



## Tip of the Month September 2021

### MCRO: A Step Forward in Transparency

Submitted by: State Court Administration  
Court Information Office

In its ongoing commitment to increase access to court processes, proceedings, and public information, the Minnesota Judicial Branch took a major step forward in transparency with the launch of Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO) in March. This new application provides the ability to search for, retrieve, and eventually purchase public documents in certain case types in state district courts without needing to visit a courthouse.

MCRO is the next iteration of public access applications for the Minnesota Judicial Branch. Two other applications remain available for the public to use:

- Minnesota Public Access (MPA) Courthouse provides access to public case records and public documents statewide through terminals that are available in each Minnesota courthouse and at the State Law Library.
- Minnesota Public Access (MPA) Remote provides the ability to view registers of actions and other case information online but requires people to physically visit a court facility to access and print documents.

MCRO, MPA Courthouse, and MPA Remote do not require installation or individual login accounts.

Staff attorneys with the Volunteer Lawyers Network also have access to [Minnesota Government Access](#) (MGA). MGA allows Minnesota government agencies to access appropriate **electronic court records and documents** in cases in Minnesota district courts. Users access MGA through individual login accounts.

While most public district court documents will be available in MCRO, Rule 8, subd. 2 of the [Rules of Public Access to the Records of the Minnesota Judicial Branch determine](#) which case types and documents in those case types are public information, as well as whether that information can be accessed and retrieved online. Users will continue to visit a courthouse to review certain public cases not available over the Internet, and to request certified copies.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is undertaking a thorough and deliberative process in developing and implementing MCRO. The application is being rolled out in three phases, which will help meet the high demand for online access to certain public documents while the Judicial Branch builds out the enhanced functionality. MCRO, when fully implemented, will replace MPA Remote.

#### **Case Types and Public Documents Currently Available in MCRO**

The first phase of MCRO launched in March. Users can access certain public documents when searching with a case number. Individuals who do not have a case number can find one by searching MPA Remote by a person's name or attorney's name, by working with opposing counsel, or by reviewing paper documents in the case.

During Phase 1, users can access and download public documents filed on or after July 1, 2015, in the following case types:

- Major and Minor Adult Criminal,
- Major and Minor Civil,
- Formal and Informal Probate,
- Guardianship and Conservatorship, and
- Estate and Trust

Public orders, appellate opinions, and notices prepared by the court filed on or after July 1, 2015, in public family case types and post-adjudication paternity proceedings, are also available.

In addition, users will find judgments, orders, appellate opinions, and court-generated notices to parties filed from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2015, in case types that were publicly and remotely accessible at the time of filing. Access to documents in MCRO filed prior to July 1, 2015, however, is limited.

### **Coming Soon: Enhanced Search Functionality and Registers of Actions**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is in the development stage for Phase 2 of MCRO, which is expected to launch later this year. During Phase 2, users will be able to access case registers of actions and search for cases by person or business name, citation number, attorney name, or attorney bar number.

In the final phase of the project, expected to launch in 2022, users will be able to search for court calendars and monetary judgments, and purchase documents online. As MCRO is being rolled out in phases, the access fee for documents accessed via MCRO will not be implemented until we provide court customers with complete access to the system in 2022.

### **Case Types Not Available in MCRO**

Per Court Rules, there are some case types and public documents that are not available for remote access. Public documents in the following public case types are not available through MCRO, but can be viewed and printed in MPA Courthouse:

- Domestic abuse (orders for protection)
- Harassment restraining orders
- Out-of-state no contact orders
- Felony level juvenile delinquency for juveniles at least 16 years old
- Child protection
- Civil commitment (*registers of actions will be available in Phase 2*)
- Search warrants

### **Case Types Not Available in MCRO or MPA Courthouse**

Per Court Rules, there is no public access to documents in the following case types:

- Domestic abuse (orders for protection) before the respondent is served
- Harassment restraining order before the respondent is served
- Juvenile delinquency for juveniles younger than 16 years old
- Paternity cases filed before January 1, 2021, without any case activity post-adjudication
- Adoption
- Confidential name change
- Cases made non-public pursuant to judicial order
- Non-public documents, such as reports, evaluations, and financial source documents

To access MCRO, or to review additional information and training materials, visit [Minnesota Court Records Online](#).