

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

On-site Research

Records at the Judicial Records Center (JRC) are available to researchers in accordance with the laws of Rhode Island and the operating rules of the department. All public records are open for use except for those specifically restricted by law or rule. An appointment is not necessary to view materials at the JRC. We highly recommend, however, that researchers call the JRC in advance of their visit in order to verify that the records that they wish to examine are currently stored on-site, rather than at the courts or our off-site storage facility. If the file has been transferred back to the courts, the researcher will be referred to the appropriate court. If the file is stored off-site, it will be transferred to the JRC for viewing by the researcher. The JRC requires twenty-four (24) hours notice to order a case from off-site storage. For a list of records stored by the JRC, click on the List of Records link. For a list of records stored by the Judicial Archives, click on the Archives – Research link.

Rules for Use

All researchers must sign in and present an official photo identification. Acceptable forms of identification include a current driver's license or a State of Rhode Island Identification Card. If researchers need to review a case file, they must hand over their identification when the case folder is handed to them. Identification cards will be given back once the case folder is returned. Researchers are not allowed to remove documents from the case folder. No food or drink is allowed in the research area. The JRC closes promptly at 4:30 p.m. No cases will be pulled within fifteen (15) minutes of closing.

Access Procedures

Cases are organized numerically. Generally, researchers must provide the JRC staff with case numbers in order to access the case files. Case numbers are available from the court in which the case was filed. In some cases, researchers can gain access to a case file by providing some other form of documentation that will allow the JRC staff to trace the case number. For example:

- Civil or small claims judgments in which the case number is unknown can usually be traced if the researcher has a copy of their credit report.
- Criminal judgments can usually be traced if the researcher presents a copy of their Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI) Report. BCI reports are available from the Department of the Attorney General, 150 South Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island.
- Researchers seeking access to divorce cases, however, must have the appropriate case number. If they do not know the case number, they may obtain it from the Clerk's Office of the Family Court.

Circulation Policy

The JRC holdings do not circulate and researchers may not remove records from the research area. Researchers may obtain copies of records on the premises, but the original records may not be marked, damaged, or altered in any way. General Law 1956 § 38-1-4 provides for severe penalties for mutilation or theft of public records.

Photocopying

A self-service copying machine is located in the research area of the JRC. Registered researchers may use this machine to make copies of court documents. Researchers are not, however, allowed to remove documents from their folders. All papers must remain attached to the folder, in their original order, even during photocopying. The cost of copies on the self-service machine is \$ 0.20 per page. Copy cards may be purchased at the JRC or at the Rhode Island Supreme Court State Law Library at 250 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island. Certified copies of court records cost \$3.00 per document. Certified copies of Family Court final judgment/divorce decrees are \$25.00. Certified copies must be made by the JRC staff. Please note that the JRC does not accept credit or debit cards. The JRC only accepts cash, business/certified checks, or money orders.

If You Cannot Visit the JRC

The role of the JRC staff is to provide researchers with access to the public records stored in our facility. Researchers unable to visit the facility may contact the JRC to request limited research by the staff. Outside research will be performed based upon the level of staffing. The search fee is \$15.00 per hour, with no charge for the first hour. When requesting information from the JRC, patrons should make their requests as specific as possible as to the information being sought. Researchers who need extensive research performed at the JRC but who cannot undertake the research themselves should contact the Rhode Island Bar Association for information about qualified researchers for hire.

Mail Requests

Individuals who need information from a single case and who are unable to visit the JRC may request information through the mail. In order to process a mail request the following information needs to be submitted to:

Rhode Island Supreme Court
Judicial Records Center
5 Hill Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860-3913

To verify a civil or small claims judgment showing up on a credit report:

1. Copy of the individual's credit report.
2. The town the individual lived in at the time of the lawsuit.
3. Telephone number.
4. A business/certified check or money order for \$3.00 made payable to the State of Rhode Island.
5. A self-addressed stamped envelope.

To obtain a copy of a final judgment/divorce decree:

1. The court (county) and case number.
2. Telephone number.
3. A business/certified check or money order for \$25.00 made payable to the State of Rhode Island.
4. A self-addressed stamped envelope.

To obtain a copy or disposition of a criminal record, submit a copy of the BCI Report or:

1. Defendant's name.
2. Date of birth.
3. Date of arrest.
4. Town where arrest took place.
5. Charge.
6. Telephone number.
7. A business/certified check or money order for \$3.00 (per offense) made payable to the State of Rhode Island.
8. A self-addressed stamped envelope.