



Tip of the Month August 2020

Using E-Signatures in District Court Filings

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With remote legal services becoming more prevalent due to the COVID-19 pandemic, e-signatures can make it easier and more efficient to complete court documents. E-signatures are widely accepted by Minnesota District Courts, and obtaining them is generally much faster than sending documents through the mail for signatures from clients or other parties, and more convenient than signing, scanning, and emailing documents multiple times.

[The Minnesota District Court Registered User Guide](#), last revised on February 10, 2020, states that **“unless a statute or court rule specifically requires a handwritten signature, a typographical signature can be used in lieu of a handwritten signature.”** A typographical signature is made by typing “/s/” followed by the signer’s name onto a document using a word processing program. In many cases, documents with typographical signatures are preferable because they do not need to be scanned, making them clear, searchable, and smaller in size. They will satisfy [Minnesota Rule of Civil Procedure 11.01](#) requiring a signature from by an attorney or self-represented party on any pleading, motion, or similar document. [The Minnesota General Rules of Practice](#) also explicitly allow both facsimile and typographical signatures from filers and other parties on court documents.

To use a typographical signature from a client, obtain written confirmation that they approve the document and save the conformation (in the event there is any doubt as to whether that party actually approved the final version of the document, you will have a record showing that the document was actually reviewed and approved by the relevant party), then send the client the document over email and ask them to “sign” by typing “/s/” followed by their name, and any additional personal information that may be required, using a word processing program or a PDF editing program (such as Adobe Acrobat). When you receive the signed document, check that no other edits were made. Add your own

signature and information if needed and save as a PDF. The signatures are legally sufficient, and the document may be saved and filed with the court.

Courts have also widely accepted e-signatures created using e-signature services. [VLN recently purchased a subscription from HelloSign](#), which will allow VLN staff members assisting volunteers to obtain signatures from clients and other parties. Services like HelloSign are very user-friendly and accessible to many clients. Signers will receive requests by email and can open the documents directly from their email on a computer or smartphone. Signers will be able to review the document and sign electronically. You can also mark fields where additional information is required, but signers will not be able to edit the document in any unauthorized way. VLN staff will be trained to use the e-sign subscription service and obtain signatures on client documents for volunteer attorneys. If you are working on a pro bono case for VLN and need to get a client's electronic signature on a document, please contact the VLN case placement coordinator or resource attorney you are working with to ask them for help getting an e-signature.