a signature.

E-Filing: The process of electronically submitting a document to the Juvenile Court.

POLICY

E-Signing Court Report Documents

The assigned SSW, assigned SSSS/designee, and, when necessary, PM, will, as applicable, apply their e-signature to every court report e-filed with Juvenile Court.

Note: Staff who have never provided an e-signature or who need to update their e-signature (e.g., due to a name change) will contact their Information Technology (IT) analyst, who will refer them directly to a designated staff person to assist with completing this process. The e-signature will then be uploaded to the S-drive and will be available the next time staff logs on to the computer.

The Case Plan, *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*, and *Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)* will be e-filed together with the e-signed court report, but these forms do not require an e-signature.

The guidelines for documenting the assigned SSW, assigned SSSS/designee, parent, caregiver, and youth signature on the *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development*

(F063-28-244) and *TILP* (when required, pursuant to CFS P&P [Independent Living Program \[ILP\] Services \[D-0504\]](#)) are outlined below.

A. **Court Report:**

Pursuant to the Procedure section below, the assigned SSW and assigned SSSS/designee are responsible for applying their e-signatures to a court report after making all necessary revisions, the assigned SSSS/designee has reviewed the court report, and the Court Typist has, pursuant to program protocol:

- Formatted final copy of court report and imported/saved into Child Welfare Services/Client Management System (CWS/CMS)
- OR–
- Formatted offline court report (not yet imported/saved into CWS/CMS) and emailed to SSW, SSSS, and program in-box

B. **Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244) and TILP:**

1. **SSW:**

To prepare the *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)* and *TILP* for e-filing with the e-signed court report, the assigned SSW is responsible for documenting, as applicable, the assigned SSW, assigned SSSS/designee, parent, caregiver, and youth (signor's) signature, and date of signature, as follows:

- Signature line: Signor's full name/"Signature on File"
- Date line: Date each signor hand-signed original form

2. **SSSS:**

Pursuant to the Procedure section below, the assigned SSSS/designee is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that, as applicable, assigned SSW correctly documented assigned SSW, assigned SSSS/designee, parent, caregiver, and youth signature on *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)* and *TILP*.

- b. Sending these forms and Case Plan to program e-file in-box, identifying each in the email subject line pursuant to program protocol.

3. Court Typist:

Pursuant to the Procedure section below, the Court Typist is responsible for:

- a. Confirming that assigned SSW and SSSS/designee applied e-signatures to the court report.
- b. Attaching Case Plan, *Acknowledgement of Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*, *TILP*, and e-signed court report to Court Portal (<https://cfapps.occourts.org/juvenile-efile/login.cfm>).

The Court Typist will process any court report document received in the e-file in-box within the period of time specified pursuant to program protocol.

The Court Typist will save Case Plan, *Acknowledgement of Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*, *TILP*, and e-signed court report as a single PDF court report document on the N: Drive and e-file with Juvenile Court in the following order:

- Court Report
- Case Plan
- *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*
- *TILP*

The Court Typist will delete the individual court report documents and the single PDF court report document e-filed with Juvenile Court from the N: Drive, e-file in-box, and individual Court Typist in-box pursuant to program protocol.

Revising Court Report After E-Signature

When a revision is needed after a court report has been e-signed, the SSSS/designee will be responsible for ensuring that the revised court report replaces the court report saved in CWS/CMS as applicable pursuant to program protocol.

The assigned SSSS/designee will delete the e-signatures from the document and:

- Import/save the revised court report into CWS/CMS
- OR–
- Email the revised court report to the Court Typist, who will import/save into CWS/CMS

Court Report Documents Rejected by Juvenile Court

The Court Typist will monitor the program e-file in-box for court report documents rejected by Juvenile Court pursuant to program protocol. The Court Typist, SSW, and SSSS will follow the Procedure below when Juvenile Court rejects e-filed court report documents.

Note: No revisions can be made to e-filed court report documents accepted by Juvenile Court. The assigned SSW and SSSS/designee will submit an Addendum when it is necessary to provide any additional information to Juvenile Court after a court report document has been successfully e-filed.

E-Signature Security

To ensure its security, the e-signature is a unique identifier uploaded when staff with an e-signature on file logon to their computer. Staff can only apply their own e-signature to a document. Court reports with an e-signature cannot be modified or imported into CWS/CMS once the e-signature has been applied and the Court report password protected.

The mandated password protection process locks the signature in place and disables the “copy” function, guarding against any illegal attempt to “lift” the signature. E-signatures will be maintained on the S: Drive, a secure drive that is only accessible to select CFS Systems Group staff and the Security Administrator.

E-Filing Court Reports

E-filing of court report documents to the Juvenile Court will be completed pursuant to the Procedure below.

Note: A court report will not be e-filed after 5 p.m. on the day prior to the Juvenile Court hearing. Court reports filed after 5 p.m. must be hand delivered to the Juvenile Court.

Further, *if* Juvenile Court requests a court report with original signatures in addition to the e-filed court report, the assigned SSW or SSSS/designee will be responsible for:

- Printing and signing the court report saved in CWS/CMS (or ensuring signature by the assigned SSW and SSSS/designee whose e-signatures were applied to the e-filed court report)
- Submitting the court report with original signatures to Juvenile Court pursuant to standard procedure

REFERENCES

Attachments and CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards

Hyperlinks are provided below to access attachments to this P&P and any CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards that are referenced.

None.

Hyperlinks

Users accessing this document by computer may create a direct connection to the following references by clicking on them.

- CFS P&P [Independent Living Program \[ILP\] Services \[D-0504\]](#)

Other Sources

Other printed references include the following:

None.

REQUIRED FORMS

Online Forms

Required forms listed below may be printed out and completed, or completed online, and may be accessed by clicking on the link provided.

Form Name	Form Number
Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development	F063-28-244
Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (Spanish)	F063-28-244Sp

Hard Copy Forms

Forms listed below must be completed in hard copy (including multi-copy NCR forms). ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these hard copy forms, where available.

	Form Name	Form Number
	None.	

CWS/CMS Forms

The following required forms may **only** be obtained in CWS/CMS. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these CWS/CMS forms, where available.

	Form Name	Form Number
	None.	

Brochures

Brochures to distribute in conjunction with this procedure include:

	Brochure Name	Brochure Number
	None.	

PROCEDURE

**Required Actions—
Applying
E-Signature
and E-Filing with
Juvenile Court
Staff**

The following actions must be completed when applying an e-signature to a court report and e-filing court report documents with Juvenile Court.

<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Step</u>	<u>Required Action</u>
Assigned SSW	1.	Complete court report per clerical deadline and save in CWS/CMS (as applicable pursuant to program protocol).
	2.	Email court typist to notify that court report is ready for formatting. –OR– Email completed court report to generic Court Typing in-box (as applicable pursuant to program protocol).
Court Typist	3.	Review court report and format, spell check, and paginate per standard procedure.

4. Notify assigned SSSS/designee that formatted court report in CWS/CMS is ready for review OR email severed (from CWS/CMS) formatted court report to SSW, assigned SSSS/designee, and program in-box (as applicable pursuant to program protocol).

Note: If preferred, SSSS may print hard copy for review.

- SSSS**
5. Review and, if necessary, modify court report and/or return to SSW for revisions.

6. Once all revisions are made, send final version of court report directly to Court Typist OR program e-filing in-box (as applicable pursuant to program protocol).

- Court Typist**
7. Upon completion of formatting, email assigned SSW, SSSS/designee, and program in-box (as applicable pursuant to program protocol) that court report is ready for e-signature.

Note: If working on severed copy, the Court Typist will import/save final version of court report into CWS/CMS.

- SSW**
8. Apply e-signature to formatted court report by:

- Entering “mysig” on the signature line of the document
- Pressing “F3” key

9. Email Case Plan, *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*, and *TILP*, with documentation of signatures on file pursuant to Policy above, to assigned SSSS/designee.

- SSSS**
10. Apply e-signature to court report.

11. Password protect court report, as follows:
 - a. From the Menu Bar, select "Tools" and "Protect Document."
 - b. Check box for “Editing Restrictions.”

- c. Click on dropdown menu in “Editing Restrictions” section and select “Filling in Forms.”
- d. In the third section, click on “Yes, Start Enforcing Protection” button.
- e. Enter YOUR password (whatever you choose) when dialog box appears.

Note: It is highly recommended to create a password of at least 8 characters, with a combination of letters, numeric characters, and special characters.

The same password may be reused for all future court reports and does not require periodic revision.

- f. Re-enter your password, then click "OK."

12. Email Case Plan, *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*, TILP, and e-signed, password protected court report to assigned program e-file in-box. Identify court report and each form in email Subject line pursuant to program protocol.

Court Typist

13. Convert e-signed, password protected court report and each form to PDF and save to the N: Drive as one document in the following order:
 - Court Report
 - Case Plan
 - *Acknowledgement of Participation in Case Plan Development (F063-28-244)*
 - TILP
14. Access Court Portal at:
<https://cfapps.occourts.org/juvenile-efile/login.cfm>.
15. Follow e-filing guidelines outlined in Court Portal Guidelines.
16. Ensure receipt of Court Portal confirmation screen stating, “JUVENILE E-FILING SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED.”

17. Print confirmation and include with legal file or report sent to Court. (**Note:** This allows SSA employees at Court who receive the legal file/report to know that the document was already e-filed.)
18. **For Petitions Only:** Open program e-file in-box to confirm e-stamp receipt. (**Note:** This is the only written confirmation received that court report documents were received and e-filed with Juvenile Court.)
19. Delete final PDF report from N: Drive, e-file in-box, and individual Court Typist in-box pursuant to program protocol.

Required Actions— Rejection by Court of E-Filed Documents		The following actions must be completed when an e-filed court report document is rejected by Juvenile Court.	
Staff Responsible	Step	Required Action	
Court Typist	1.	Email court report to assigned SSSS/designee.	
SSW/SSSS	2.	Complete revisions as necessary.	
SSSS	3.	Email revised court report to assigned Court Typist OR program e-file in-box pursuant to program protocol.	
Court Typist	4.	Complete formatting revisions.	
Court Typist, SSW, SSSS	5.	Complete Steps 4–19 in the Procedure section above, as applicable pursuant to program protocol.	