

A Maryland Judiciary Production
My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland
Access to Court Records: Case Search

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Title: **CASE SEARCH**

Hello and welcome. If you need information about court records, there is a valuable on-line tool that can help. It's called Case Search. To get started visit mdcourts.gov/casesearch.

In this video, we will answer some common questions about Case Search. You will learn what information is available and what information is not available. We will also discuss how information can be removed, so it is not available to the public. Let's get started by discussing what information is available on Case Search.

WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON CASE SEARCH?

Case Search displays records of cases heard in Maryland state courts. This includes the District Court of Maryland, the circuit courts, the Appellate Court of Maryland, and the Supreme Court of Maryland.

The United States District Court is a federal court. Case Search does not include federal cases.

In general, court records are open to the public. Case Search allows you to see a summary of a court

case, but not a complete record. For instance, you may see case numbers, the names and addresses of

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some of the people involved, dates and times of hearings, the names of documents in the court file, and sometimes, a brief statement about decisions made by the court. If you want to read a document, write down the case number. Then go to the courthouse where the case was filed. At the Clerk's office, you may view the file and request copies of most documents.

Copies may also be available through the Maryland Electronic Courts, also called MDEC. Remote access to MDEC is limited to registered users who are a party to the case. Some courts have a computer station or kiosk that the public can use to access MDEC records.

Now let's discuss what information is not available on Case Search

WHAT INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE ON CASE SEARCH?

Land records and cases involving wills or estates are also court records, but do not appear on Case Search. If you wish to view land records online, visit mdlandrec.net. Estate cases such as those involving the Register of Wills and Orphan's Court are available through Estate Search at registers.maryland.gov.

Traffic cases are available on Case Search. However, this information does not reflect a person's complete driving record. Non-serious traffic offenses in District Courts are automatically removed from Case Search after three years.

Although court records are usually open to the public, Maryland Law requires some be kept private. This means they will not appear on Case Search and the Clerk's Office will only allow authorized people to view the file. We don't have time to mention every type of restricted case, but we will give you a few examples.

The public may not access the following types of cases:

- Adoption
- Guardianship terminating parental rights
- Juvenile delinquency
- Truancy
- Child in Need of Assistance or CINA cases
- Emergency mental health evaluations
- Unserved arrest warrants
- Unserved protective orders, and
- Action for judicial declaration of gender identity.

Certain personal information is also not available to the public including:

- Social Security or federal tax identification numbers

- Income tax returns
- Financial statements like those required in child support and divorce cases
- Names of victims of certain crimes, and
- The names of those who requested Peace and Protective Orders. The name of the person the order is entered against may sometimes be available.

Most criminal cases are available on Case Search, but with some restrictions. The website may not show records where the outcome of all charges was nolle prosequi, dismissal, acquittal, or not guilty. Nolle prosequi simply means the State's Attorney chose not to prosecute the case. Some District Court cases involving possession of cannabis are also not available on Case Search.

HOW INFORMATION CAN BE REMOVED

Another common question is, how information can be removed from Case Search? The answer is that it depends on what kind of information you wish to have removed. Criminal cases may be eligible for expungement. If granted, an expungement requires the court and law enforcement to remove information about a criminal case from their records. To learn more, look for our series on Expungement in the video library.

Civil cases may also be eligible for removal from Case Search through a process called shielding. Peace and protective order cases may be eligible depending on the outcome of the case. You may make a written request for shielding in other types of cases as well. But it can only be granted in some circumstances. To learn more about this process, visit the People’s Law Library website at peoples-law.org.

This is a lot of information. If you need more help, Questions about shielding and expungement may also be directed to lawyers at the Maryland Court Help Center. Call 410-260-1392 or go to mdcourts.gov/helpcenter for a list of hours and locations.

One more thing before we review. Information about criminal cases that appear on Case Search should be reviewed with caution. Remember that cases may appear even when the defendant received a favorable outcome. Case Search is not appropriate to use for a criminal background check. To request this service, contact the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services at 1-888-795-0011 or online at dpscs.maryland.gov

Let’s review.

LET’S REVIEW

Maryland Case Search will allow you to view a summary of court records. It is open to the public, but some information and types of cases will not appear, if restricted by law. Expungement and shielding are the two main ways that you can ask the court to remove records from Case Search. And finally, Case Search should not be used for a criminal background check. To request a criminal background check, contact the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

More resources are available at mdcourts.gov/courthelp. I hope this information has been helpful.

Thanks for watching.