

Maricopa Lawyer
Clerk's Corner
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By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

Change is the only constant

If there is a slower season in the legal community, it is the summer. Continuing education courses wind down and the temperature ratchets up. Change continues, however, even during the summer. Judicial rotations have been made across case types and Judge Norman Davis began his tenure as presiding judge. Other changes taking place this summer include new ZIP code boundaries for case assignments, access to family court records, electronic filing and passport changes.

Superior Court Administrative Orders 2010-061 and 2010-064 detail new lists of which regional court facilities will hear cases that are filed and initiated on and after July 1, 2010. Case assignments are usually based on the ZIP code of the filing party who initiates a case. To balance judicial workloads, improve caseflow and reduce delay, it was necessary to develop separate ZIP code boundaries in Family and Civil cases. As a result, a Family Court case may be assigned to a different regional court facility than a Civil matter (including probate cases) originating from the same ZIP code. Certain Civil and Family Court filings are not assigned according to administrative boundaries, including orders of protection, Federal Title IV-D cases filed by the office of the Arizona State Attorney General, complex civil litigation, transcript of judgment, injunctions against harassment and tax filings.

The Administrative Orders detailing the ZIP code boundaries effective on and after July 1, 2010 are posted on the Superior Court's website at:

<http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/SuperiorCourt/AdministrativeOrders/2010.asp>

The Superior Court in Maricopa County has implemented a procedure to keep new Family Court filings non-public for the first 45 days after filing. In the first 45 days of a Family Court filing, parties and their attorneys will have access to case information but the general public will not. This procedure allows the petitioner time to serve the respondent and for the parties to take action before the case becomes available to the public. This limited restriction of access to records in initial Family Court cases has been discussed for several years in response to domestic violence and other safety, privacy and confidentiality concerns. Clerk staff will verify the identity of customers before providing information in the first 45 days of a case. Because identity cannot be verified over the phone, information will only be provided telephonically after the 45 days have passed. The new procedure took effect in Maricopa County in cases filed or initiated on and after July 1, 2010.

Throughout the Summer and Fall the courts anticipate more attorneys will learn about and use AZTurboCourt, the statewide eFiling portal. Though still in various stages of development and release, AZTurboCourt is envisioned as a comprehensive eFiling

website for limited and general jurisdiction courts throughout the State of Arizona. In the coming months the Administrative Office of the Courts will provide more information and training to take advantage of the next generation of electronic filing.

The Clerk's Office is one of several agencies in Arizona that acts as an acceptance agent for passport applications to the Department of State. In July, the Federal government followed through with a long-standing promise to raise the fees for receiving a passport. Based primarily on the cost of technological advancements and security capabilities in creating passports and backlogs in processing them, the fees were anticipated to recover some, but not all of the existing expenses surrounding passport applications. The general forms and requirements for passport applications have not changed.

Change is easier for some than others. The underlying values, precedent and processes of the courts remain steady, but the daily processes for filing, monitoring and calendaring cases continue to change over time. The Clerk's Office will continue to seek ways to leverage technology, more efficiently support the court and to provide outstanding customer service to the public and the legal community.