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I. General Information

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1. What kind of information is available on Virginia's Judicial System Website?

The sitemap displays the information by topic that is available on Virginia's Judicial System Website.

2. Where can I learn more about Virginia courts?

Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia. Such information may include the court's schedule, policies, or directions to the courthouse.

3. Where can I find answers to questions about the federal court system or a case filed in a federal court?

Several federal resource links are located in the Virginia's Judicial System Website's Federal Links section of the State Law Library page. Questions about a particular case in the federal court system should be directed to the court in which the case was or will be heard.

II. Information About Cases

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1. Where can I get general information about how different types of cases are processed in Virginia?

The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page provides general information about select case types.

The General District Court Manual and the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Manual include detailed information on case procedures for both criminal and civil cases. For information on circuit court cases, there is a manual describing the processes for civil cases and a manual describing the processes for criminal cases.

2. Where can I get information about a specific case that was filed in Virginia?

The Case Status and Information page contains links to online case information systems that allow you to search for cases in all general district courts and most circuit courts. If you know the locality in which the case was or will be heard, you can search by the plaintiff or defendant's name, the case number, or date of the hearing. Statewide criminal case searches based on the case number or name of the defendant can also be conducted.

For additional information about a particular case, contact the clerk's office for the court where the case is filed. Virginia's Courts System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

III. Assistance with Legal Issues

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1. Where can I do my own research about the law?

The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website provides general information and multiple resources that can assist in researching the law.

A number of resources for legal information are available on the State Law Library page, including the Legal Links page from which you can link to Virginia Codes, Rules and Statutes and the Virginia Public Law Libraries page, which provides contact information for local public law libraries in Virginia.

2. If I want to look up a statute, where can I access the Code of Virginia?

The Code of Virginia is available on the Virginia General Assembly's Legislative Information System Website. This electronic version of the Code of Virginia does not provide cross-references to cases and law review articles, as does the official print version of the Code of Virginia, VIRGINIA CODE ANNOTATED. The annotated Code is available at Virginia Public Law Libraries and may be available at other public libraries in Virginia.

3. If I need legal advice, where can I find a lawyer?

The Virginia State Bar offers a Virginia Lawyer Referral Service, that allows you to have an initial consultation with an attorney for a reduced fee. The toll-free telephone number for the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service is 1-800-552-7977. Information about free and low-cost civil litigation services in Virginia is available at the Virginia Legal Aid Website. Their website includes information to assist in determining whether a person qualifies for legal assistance based on where they reside and their income.

4. Where can I find court forms on Virginia's Judicial System Website?

Links to most forms and instructions are available on the Forms page. Only those forms that can be submitted to the court by a member of the public may be completed online and printed for submission to the court.

5. What should I do if I have found the court form I need on Virginia's Judicial System Website, but I am unable to access the form?

Forms are available as Adobe Acrobat PDF documents. The Adobe Reader (free from Adobe) allows you to view, complete and print PDF documents. These forms are designed and tested to work with Internet Explorer and may not display or function correctly in other browsers (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari, etc.). If Internet Explorer is

not available, download (save) the form and then open it using Adobe Reader, rather than opening it within your browser.

- All of our PDF files are tested prior to posting. If you have problems with a form, please review the troubleshooting information in Adobe's support knowledgebase. You may also contact the Webmaster.

Some forms are for use by court personnel only and may not be completed by the public.

- If the form is not available to the public, contact the clerk's office for the court in which your case will be heard. Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

6. Where can I find a complete listing of court forms on Virginia's Judicial System Website?

- Circuit Court Forms List
- District Court Forms List

7. If I want to file a court case, where can I get information or assistance?

A number of resources are available for information on filing a civil case in Virginia, including:

- The clerk's office for the court in which you plan to file a case: Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.
- The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website, which provides general information and links to available court resources.
- The advice of a lawyer:
    - The Virginia State Bar offers the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service, through which you may have an initial consultation with an attorney for a reduced fee. The toll-free telephone number is 1-800-552-7977.
    - Legal Aid programs in Virginia provide free and low-cost legal assistance in civil cases to qualifying low-income individuals. Their website provides information about their services and information to assist in determining whether a person qualifies for legal assistance based on where they reside and their income.

8. If I cannot be present on the date scheduled, how can I get a new date for my case?

Contact the clerk's office for the court in which your case is filed for more information about the possibility of changing your court date. Each court sets its own policy on the rescheduling of court hearings, otherwise known as a "continuance." Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

IV. Traffic Cases

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1. How can I pay my traffic ticket without going to court?

If the summons you received indicates the offense is "prepayable," you may follow the Pretrial Waiver and Prepayment Instructions on the front of the summons to pay your ticket by mail without going to court. In addition, you may be able to pay the ticket online. Links to online payment systems are available on the How to Pay Traffic Tickets and Other Offenses page. **Note:** Most courts enter traffic ticket information within 10 business days.

2. How can I verify that my online payment of a "prepayable" ticket has been accepted?

You can check the "Case Details Screen" of your case online to verify the status. Payments made before 3:30 p.m. will be updated on the system overnight and will appear on the following business day or within two (2) business days if the payment was made on a Friday. If your case is still not shown as paid on the "Case Details Screen," you can call the clerk of the local court to confirm receipt of the payment.

3. If I have lost my traffic ticket, what should I do?

- Contact the law enforcement agency that issued the citation:
  - Virginia State Police
  - Local Law Enforcement Agencies
- You also may conduct a statewide search of the case information of all general district courts by entering your name in the Online Case Information System-Statewide Search. **Note:** This system will not work if using Internet Explorer. Other browsers such as Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari, etc. should be used.

4. Where can I get information about my Virginia driver's license (operator's permit) or the Virginia driver's point system?

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles:

- Records Services: Request a Copy of Your Driver or Vehicle Record
- Driver's Services: Points and Violations

V. Child Custody, Visitation, and Support

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1. How do I file a court case for child custody, visitation, or support?

- The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page also provides general information about custody, visitation, and support.

- If there is no existing court order on child custody, visitation, or support, a new case may be initiated through the Court Service Unit of a juvenile and domestic relations district court. Contact the local Court Service Unit for information.

- If a Virginia court has previously entered an order, or a case is currently pending regarding divorce, child custody, visitation or support, contact the clerk's office of that court directly. Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

2. Where can I go for help in getting child support for my minor child?

Contact the Virginia Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement.

The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page also provides general information about custody, visitation, and support.

VI. Marriage, Divorce, and Changing a Last Name

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1. Where can I find information about a marriage or divorce that has already taken place?

To obtain a copy of a marriage or divorce record, contact the clerk's office for the circuit court where the marriage license was issued, or the divorce was granted. Virginia's Court System page contains information on all courts in Virginia. Records may also be obtained from the Virginia Department of Health's Division of Vital Records.

2. Where can I find information or instructions on obtaining a divorce?

There are no official court forms dealing with the process of spousal separation or divorce; however, there are the following resources:

- The Virginia State Bar produces pamphlets about divorce, including:
  - *Divorce in Virginia*
  - *Children and Divorce*
- The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page provides general information about divorce and links to resources that will help in understanding the divorce process.
- The Virginia State Bar offers the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service, through which you may have an initial consultation with an attorney for a reduced fee. The toll-free telephone number for the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service is 1-800-552-7977. Legal Aid programs in Virginia provide free and low-cost legal assistance in civil cases to qualifying low-income individuals. Their website provides information about their services and information to assist in determining whether a person qualifies for legal assistance based on where they reside and their income.

- You also may contact your local circuit court for more information. Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

3. How can I be authorized to perform a marriage ceremony in Virginia?

Petitions for Authorization to Celebrate Rites of Marriage are filed in the circuit court of the locality where the wedding is scheduled to take place. The Circuit Court Clerks' Manual – Civil contains information on these petitions. Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

4. How can I apply for a name change?

Applications for name change are filed in the circuit court. The Circuit Court Clerks' Manual – Civil contains information on applications for name change for both adults and minors. For additional information, contact the clerk's office of your local circuit court.

VII. Probate and Decedents' Estates

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1. Where can I find information about probate and decedents' estates in Virginia?

The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page provides general information about probate and links to resources that will help in understanding the probate process.

The Virginia Bar Association produces a Guide to the Administration of Decedents' Estates in Virginia. The Virginia Court Clerks' Association also produces a guide titled Probate in Virginia.

For further information, contact your local circuit court. The Virginia's Court System page contains information on all courts in Virginia.

VIII. Death Certificate

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1. Where can I get a copy of a death certificate?

A death certificate may be obtained from the Virginia Department of Health's Division of Vital Records.

IX. Search Land Records

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1. Where can I search land records?

Land records are maintained in circuit court clerks' offices and are available for inspection there. Many circuit court clerks provide secure remote access to persons who

have completed an application with the clerk and entered into a subscriber's agreement with the clerk. For more information, contact the circuit court clerk of the locality in which you are interested in researching the land records.

X. Small Claims Court

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1. How can I pursue a small claims case (involving no more than $5,000) in a Virginia court?

Information on small claims case procedures is available at the following links:

- Small Claims Court Procedures Pamphlet
- The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Website's Topics page.
- General District Court Civil Forms used in small claims cases

For additional information, contact the clerk's office of your local general district court.

XI. Criminal Records

Back to Topics

1. How can I access public criminal court case records?

The Case Status and Information page contains links to online case information systems in which you can search for criminal cases in all general district courts and most circuit courts. If you know the locality in which the case was or will be heard, you can search by the defendant's name, the case number, or date of the hearing. Statewide searches based on the case number or name of the defendant can also be conducted. For additional information about a particular criminal case, contact the clerk's office for the court where the case is filed. Virginia's Court System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

2. Where can I find information on filing for expungement of my criminal conviction?

Information on expungement cases that are filed in the circuit court is available in the Circuit Court Clerk's Manual – Criminal and the Circuit Court Clerks' Manual – Civil. Related circuit court forms may be accessed on the Circuit Court Forms page.

3. Where can I find information about a criminal records check?

Criminal history records information is available to only certain persons, businesses and entities. The Virginia State Police maintains the Virginia Criminal Records Exchange, which is the sole repository for criminal records in Virginia.

XII. Concealed Handgun Permits

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1. How can I get a concealed handgun permit?

Information is available on the Firearms/Concealed Handguns page of the Virginia State Police Website. Additional information about concealed handgun permits is available in the Circuit Court Clerks' Manual – Civil.

XIII. Restoration of Civil Rights

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1. How can I get my civil rights restored?

Information on the restoration of rights is available on the Restoration of Rights page of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

XIV. Appealing a Case

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1. What can I do if I disagree with a court decision?

A party who disagrees with a court decision may, under certain circumstances and within certain time limits, appeal to a higher court. Basic information on appeals is available in several Court Informational Pamphlets found under the "For Citizens" tab. Contact the clerk's office for the court in which your case was decided for additional information. Virginia's Courts System page contains links to information on all courts in Virginia.

XV. Misconduct

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1. What can I do if I am concerned about possible judicial misconduct by the judge in my case?

The Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission investigates charges of judicial misconduct or serious mental or physical disability that interfere with a judge's duties. The Commission investigates complaints against judges only, not lawyers, magistrates, or other court personnel. The Commission may not investigate matters of judicial discretion, such as the rulings and decisions of the judge, and cannot change any judicial decision or finding. The Commission also does not interfere with pending cases, unless there is a complaint of delay.

2. What can I do if I am concerned about possible misconduct by a magistrate?

If you have concerns about the conduct of a magistrate and wish to file a complaint, you may submit a written complaint to the Department of Magistrate Services in the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The procedures for filing a complaint against a magistrate are available on the Magistrate Services page of Virginia's Judicial System Website.

3. What can I do if I am concerned about possible misconduct on the part of my lawyer?

The Virginia State Bar regulates the legal profession in Virginia and receives complaints about lawyers' conduct. If you are concerned about your lawyer's conduct, information about how the Virginia State Bar deals with complaints and how you may file a complaint can be found on the Virginia State Bar Website. You may also contact the Virginia State Bar at 804-775-0570 or callers outside the 804 area code may dial toll free 1-866-548-0873.