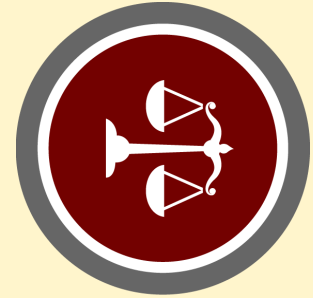




**Ford Firm**  
**Randal S. Ford, Esq.**  
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[Tusaloosacriminallaw.com](http://Tusaloosacriminallaw.com)

*Helping Clients For Over 30 Years.*



**Ford Firm**

# *Information Guide For The* **Tusaloosa Court System**

*Information for Tusaloosa Municipal And District Courts*

## **WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT COURT**

Information on the following:

1. How to figure out what Court your case is in.
2. How to Dress for Court.
3. What to do when you ARRIVE at Court on your court date.
4. What to do if you missed your court date.
5. How to address the Court.
6. What options you have at Court: Guilty Plea, Trial, Diversion (maybe dismissal).
7. Where is EVERYTHING located (important to know where to go).
8. Court Referral Office and the Deferral Programs (how to navigate the system).

## **INFORMATION ABOUT MISDEMEANORS**

You will find out what class A,B, and C misdemeanors are! What are the possible fines, and what is the term of imprisonment.

How does a conviction affect my future options for employment, school, driving, and career (such as government employment, criminal history, etc.)

What is an Expungement and how does it work?

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### **SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST**

- How Expungements Work

**No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.**

## COURT: WHERE, WHAT, AND WHEN?



Where is my court case? You can find out where your court case is located by looking at the paperwork you received: speeding tickets have the court address at the bottom of the ticket, citations have the court listed ON the citation, and if you happened to go to jail and had to bond out your RELEASE paperwork will have the court, date and time on the paperwork. Do NOT miss your court date. If you cannot make your court date you need to PHYSICALLY go to the Court and speak with the court's clerks OR the Judge's staff to reset your court date for later. DO NOT call or email and expect any answer. You MUST PHYSICALLY APPEAR at the Court in order to get a

continuance to another date. Dress for Court like you are going out on a date. No shorts, no open toed shoes (sandals), no skirts ABOVE the knees, no spandex tight body pants. You CAN wear blue jeans and a shirt with a collar or appropriate appearance, but do NOT show up with a T-shirt and body hugging clothes. Court is a FORMAL PLACE and the person you are meeting CAN put you in jail. Sign in on the Computer or Legal Pad when you get to Court. Always address the Judge as "Your Honor" or you can use "Yes Sir" or Yes Mam" depending on the sex of the judge. The Key is to be RESPECTFUL.

*"your real job in appearing in Court is to resolve your problem as quickly and painlessly as possible"*

### OPTIONS YOU HAVE WHEN YOU GO TO COURT

When you show up at Court the first time it is called an "Arraignment". This is where you enter a plea of "Guilty" (and get your consequences), or "Not Guilty" (and the case is set for trial).

Most cases are resolved at the Arraignment between the Lawyer / Defendant and the Prosecutor. If Diversion (community service, paying court costs, taking classes, etc.) is available, you may elect to participate in it. In most diversion cases you PLEAD GUILTY but the Judge **does NOT find you guilty**, and if you complete the required assignments your case is dismissed. It is a really good option for students and first time offenders.

### WHERE ARE THE COURTS LOCATED?



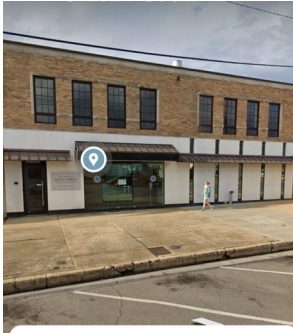
**Tuscaloosa Municipal Court is at 2122 6th Street,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401**

(1 block off University Blvd, look for city signs on the road for directions also)



**Tuscaloosa County District Court is at 714 Greensboro Avenue,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401**

(Go up the stairs, pass the metal detectors, and take elevators to the 6th floor)



1812 University Blvd  
Tuscaloosa AL 35401  
Court Referral Office

## Tuscaloosa County Alternative Sentencing Office

10h · 📍

**CRO CLIENTS ONLY:  
EFFECTIVE APRIL 01, 2024  
MONTHLY MONITORING  
COST WILL BE \$40.00!**

**ATTENTION CLIENTS  
EFFECTIVE APRIL 01, 2024,  
DRUG SCREEN COST WILL BE  
\$30.00!**

*The Tuscaloosa County Court Referral Office is located on University Blvd in downtown Tuscaloosa (less than 1 block from the "Strip") and has a Facebook page titled "Tuscaloosa County Alternative Sentencing Office" with Color Code testing information and Lab closing times.*

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT CRO

There are 2 types of programs, regardless of whether you plead guilty or are given "diversion".

One is where you perform tasks such as community service, online classes and pay fees and costs. The judge is the person directly handling your program / progress.

The Second is where you are sent to the Court Referral Officer, or CRO, and they will give you the appropriate classes, community service, drug testing/ monitoring, and monthly "check in's." What is REALLY IMPORTANT to understand is that if you are offered "Diversion" as opposed to just pleading "GUILTY", you should take Diversion. The ONLY difference in most cases is that for Diversion you may have to pay an additional fee.

The CRO's are good people who want you to succeed. However, there are NOT enough of them to accomplish the job (they are overworked), so help them by doing the following:

1. Assume it will take you 3 hours to talk to the CRO on your date. There are dozens of people waiting at the same time. This is more like a doctor's appointment and not a class, thus time has no meaning. Accept it gracefully.
2. ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS sign in on the intake sheet when you arrive at the CRO's office for ANYTHING. And NO, you cannot just "pop in" when you want to. You must make your appointment and be 15 minutes early.
3. Take a picture of your Receipts, Community Service letters, and ANY paperwork you are given by the CRO. Keep it on your phone for reference.
4. You MUST take your drug testing on the DATE your "code" comes up. Miss the test and it is considered a "FAIL". If your test is "inconclusive" it's a FAIL.
5. TAKE YOUR DRUG TEST in the MORNING! The lab sometimes closes at 3pm. If you miss the lab you are out of luck. You can visit a PRIVATE lab and take a test that YOU pay for, but that lab must fax a copy of the results to the CRO. So between 12:01 am until 11:59 pm you MUST take your drug test / screen on the day of your code.

## THEFT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLASSES

Classes for Property Theft and Domestic Violence are handled by Family Counseling Service in downtown Tuscaloosa. The address is 2020 Paul W. Bryant Dr., Tuscaloosa, AL 35401. The office is down the street from Alabama Power on Bryant Drive. Some of the classes are provided via ZOOM. Classes require PRE-PAYMENT in cash and you have to be enrolled in the class to participate.

## DRUG AND ALCOHOL CLASSES

Classes for cases involving drugs or alcohol, like Marijuana Possession or DUI's, are held at Essential Foundations at this current time. The office is located on Skyland Blvd. You MUST pre-pay for your classes and you have to pay CASH. Make sure you get a receipt and take a picture of it with your phone.

Picture below for the location and address:



Essential Foundations

**Address:** 429 Skyland Blvd,  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35405

**Cross Streets:** Near the  
intersection of Skyland Blvd and  
5th Ave

**Phone:** (205) 737-7830

## ALABAMA'S PRETRIAL DIVERSION PROGRAMS

Alabama's pretrial diversion programs (PTD) allow some people accused of nonviolent crimes to avoid a criminal trial and conviction if they complete a supervised program:

- **Eligibility** Generally, first-time offenders have the best chance of eligibility. Other factors include the nature of the offense, the accused's criminal history, and the injured party's opinion.
  - **Program requirements** Participants must meet several requirements, such as:
    - Admitting guilt in writing
    - Completing counseling, education programs, or community service
    - Reporting to a probation officer, court referral officer, or the court
    - Paying restitution if applicable
    - Paying all program expenses, including court costs, attorney's fees, and investigative expenses
  - **Program outcomes** If the defendant completes the program, the case will be dismissed and there will be no conviction. If the defendant does not complete the program, they will face the same consequences as if they had been convicted.
  - **Drug courts** Alabama also has drug court programs for people charged with drug and alcohol-related offenses. These programs use a system of evaluation, screening, and education to focus on rehabilitation

## CLASS "A" MISDEMEANORS

A Class A misdemeanor in Alabama is a criminal offense that can result in up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$6,000. Class

A misdemeanors are the most serious type of misdemeanor in Alabama. Some examples of Class A misdemeanors include:

- Third-degree domestic violence
- Theft of property valued at \$500 or less
- Third-degree assault

- Reckless endangerment
- Second-degree criminal mischief
- Possession of drug paraphernalia



## CLASS "B" MISDEMEANORS

A Class B misdemeanor in Alabama is a mid-level crime that can result in up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$3,000. Some examples of Class B misdemeanors include:

- Resisting arrest
- Menacing
- Stalking in the second degree
- Cruelty to animals
- Tampering with a witness

- Having an open house party
- Theft of cable TV service

**Other possible penalties for a Class B misdemeanor include:**

- Restitution to the victim
- Court-ordered rehabilitation or drug or alcohol court program

## CLASS "C" MISDEMEANORS

A Class C misdemeanor in Alabama is the least serious misdemeanor offense and can result in a jail sentence of up to three months and a fine of up to \$500. However, a conviction for a Class C misdemeanor often results in no jail time and a minimal fine.

Examples of Class C misdemeanors include:

Traffic violations, such as speeding, changing lanes illegally, or failing to follow traffic signs

Petty crimes, such as a minor possessing alcohol or tobacco

Small-scale property theft

Public intoxication

Disorderly conduct, such as fighting in public, yelling obscenities, or public urination

Harassment, including verbal or non-verbal threats that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety

Treating or prescribing for a sexually transmitted disease without a license to practice medicine in Alabama

Selling a drug, medicine, or preparation that is intended to treat a sexually transmitted disease without a licensed physician's prescription

Knowingly transmitting a sexually transmitted disease to another person

## RECAP OF MISDEMEANOR JAIL AND FINES

In Alabama, misdemeanors are classified into three classes, each with its own sentencing guidelines:

- **Class A:** Up to a year in jail and a fine of up to \$6,000
- **Class B:** Up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$3,000
- **Class C:** Up to three months in jail and a fine of up to \$500



*“A lawyer can help you navigate the court system and present your situation in a manner that is advantageous to you. The prosecutors do listen to the lawyers at arraignment. They do not have time to hear every defendant’s story, they just set the case for trial.”*

## I WAS IN JAIL. WHAT IS A BOND?

When you left jail you were probably given a “bond.” A bond is an amount of money that is used as a security to ensure that you show up in court.

If you paid a bail bonds person then you paid a percentage of the bond to the company and they agreed to put up surety to guarantee that you appear at court. You will NOT get any money back from using a bail bond company.

If you paid a CASH BOND, you are in luck. The Judge can “apply” the cash bond to your courts costs and fines. So instead of “losing money” to a bondsman, you can have the money used on your behalf. If you take your case to trial and win, then you would receive a refund of your bail bond.

Should you fail to appear in Court you will forfeit your bond and lose your money. If the bondsman has to pay the bond they will sue you for their loss.

If you had any “cash” at the jail, the money was taken from you before you entered the facility. When you bonded out of jail you were given your property, but you may have noticed your cash was not there. In order to safely manage money that people bring into the jail, the cash is “converted” in to a debit card. You will need to contact the Tuscaloosa County Jail to determine when is the best time to return to pick up your debit card during the week. So your money is still there, it’s just in another form.

Other items such as your cell phone, rings and jewelry, papers, etc. were returned to you when you left the jail. You should have been given a paper receipt when items were taken from you and you should have signed a receipt when your were given your property as you left the facility.



View videos about appearing in Tuscaloosa Courts on YouTube

[https://  
www.youtube.co  
m/@randalsford](https://www.youtube.com/@randalsford)



# Ford Firm

*The Ford Firm has been representing criminal defendants in the Court's of Tuscaloosa, Alabama for over 30 years. If you need assistance with your case, please reach out to us at 205.454.7500.*

## EXPUNGEMENT

Once you have navigated the court system, you may be entitled to file for an Expungement. An Expungement removes the case and/or conviction from your permanent file. It's like it never happened. Misdemeanor charges or violations that you had dismissed and/or dismissed with prejudice can be Expunged. Some misdemeanor convictions can also be Expunged after the terms of the offense has been completed and the required period of time has passed.

**There are several good reasons to seek expungement of a criminal record.**

These include:

**Personal confidence:** Misdemeanor and Felony expungement provides an opportunity to leave your past behind and move forward with the confidence of knowing that your record is clean and you have nothing to hide.

**Employment:** Many employers conduct background checks for new hires, or even promotions.

**Housing:** In some states private landlords can legally deny housing to someone with convictions.

**State licenses and certifications**

**Potential loan eligibility issues**

### **Ford Firm**

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**IF YOU NEED LEGAL ASSISTANCE, CONTACT US AT  
205.454.7500. - Randal Ford**