

Case Initiation & Filings

Initiating a Case and Assigning a Case Number

Administrative Rule 8 and Trial Rule 3

Contact: Richard T. Payne; email: richard.payne@courts.in.gov

When a new case is presented for filing in a trial court clerk's office or through e-filing, the first step is the assignment of a case number. Ind. Trial Rule 3 governs the start of a legal action and requires the filing of appropriate documents, payment of any required fees, and furnishing documents necessary for service of process.

Once the litigant or prosecutor has complied with T.R. 3, which also applies to commencement of a criminal case under Ind. Criminal Rule 21, the trial court clerk's office assigns the case number. The case number reflects the county, court type, court number, year and month of filing, case type and filing sequence. Ind. Administrative Rule 8 requires all trial courts to use the uniform case numbering system. Most counties have computer programs to assist in assigning the numbers, but it is important that a clerk understands what the numbers and letters mean.

More information about issuance of case types is available to registered users of the Supreme Court's INcite application dealing with statistical reports.

Court Identifier

Since 1987, all state courts have unique identifiers, based on the county, type of court and court number. The county numbers were assigned in alphabetical order and are listed in Ind. Administrative Rule 8(B)(1). All cases filed in your county will have the same county number.

Section (B)(1) of the rule gives each type of court a particular code. For instance, Circuit Courts of each county are designated with "C" and Superior Courts are designated with "D."

Since many counties have more than one court, each successive court created in each category is numbered. As new courts are created, the rule provides the identity of the specific court. The remainder of section (B)(1) sets forth all the court identifiers with the county, court type and court number. For reference, the rule retains court identifiers for those courts that were once in existence and have subsequently been abolished.

When combined, the first five characters in a case number identify the county, court type and court number.

Year/Month of Filing

The second group of four characters represents the year and month of filing. At the beginning of each year, the filing sequence (see below) returns to "1." Thus, it is important that each case number reflects the year the case was filed, to differentiate it from another case with the same filing sequence. In addition, to assist in maintaining the files, it is useful to know the month in which a case was filed. Thus, the case number uses a two-digit year and two-digit month grouping.

Case type

The third group of two characters designates the type of proceeding. A complete list of case types is available in Admin. R. 8(B)(3). For statistical purposes, as well as caseload credit, accuracy of the case type is important. The Clerk and staff should know the difference between the civil case types as well as the nuances between closely related case types. Miscellaneous (MI), Miscellaneous Criminal (MC) and Juvenile Miscellaneous (JM) case types are used sparingly and only when the other case types specifically do not apply.

Filing Sequence

Beginning each new year, the sequence of filing should start at "1" and continue sequentially throughout the year. If your county maintains separate dockets for case types or groups of case types, then each docket may receive separate sequential filing numbers. By assigning the filing sequence in this manner, the county can keep track of the number of cases filed in the county at any given time, regardless of case type or court.

For example, 49D06-0709-PL-0000123 decodes as:

County	Court Type	Court Number	Year Filed	Month Filed	Case Type	Annual Filing Sequence #
49	D	06	07	09	PL	0000123
Marion	Superior Court	Civil Division 6	2007	September	Plenary	Case Number 123

Application of the Rule

Because the goal of Admin. R. 8 is to promote uniformity across the state, it is imperative that your office understands the components of the Rule and educates inexperienced staff as to its application and importance. Since judges are given weighted caseload “credit” based on the case type given to a particular filing, it is important that your office accurately identifies the case type for each filing. Also, according to Ind. Administrative Rule 7, your office retains paper case files based on the case type assigned. If the wrong case type is assigned to a particular file, Admin. R. 7 may direct retention longer than necessary or destruction before it the proper time.

Information regarding distinctions between case types

Periodically your office will receive clarifications concerning case types. When you receive information, generally from the Supreme Court, educate your staff as well as post the information for the general public’s use. If you have any questions or concerns regarding initiating a case and assigning a case number, feel free to contact the Indiana Supreme Court Office of Court Services for assistance.