



*Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas
Orphans' Court Division
Lehigh County Courthouse
455 West Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18101-1614*

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**ORPHANS' COURT EFILING GUIDELINES THROUGH ODYSSEY FILE &
SERVE (OFS)**

These guidelines are provided to supplement the procedural requirements for e-filing in the Orphans' Court Division set forth at Leh. O.C. Rule 4.7-1 et. seq. It is the obligation of the filer to comply with all requirements and resubmit filings that are rejected. The filing date is the date when a filing is accepted by the Clerk of the Orphans' Court. Additional information regarding e-filing through OFS can be found at <https://pennsylvania.tylertech.cloud/ofswb> or OFS OrphansCourtSupport@lehighcounty.org

I. General E-filing:

- A. All documents filed through OFS must include page numbers, be in proper sequential order, in legible PDF format and contain all the following:
1. A 3-inch margin at the top of the first page for timestamp and other official use.
 2. File Number. NOTE: If a Register of Wills ("ROW") file exists for a decedent's estate, that file number will be assigned to the Decedent's Estate case type in the Orphans' Court ("OC").
 3. A caption that includes the name of the decedent, trust, incapacitated person, or minor, and not the names of petitioners/respondents fiduciaries, or parents of minors. (e.g. In re: Estate of Jane Doe, dec'd; In re: Jane Doe Testamentary Trust; In re: Guardianship of Jane Doe, an Alleged Incapacitated Person; In re: Jane Doe, a minor)
 4. Accurate and concise title, e.g. Petition; Answer; Brief; Affidavit of Service
 5. Digitized signature or the name of the filer preceded by /s/ accompanied by the attorney/pro se filer's printed name.
- B. A proposed order filed through OFS must:
1. Contain a 3-inch margin at the top of the first page for timestamp and other official use.
 2. Be titled "Order" (not "Proposed Order")
 3. Contain the correct File Number
 4. Include the exact name of the pleading to which it relates and a blank space for

insertion of the date on which that pleading was filed (e.g. “Upon consideration of the *Petition For Appointment of Successor Trustee* filed _____,”)

- C. Party information and addresses must be entered using upper and lower case letters and without using any punctuation. (e.g. John Doe Jr)
- D. A *Praeipie to Attach* is to be filed as the Lead Document and the supplied information is to be filed as an attachment (e.g. *Praeipie to Attach* is the lead document and “*bank account statements*” the attachment)
- E. Multiple pleadings are to be filed in single envelope as separate Lead Documents (exhibits referenced in a petition are to be included as part of that Lead Document, unless an exhibit is a Confidential Document, *See*, Section II (3) below).
- F. In order for a **new party** to be able to **file to an existing case for the first time**, their counsel must first complete and file an *Entry Of Appearance* form, or the unrepresented new party must complete and file an *Entry Of Appearance of Self-Representation* form. Upon acceptance of that form, a new party will be able to file to an existing Orphans’ Court case.
- G. Complete the **Case Information Section** by selecting “Orphans’ Court” as the Location: and “Family” as the Category, and selecting a Case Type from the dropdown menu then complete the **Party Information Section** and the **Filings Section**
NOTE: If “Petition for Issuance of Citation/Notice To Plead” is selected from the Filing Code dropdown menu, anyone requiring notice who is not already a party must be added to the **Parties Section** as Respondent and/or Party In Interest

II. Public Access Policy and Electronic Filing:

- A. When required by §7.0(D) of the state Case Records Public Access Policy, the *Certificate of Compliance* is to be filed as part of each pleading and NOT filed as a separate Lead Document.
- B. When required by §8.0 of the state Case Records Public Access Policy, redacted pleadings filed with a *Confidential Information Form*, are to be filed as two separate Lead Documents within the same envelope, e.g. “Minor’s Compromise Petition (redacted)” “Confidential Information Form” “Proposed Order”)
- C. When an exhibit to a pleading is a Confidential Document as defined in §8.0 of the Case Records Public Access Policy, the exhibit and the *Confidential Document Form* required by §8.0 are to be filed as the same Lead Documents within the same envelope as the pleading (e.g. “Minor’s Compromise Petition;” “Confidential Information Form”, “Confidential Document Form – Medical/Psyc Records;” “Proposed Order”).
- D. Because all incapacity pleadings filed pursuant to Chapter 55 of the PEF Code, other than a decree of adjudication, are unavailable to the public pursuant to §9.0 of the state Case

Records Public Access Policy, such pleadings are not to be redacted and need not be filed with Confidential Information Form and exhibits are not to be separately filed with Confidential Document forms.

III. Notes For Certain Case Types

A. Formal Fiduciary Accounts

- Select either “Decedent’s Estates,” “Power of Attorney,” “Trust,” “Minor’s Guardianship” or “Incapacitated Persons/Adult” as the Case Type
- Within the “Optional Services and Fees” section, select “+ Add Optional Services and Fees” and select the applicable entry from the dropdown list.
- “Petition for Adjudication/Statement of Proposed Distribution (OC Forms OC-01 through OC-05)” and an “Application for Listing” on a scheduled Audit List should be included as a separate lead document in the same envelope.

NOTE: Regarding voluminous accounts, if you receive an error message that the envelope exceeded the filing size limit, submit it in separate envelopes using the Filing Code **Draft Petition Settlement Minor’s Comp** and describing the contents in the “Comments to Court” field. (e.g. “proposed order petition + Exhibits A-G”; Exhibits H-L to death case settle petition”)

B. Minor’s, Decedent’s and Incapacitated Person’s Settlement Petitions required to be submitted for review before filing pursuant to Leh. R.C.P. 2039, 2206 and 2056.

1. Initial Draft

- a. If a civil action has been instituted, the petition, exhibits and proposed order (collectively “Civil Settlement Petition”), are to be drafted under the civil caption and number
- b. If no civil action has been instituted, **and** the minor resides in **or** the decedent’s or guardianship estate was raised in, Lehigh County, the petition exhibits and proposed order (collectively “Orphans’ Court Settlement Petition”) are to be drafted under the Orphans’ Court caption and file number.
- c. **All Civil Settlement Petitions as well as Orphans’ Court Settlement Petitions must be electronically submitted through OFS for Orphans’ Court review as follows:**

(i) Minor’s Compromise

- Select a “Start A New Case”
- Select “Orphans’ Court” as the Location
- Select “Family” as the Category
- Select “Minor’s Settlement” as Case Type
- In Party Information section:
 - Enter full name and initials of minor
 - Enter name “Petitioner” (this may be the minor’s parent/guardian OR the tortfeasor’s insurance carrier who is filing petition for unrepresented minor)

- Select **Draft Petition Settlement Minor's Comp** as the Filing Code.
- **Upload the petition, exhibits and proposed order as a single lead document.** DO NOT SELECT Filing Code **Exhibits** when submitting draft for Orphans' Court reviews.

NOTE: If you receive an error message that the envelope exceeded the filing size limit, resubmit in separate envelopes using the Filing Code **Draft Petition Settlement Minor's Comp** and describing the contents in the "Comments to Court" field. (e.g. "proposed order petition + Exhibits A-G"; Exhibits H-L to death case settle petition")

(ii.) Death Case

- Select a "Start A New Case"
- Select "Orphans' Court" as the Location
- Select "Family" as the Category
- Select "Death Case Settlement" as Case Type
- In Party Information section:
 - Enter name of Executor/Administrator as the Petitioner
 - Enter full name of Decedent
- Select **Draft Petition Settlement Death Case** as the Filing Code.
- **Upload the petition, exhibits and proposed order as a single lead document.** DO NOT SELECT Filing Code **Exhibits** when submitting draft for Orphans' Court reviews.

NOTE: Regarding voluminous exhibits, if you receive an error message that the envelope exceeded the filing size limit, resubmit in separate envelopes using the Filing Code **Draft Petition Settlement Death Case** and describe the contents in the "Comments to Court" field. (e.g. "proposed order, petition + Exhibits A-G"; "Exhibits H-L to death case settle petition")

(iii.) Incapacitated Person

- Select a "Start A New Case"
- Select "Orphans' Court" as the Location
- Select "Family" as the Category

- Select “Incapacitated Person’s Settlement” as Case Type
- In Party Information section:
 - Enter name of the Guardian of the Estate “Petitioner”
 - Enter name of the incapacitated plaintiff/person as the “Alleged Incapacitated Person”
- Select **Draft Petition Settlement Incapacitated Person** as the Filing Code.
- **Upload the petition, exhibits and proposed order as a single lead document.** DO NOT SELECT Filing Code **Exhibits** when submitting draft for Orphans’ Court reviews.

NOTE: Regarding voluminous exhibits, if you receive an error message that the envelope exceeded the filing size limit, resubmit in separate envelopes using the Filing Code **Draft Petition Incapacitated Person** and describe the contents in the “Comments to Court” field. (e.g., “proposed order, petition + Exhibits A-G”; “Exhibits H-L to death case settle petition”)

2. Settlement Petitions Approved for Filing

- b. Upon completion of Orphans’ Court review, Settlement Case Management Order are issued with Directions that include specific filing codes to be used to formally file the settlement petition and proposed order

3. Proof of Compliance with Orders Approving Minors’ Settlements and Death Case Settlements that include awards to minors

- a. **File in Orphan’s Court (NOT in Civil Division)** using the Minor’s Settlement case type and OC number, or the Death Case Settlement case type and OC number, by selecting from the following Filing Codes:
 - Affidavit of Deposit of Minor’s Funds
 - Attorney’s Certificate of Compliance re Deposit of Minor’s Funds
 - Parent/Guardian’s Certification of Establishment of Restricted Account For Minor
 - Proof of Purchase of Annuity

C. Assisted Conception Birth Registration Petitions:

1. Select “Adoption” as Case Type
2. Select “Petition For Assisted Conception Birth Registration” as the filing code and upload with all necessary Affidavits, Stipulations and Consents as a single document.

D. Petitions To Authorize ECT

1. Select “ECT” as Case Type
2. Select “Petition No Notice Required – with JCS” if subject of the petition has NOT been adjudicated incapacitated AND this is the first ECT petition filed.
3. Select “Petition/No Notice Required” if the subject of the petition HAS BEEN adjudicated incapacitated in Lehigh County OR this is NOT the first ECT petition filed regarding this subject.

Revised: January 12, 2024