

E-file Business Process Recommendations: eFileTexas to Odyssey

1. How do you inform the Court Administrator that the case needs to be scheduled for a hearing?

Background: A case typically needs to go in front of a judge in court. In order for this to occur, the Court Administrator must schedule a hearing on the case. How does the Court Administrator know that there is a need to schedule a hearing on a case?

Current Recommendation: Setup eFileTexas to route the document to a document work queue in Odyssey. The Court Administrators will work that queue together to schedule the appropriate hearings on the cases.

Steps:

1. Navigate to appropriate queue within Odyssey
2. Work the queue by clicking the "Start" button
3. Navigate to View Calendar to schedule hearing on case
4. Click Next/Delete button

Alternative Option: Counties with lower volume may run an Event Listing Report in Odyssey to generate a list in List Manager, which can be worked by the Court Administrator to schedule the appropriate hearings on the cases.

Steps:

1. Navigate to Reports→Case Management→Event Listing
2. Run report with appropriate parameters with a date range of the date you are looking for
3. Enter List Name
4. Click "Submit" button
5. Navigate to List Manager
6. Click "Load" button
7. Choose appropriate list
8. Click on case and schedule hearing appropriately

Future Recommendation: Utilize Odyssey's Workflow functionality to route the document to a specific court based on the court it is assigned to. The Court Administrator will work that queue to schedule the hearings for their respective court.

Judge Edition Recommendation: If documents are related to the hearing in Case Manager, those documents will be specifically called out for the judge in a section called 'Hearing Documents'. Often times judges indicate that they only want to see the documents during a court hearing that are related to that hearing. This functionality provides them away with to quickly find the documents for today's hearing.

2. How do you handle Citations when they are requested for service?

Background: Documents often need to be served to responding parties, who may be unaware of actions on a case. When this happens, the filing litigant often opts for a service to be performed by either, a private process server or the local constable / sheriff. If the constable or sheriff is used for the service of these documents, the clerk often notifies the serving entity that the document needs to be served. In addition, the documents to be served need to be delivered to the serving entity (either the printed papers or the electronic images). Today in Texas, the clerk is typically receiving the copies of the documents from the attorneys or making copies themselves while generating the serving instrument (i.e. Citation) from the Case Management System and passing them to the serving entity (constable or sheriff) as a courtesy gesture to the filing parties. If the clerks are no longer going to be receiving paper when requests for service are made, who is responsible for printing the original filing document? Also, how are the Citations and original filing documents being delivered to the serving entity?

Current Recommendation: Utilize the Save Merged Forms functionality in Odyssey to print the Citation, while saving it to the case record. Then electronically serve the Citation to the party whom requested it via eFileTexas to ensure that he/she received it. He/she can then print the Citation and serve both the Citation and the original filing document to the serving entity of their choice.

Steps:

1. Accept the Request for Citation filing within eFileTexas
2. Navigate to case within Odyssey
3. Navigate to Events tab of case
4. Right click on Citation event and choose "Print Form"
5. Save document to desktop
6. Click the "Attach" button
7. Save case and navigate to eFileTexas
8. File the Citation using the "Service Only" filing option and send it to the email address on file of the individual that requested the Citation

*Note: This approach requires the county to have purchased the Save Merged Forms functionality within Odyssey.

Alternative Option: Counties that have not purchased the Save Merged Forms functionality within Odyssey may choose to attach the file to the event in Case Manager once it has been saved to their desktop.

Steps:

1. Accept the Citation filing within eFileTexas
2. Navigate to case within Odyssey
3. Navigate to Events tab of case
4. Right click on Citation event and choose "Print Form"
5. Save document to desktop and close Forms window
6. Right click on the Citation event and choose "Attach Document"
7. Enter the appropriate information and attach the Citation from desktop
8. Save case and navigate to eFileTexas
9. File the Citation using the "Service Only" filing option and send it to the email address on file of the individual that requested the Citation

Alternative Option: Counties that have not purchased the Save Merged Forms functionality within Odyssey may also choose to use a different method to deliver the document to the requested party. They may:

1. Require the requested party come pick up the citation in person
2. Email the Citation to the requested party
3. Mail the Citation to the requested party

Texas rules state that the original filing document (i.e. Petition) must be attached to the Citation upon service. However, it does not indicate the party responsible for printing the original filing document. In addition to determining the method on delivering the Citation, the county must choose the party responsible for printing the original filing document. They may:

1. Require the requested party print out the original filing document to attach to the Citation
2. Print out and provide the requested party with a courtesy copy of the original filing document

Judge Edition Recommendation: In order for the judge to easily find service related documents and consume the information, document categories can be configured in Judge Edition. A document category allows documents to be grouped based off certain criteria. For example, all service related documents can show together, in a user defined group called 'Service Documents'. These documents will display in the Judge Edition Table of Contents together in one place. This is Judge Edition v3.0 functionality that is generally available now.

1. Go to the Judge Edition Configuration menu on the Home Screen.
2. Select Documents
3. Name your new group 'Service Documents'
4. Select a hearing type and/or case type that the group would appear for
5. Select the document type, or the event type that the service documents are related to.
 - a. This configuration will assign those documents to the 'Service Documents' group
6. Now when the judiciary views the case in Judge Edition, the document table of contents will show a new group called 'Service Documents' and list those

documents under that group. This provides the judge with a quick view to those specific documents.

3. What is the best way to make local county announcements?

Background: Today, in Texas.gov, each county can host their local announcements on the landing page when the filer logs into the system. This is because each county has a separate instance of the system. In eFileTexas, the entire state will be on the same system. Since the entire state is on the same system, how can counties make local announcements?

Current Recommendation: Today, there is no way to do this in the system because eFileTexas is a statewide system as opposed to an individual county system. However, we will be releasing the Odyssey Portal with the new HTML 5 functionality. When this is released, the attorneys will have the option of subscribing to the county of their choice to view that county's home page displaying their local announcements.

4. How do you handle Rule 11 / Hallway Orders?

Background: Texas Rules of Civil Procedures states that any agreement between attorneys / parties must be in writing and then signed/filed. Otherwise, they must be made in open court. What is the best way to file these written agreements?

Current Recommendation: Many counties will offer a kiosk where attorneys can file documents with the clerk while at the courthouse. The attorney will utilize this kiosk to file the signed order with the clerk without the need to leave the courthouse.

Alternative Recommendation: If the county does not provide a kiosk for attorneys to use, the attorney will need to find an alternative way to file the signed document electronically using the eFileTexas Filing Manager.

5. What is the best way to handle certified copies of a Final Judgment?

Background: It is common for attorneys to bring multiple copies of the judgment to court for the judge to sign. Once the judgment is signed, the attorney takes them to the clerk to get file stamped. How are attorneys going to file these judgments with the clerk after they are signed by the judge?

Current Recommendation: Many counties will offer a kiosk where attorneys can file documents with the clerk while at the courthouse. The attorney will utilize this kiosk to file the signed judgment with the clerk without the need to leave the courthouse. They will follow the same steps they would, in eFileTexas, when filing this signed document.

Alternative Recommendation: If the county does not provide a kiosk for attorneys to use, the attorney will need to find an alternative way to file the signed document electronically using the eFileTexas Filing Manager.

6. What is the best way to handle Proposed Orders that are often filed with Motions?

Background: Proposed Orders are often submitted along with their Motions to the court by filing attorneys. After an order has been signed by the judge, the filing attorney typically files the documents with the clerk while at the courthouse. How are attorneys going to file these orders with the clerk after they are signed by the judge?

Current Recommendation: The attorney typically creates the proposed order as a courtesy to the judge. However, the order is actually generated by the judge and is not valid until the judge signs the document and it is filed with the clerk's office. Therefore, the judge can continue to sign these proposed orders as he/she does today. They can then have the Court Administrator or the attorney take their order to the clerk's office. Once the clerk receives this document they can file it directly into Odyssey by using the appropriate event and attaching the document to the event. Since the order was really generated by the court as opposed to an attorney, the clerk may file it directly into Odyssey as they do today.

Alternative Recommendation: Many counties will offer a kiosk where attorneys can file documents with the clerk while at the courthouse. The attorney will utilize this kiosk to file the signed order with the clerk without the need to leave the courthouse. They will follow the same steps they would, in eFileTexas, when filing this signed document.

Alternative Recommendation: If the county does not provide a kiosk for attorneys to use, the attorney will need to find an alternative way to file the signed document electronically using the eFileTexas Filing Manager.

Alternative Recommendation: The attorney can file the Proposed Order into eFileTexas and the county can route their Proposed Order to a queue that is monitored by the judge. The judge can review/edit the document, if necessary, using the annotations toolbar. When ready to sign, they will use the electronic signature stamp to place their signature on the document. They will then forward the document to another queue that is monitored by the clerk. The clerk will review and accept the filing, which will docket it on the correct case in Odyssey.

Alternative Recommendation: The attorney can file a Proposed Order in eFileTexas just as any other document. The Clerk can accept the Proposed Order and then log into Odyssey to print it. They then take the printed Proposed Order to the judge for their signature. After the signature is obtained, the clerk will file the signed Order back into the case as a subsequent filing in the form of an Order event. When doing so they electronically serve the order to the attorney that originally filed the Proposed Order. The clerk then accepts the Order and it is docketed appropriately within Odyssey while providing a validation that the attorney received the signed order in the form.

Future Recommendation: Utilize eFileTexas's Proposed Order Module, which allows Judges to make edits to the document, if necessary, and electronically sign the document. The document is then routed from the Judge's queue to the Clerk's queue for them to accept.

7. What is the best way to handle Temporary Restraining Orders?

Background: Temporary Restraining Orders (TROs) are often taken directly to the judge to sign and then fast tracked to the clerk for filing. How are attorneys going to file these orders with the clerk after they are signed by the judge?

Current Recommendation: The attorney typically creates the proposed order as a courtesy to the judge. However, the order is actually generated by the judge and is not valid until the judge signs the document and it is filed with the clerk's office. Therefore, the judge can continue to sign these proposed orders as he/she does today. They can then have the Court Administrator or the attorney take their order to the clerk's office. Once the clerk receives this document they can file it directly into Odyssey by using the appropriate event and attaching the document to the event. Since the order was really generated by the court as opposed to an attorney, the clerk may file it directly into Odyssey as they do today. This will ensure that the information is added to the system in a timely manner.

Alternative Recommendation: Many counties will offer a kiosk where attorneys can file documents with the clerk while at the courthouse. The attorney will utilize this kiosk to file the TRO with the clerk without the need to leave the courthouse. They will follow the same steps they would, in eFileTexas, when filing this signed document. In addition to utilizing the kiosk for quick filing, the clerk may setup an "Urgent Queue", which can be monitored at a higher priority than the "normal" queues. The attorney, much like today, can still contact the clerk's office and request escalation to ensure this TRO is reviewed and accepted as quickly as possible.

Alternative Recommendation: If the county does not provide a kiosk for attorneys to use, the attorney will need to find an alternative way to file the signed document electronically using the eFileTexas Filing Manager.

Alternative Recommendation: The attorney will electronically file the TRO into eFileTexas and the county can route their TROs to an emergency queue that is monitored by the judge. The attorney can then call the judge to let them know that TRO has been placed in the queue for their review. The judge can review/edit the document, if necessary, using the annotations toolbar. When ready to sign, they will use the electronic signature stamp to place their signature on the document. They will then forward the document to another emergency queue that is monitored by the clerk. The clerk will review and accept the filing, which will docket it on the correct case in Odyssey.

Future Recommendation: Utilize eFileTexas's Proposed Order Module, which allows Judges to make edits to the document, if necessary, and electronically sign the document. The document is then routed from the Judge's queue to the Clerk's queue for them to accept. The TRO can follow the same path and utilize the "Urgent Queue", if the clerk deems necessary.

8. How do we handle fee configuration in Odyssey that eFileTexas doesn't support?

Background: In Odyssey, you can have fees that can be assessed once per case but eFileTexas doesn't have these configuration options or the ability to understand such configuration. When a fee is added that should only be assessed once per case, such as a jury request fee, how do we handle this?

Current Recommendation: eFileTexas Support will contact the Clerk's office and let them know that the payment was not transferred into the system, in full, due to a fee rule restriction within Odyssey. The clerk will go in and manually assess an "overage" charge and take a payment against this charge, using a tender method of "eFileTexas Overage" in their eFileTexas Payment Till, which will yield an overage on the case. The clerk will make the recipient of this overage fee, the individual who made the initial payment in eFileTexas, in which the fee rule restriction prevented from being made within Odyssey. The clerk will then create a manual disbursement to send the refund back to the appropriate party.

Steps:

1. Accept filing/payment in eFileTexas
2. Navigate to case in Odyssey
3. Navigate to Financials tab and navigate into appropriate Financial Category for the appropriate party
4. Click the Red \$, then click the "Add" icon
5. Select eFileTexas Overage and click "Continue" button
6. Enter amount of overage to be refunded to party
7. Click "Edit Detail" link
8. Enter the recipient of the individual whom made the initial payment in which the overage was collected
9. Click "Continue" button
10. Click "Save/Payment" button
11. Enter the payment using the appropriate payment type and a tender method of "eFileTexas Overage"
12. Click "Save" button
13. Click the Check icon

14. Select the appropriate recipient and fees
15. Click "Continue" button
16. Choose the appropriate Type and click "Save/Submit" button or "Save/Export" button (depending on office's business process)

9. When filing Foreign Judgments, should the Original Judgment be added as a separate filing document or as an attachment to the lead document (Foreign Judgment)?

Background: When a Foreign Judgment is filed, a copy of the Original Judgment is needed. This is an additional document that is filed along with the original petition.

Current Recommendation: The Foreign Judgment should be filed as the lead document within the eFileTexas portal. The Original Judgment should be filed as an attachment of the Foreign Judgment to avoid re-filing the Original Judgment on the case record. This will give you the information that is necessary while providing the least amount of overhead.

Judge Edition Recommendation: The foreign judgment and the original judgment, can be bookmarked, so the judge can easily navigate to the appropriate document when consuming the case file electronically. Judges have the ability to view PDF bookmarks that were filed with the document, in addition to adding their own bookmarks to document pages. Judges can also search documents by keywords such as 'foreign judgment'. Using this functionality will ease the judges into finding what they need during court.

10. How do you handle Exhibits?

Background: Often there are items that are submitted to the court or filed as exhibits on the case. These items may be photos, letters, documents, hard objects, etc. How do you electronically file these types of exhibits?

Current Recommendation: Items that can be scanned and accepted as electronic documents can be filed electronically under the event "Exhibits" or entered in as attachments to other filings. The current rule set does not require exhibits to be filed electronically. Therefore, items that can't be filed electronically (i.e. hard objects), may be filed over the counter or during court sessions.

Alternative Recommendation: Items that can be scanned and accepted as electronic documents can be filed electronically under the event "Exhibits" or entered in as attachments to other filings. The current rule set does not require exhibits to be filed electronically. However, you may choose to file an event of "Exhibits" with a document describing the item(s) with a statement in the filing stating that it would be retained in the attorney's possession until needed (be it for a deposition, request for production of documents and things, or trial).

Judge Edition Recommendation: If exhibits are entered in as attachments to other filings, the judge can search any document on the case for 'exhibit A' and navigate to the appropriate exhibit item inside a filing. If exhibits are filed as separate attachments and attached to their own event, a document category called 'Exhibits' could be created so those documents are quickly called out for the judge. See above for how to create document categories in Judge Edition.

11. How do you sign documents that are introduced in an electronic format?

Background: Often there are documents that are submitted electronically that need to be signed by a judge or a county official. How do you recommend signing these documents?

Current Recommendation: Users in eFileTexas can setup their own signatures as stamps inside of eFileTexas. These stamps are driven by user credentials and can only be used by the individual who logs in with that specific user ID and password. The individual can place his/her signature stamp anywhere on the document, when reviewing it. If the document needs to be routed to another queue after the signature is made, the individual could forward it to the queue of their choice.

Steps:

1. Navigate to the review queue in eFileTexas
2. Click on the play button
3. Click the stamp button
4. Choose the signature stamp
5. Click and drag the signature to the appropriate location on the document

Alternative Recommendation: Documents in Odyssey can be routed to a document queue once they have been accepted in eFileTexas. This queue can be monitored by the signatory. The signatory can then utilize Odyssey's Electronic signatures to sign the document electronically.

Steps:

1. Navigate to the queue in Odyssey
2. Right Click on the document and choose Annotate PDF Document
3. Click on the Signature icon
4. Click and drag on the document, where you would like the signature to be placed
5. Click Save button

*Note: This requires the customer to have the Electronic Signatures (an add-on feature) and Odyssey 2012.

After the document is signed, the document can be sent to another queue in Odyssey to be docketed on the correct case event.

Alternative Recommendation: You may print off the document after it is accepted in eFileTexas and docketed within Odyssey. Then sign the document and rescan it into the case while attaching it to the event as another document.

Steps:

1. Navigate to the case in Odyssey
2. Navigate to the document and print it off
3. Sign the document
4. Right click on the event and choose Scan Document
5. Enter the Type and the Security Group
6. Click the Scan button

12. Changes of Venue and Transfers

Background: When a transfer of venue occurs, the filer must provide the court with the original case file and the filings that have occurred with it. Since all non-criminal pleadings fall under the mandate for mandatory electronic filing, these will need to be e-filed. How do you recommend e-filing transfer cases?

Current Recommendation: Users can print off all of the documents on the case and store them in a folder on their desktop. They can then use these documents to electronically file the case and subsequently file pleadings into this case at the new county.

Steps to File a Transfer Case:

1. Right click on your desktop and choose New→Folder
2. Name the folder the case number of the case you are transferring
3. Navigate to documents tab within Odyssey
 4. Open the individual documents and save them into the folder you created on your desktop
5. Navigate to eFileTexas and file the case using the initial filing document (i.e. Petition) and a waiver account of “transfer”
 6. After the case is accepted, subsequently file into the case the remaining filings and documents

Steps to Accept a Transfer Case:

1. Navigate to your review queue within eFileTexas
2. Accept the filings