

Connecticut Judicial Branch Self-Represented Parties Information Series

Filling Out and Filing an Appearance Form

Screen 1

Welcome to the Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries Self-Represented Parties Information Series.

Screen 2

Filling out and filing an Appearance form.

In this overview, we will show you the correct way to fill out and file an Appearance in a lawsuit. An Appearance form (JD-CL-12) is the official court form filed with the Court Clerk that places your name and address on file with the Court. It also tells the court that you know about the case and that you are going to represent yourself in the case. Putting your name and address on file allows the Court to mail notices of court dates and court rulings to you at the address on file. It also gives other parties and attorneys an address to send paperwork to you. Court rules state that defendants should file an appearance within 2 days after the Return date.

When you file an Appearance, you are agreeing that the Court has authority over you and you are expected to follow the rules and decisions of the Court. You may say that the Court does not have any authority over you, but to do so you must file a separate paper, called a motion, with the Court after you file your Appearance. After you file your Appearance and you follow the rules, if you do not agree with the decisions of the Court, you can usually file an appeal later and the decisions will be looked at by another court.

If you are the Plaintiff in the case and representing yourself, it is not necessary to file a separate Appearance form. Your signature on the Summons is considered to be your Appearance.

If you are the Defendant in a case, you should have the papers nearby that you received telling you about the lawsuit. You will need to get some of the information from the Summons to fill out the Appearance form.

Screen 3

Some words to know

In this overview, the word Plaintiff is the party who is doing the suing. The word Defendant is the party who is being sued. A Party is a person, business, or governmental entity who is involved in the lawsuit as either a Plaintiff or Defendant.

Screen 4

Some more words to know

Serve is the formal delivery of legal papers, such as a Summons and Complaint, to another party. The Summons is a legal paper that is used to start a civil case. A Return Date is the date that begins the countdown for things, such as deadlines, taking place in the case. The Court rules tell what must be done to move a case through the Court. If you do not follow the Court rules you may hurt, or even lose, your case.

Screen 5

Connecticut Practice Book

You must follow the Court rules when filing your Appearance. The Court rules are found in the Connecticut Practice Book, which is available on the Judicial Branch website or in any Judicial Branch Law Library or Court Service Center. Connecticut Practice Book sections 3-1 to 3-21 talk about Appearances. The Appearance Form lists Connecticut Practice Book sections 3-1 to 3-6, 3-8, 10-13, and 25A-2. You will want to look at these Court rules to make sure that you understand the Appearance form and file it correctly.

To get to the Connecticut Practice Book on the Judicial Branch homepage, click on the Public Tab. Click on the link for Court Rules. Click on the link for the current year Connecticut Practice Book.

The Connecticut Practice Book is in PDF format. Under Superior Court – General Provisions, look for Chapter 3, Appearances.

Screen 6

The Appearance form, JD-CL-12, is also available on the Judicial Branch website. From the Judicial Branch homepage, click on the Public tab. Click on the link for Forms.

At the Official Court Webforms page, click on the link for General forms. Scroll down the list to form JD-CL-012. In the Download column, on the far right, click on the CL012.pdf link. The form will open on your device.

You can also use the Search By: feature offered on the page. Set the top dropdown to Form Name, and enter the word Appearance in the search box below and click the Search button. Select form JD-CL-12 from the list as directed above.

Screen 7

If you already have filed an Appearance and are letting the Court know that your mailing address has changed, check the box at the top left of the form before the words “I am filing this appearance to let the court and all attorneys and self-represented parties of record know that I have changed my address.” Only check this box if you are telling the Court about a change of address.

Screen 8

If this is the first time you are filing an Appearance in this case, start at the top right hand corner of the form. Type the return date which is found on the Summons you

received when notified of the case. The return date, which is found in the top, right of the Summons, is the date that starts the countdown for things taking place in the case.

In the box below the return date, type the docket number if you know it. The docket number is the number used by the Court to identify your case. If you do not know the docket number, or it is not on the papers you got notifying you of the case, you can contact the Clerk's Office to ask for it.

Screen 9

Returning to the left side of the form, on the next line down, type the name of your case in the box labeled "Name of case." You can find the case name on the papers you received notifying you of the case. Be sure to enter the case name just as it appears on these papers.

Screen 10

On the next line down, check the correct box to indicate if the case is filed in a Judicial District Court, a Housing Session Court, a Small Claims Court, or a Geographical Area Court. If it is a Geographical Area Court, type the Geographical Area Court number on the line provided. This information should appear in the papers you were served when notified of the lawsuit.

In the box to the right, type the address of the Court that is on the papers you received. Include the street address, town or city, and zip code of the Court.

Skip the box below labeled "Scheduled Court date."

Screen 11

Under the words "Please Enter the Appearance of," enter your full legal name in the box labeled "Name of self-represented party...." Be sure to use your full name, not a nickname. For example, if your name is "William," write "William," not "Bill."

Skip the box labeled "Juris number of attorney or firm."

Screen 12

In the box labeled "Mailing address," type your mailing address; number, street and, if needed, apartment number. If your mailing address is a post office box, type the box number in the box labeled "Post office box." Otherwise, leave this box blank.

Screen 13

Type your telephone number in the last box on the line labeled "Telephone number." Be sure to include the area code.

Screen 14

On the next line, type the city or town of your mailing address in the box labeled "City/Town." Type the state abbreviation, such as CT, in the box labeled "State." In the

next box, labeled "Zip code," type your zip code. The zip code can be either 5 or 9 numbers long.

Screen 15

If you have a personal fax machine, type that number, including the area code, in the next box labeled "Fax number." If you do not have a fax machine, leave this box blank. Since the Court or other parties may fax confidential or personal information to the fax number given, you may not want to give a public fax number or the number of a work fax machine.

Screen 16

In the last box on this line, labeled "E-mail address," type your personal email address. Once again, you may not want to give an email address that is not private.

Screen 17

The next section of the form is labeled "in the case named above for:" Check the box before "The Defendant" if you are the only Defendant in the case. If there is more than one Defendant, check the box before "The following Defendant(s) only:," and type your name. The other choices are for attorneys who are representing parties. Please remember that you may not represent anyone else unless you are an attorney licensed in Connecticut.

If you are representing yourself in a family matter that is in the Family Division of the Superior Court, check the box before "matters in the Family Division." If your case is a Title-IV Child Support matter, check the box before "Title-IV Child Support."

If you are a self-represented party who is replacing an attorney that was representing you, check the box before the words "This appearance is in place of the appearance of the following attorney...." and fill in the name and juris number of that attorney on the line provided.

If you have an attorney who is representing you and are filing the Appearance in order to also receive notices and to access information in the case file, check the box before the words "This appearance is in addition to an appearance already on file."

Screen 18

The last line of this section, asks if you will accept delivery of papers filed in this case electronically, in computer format, usually by email, instead of being delivered to you on paper. You will need to check either the box before "Yes," if you will accept electronic delivery, or in front of "No," if you will not. Remember, these papers may contain confidential or personal information so, if you agree to accept delivery electronically, make sure that the email account you have indicated above on the form is private. Connecticut Practice Book section 10-13 talks about Service, or delivery, of papers.

Screen 19

Check that you have filled in all the necessary information in the form to this point and make sure that it is correct. If not, make any changes or begin again with a new form. If the information is correct, skip the box labeled "signed." In the next box, labeled "Name of person signing at left," type your full legal name. In the last box on this line labeled "date signed," type the date that you are completing the form.

Screen 20

The Certification section has to be filled out. Connecticut Practice Book sections 3-4 and 3-5 talk about the filing and delivery, or service, of the Appearance form to other parties.

In the first sentence beginning "I certify that a copy of this document was mailed or delivered..." on the line after the word "(date)," type in the date that you will be sending, either in paper through the mail or electronically through email, a copy of the document to all other parties in the case.

If you are filing the Appearance to replace your current attorney, you need to send a copy of the completed Appearance form to the attorney along with to all the other parties in the case.

Screen 21

Below the Certification text, in the box labeled "Name and address of each party..." type the names and addresses of the parties that you will mail or email copies to. If you need more space attach another sheet of paper with the names and addresses of other parties that you will mail or email a copy of the completed Appearance form after you fill it out.

Screen 22

Check that you have filled in all the necessary information in the Certification area and make sure that it is correct. If it is not, make any changes or begin again with a new form. If the information is correct, in the next line skip the box labeled "Signed." In the next box, labeled "Print or type name of person signing," type your name. In the box labeled "date signed," type the date that you are completing the form. In the last box on this line labeled "Telephone number," type your telephone number.

Do not enter anything in the box on the right labeled "For Court Use Only."

Screen 23

Make sure that all the required information for the form is filled out and spelled correctly. Once you have done this, you can print the completed form by pressing the "Print Form" button at the bottom of the form. Once you have printed the form, sign the form in the box labeled "Signed" in the "Please Enter the Appearance of" section and sign the form again in the "Signed" box in the Certification section.

Screen 24

Make a copy of the signed form for your own records. Make copies to send to the other parties in the case. File the original with the Clerk's Office in the court where the case is filed.

Screen 25

Responsive pleadings: motions, requests and answer.

After completing and filing your Appearance form, you will want to read the Court rules to decide which responsive pleading or pleadings you will file in response to the Complaint. Connecticut Practice Book sections 10-6 and 10-7 talk about the pleadings and their order. Section 10-8 talks about the timing for filing pleadings. You may also want to view our video "Connecticut Civil Lawsuit: First Steps as a Defendant" for more information on pleadings.

Screen 26

More Help.

If you need procedural help or further assistance with filling out the Appearance form or any court form, please visit a Court Service Center.

If you need further information on handling your case, please visit a Judicial Branch Law Library.

Screen 27

This concludes our overview. For more information please visit a Judicial Branch Law Library, a Court Service Center, or the Judicial Branch website.