

Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa Tribal Court

TOPIC: Court User Responsibilities
General Guidelines



All Parties involved in Tribal Court cases and hearings are notified of the following:

1. The terms “plaintiff, petitioner, claimant” or any similar terms *indicate the identity of the party who is filing the court petition*. The terms “defendant, respondent” or any similar terms *indicate the identity of the party who must respond to the court petition*.
 - a. If you are the Plaintiff, it is your responsibility to have the Defendant served with the petition and also to provide proof of service. Any “returned unserved” notices will then require a legal notice to run once a week for three consecutive weeks in a local paper before the Defendant is considered as being properly served. No petition can move forward without proof the Defendant had a reasonable opportunity to respond.
2. If you intend to have a lawyer represent you, then you should immediately make efforts to hire a lawyer. A current listing of Bar Members is available at the Clerk of Court’s office.
3. Judges and people in the Clerk of Court’s Office cannot give Court Users any legal advice about Tribal Court matters.
 - a. Except as explicitly authorized, “Ex parte” [*Pronounced, Ex-Par-TAY*] communications with judges are prohibited. “Ex parte” may also describe contact with a person represented by an attorney, outside the presence of the attorney. Court Users must not approach judges for discussion of a case outside the courtroom, and all/both parties must have the opportunity to be present when discussion of a case occurs within the courtroom.
4. Dress appropriately. Attire must be clean and respectful toward the seriousness of your situation. Dress as if you are going to a job interview.
5. **If you represent yourself:**
 - a. You will have to follow all applicable “Rules of Procedure” as you continue with this case. **Judges and staff in the Clerk of Court’s Office are prohibited from giving you any legal advice about these matters.**
 - b. You are responsible to attend all court hearings. If you do not attend a scheduled hearing, the Court will proceed to enter any and all appropriate orders and rulings. Punctuality is very important; the Court expects prompt appearances for scheduled matters. Notifying the Clerk you are running late, can’t make it, or forwarding a message through someone else will not necessarily get you excused by the Judge.
 - c. You must make copies of any documents you file with the Clerk and personally mail a copy of those documents to the lawyer for the other side (or to the other party if they do not have a lawyer).
 - d. You must notify the Clerk of Court of your current address and telephone contact number so the other party can send copies of pleadings to you and so the Clerk may notify you of the scheduled hearings.