



Changes Coming to the Rules Governing Civil Cases in the District of Columbia Small Claims and Conciliation Branch

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Effective March 12, 2018, the D.C. Superior Court will amend its Rules of Procedure for the Small Claims and Conciliation Branch (Rules). This article provides a brief overview of some of the major changes to the Rules about which practitioners should be aware. In large measure, the Rules have been amended to conform to the stylistic changes to the rules governing civil actions in D.C. Superior Court; there are, however, some changes that are substantive and specific to the Small Claims and Conciliation Branch. As stated in the enacting Rule Promulgation Order, the amendments will become effective on March 12, 2018 and will apply to all proceedings thereafter commenced and insofar as just and practicable all pending proceedings. R. Promulgation Ord. 18-01 (Jan. 25, 2018).

Rule 4 formerly, Process has been restyled Service of Process, and, like the title, the substance of the Rule has been slightly expanded. Specifically, the Rule now provides specific provisions for effectuating service of process on individuals, corporations, the District of Columbia, etc.

Rule 11 formerly, Preliminary proceedings by the Clerk has been restyled Preliminary Proceedings and has been streamlined to provide more flexibility to the court. Specifically, rather than requiring a strict set of announcements for the beginning of each docket, the Rule now requires the Court to simply make an introductory statement that describes the procedures and legal framework governing cases. Rule 11.

Rule 13, Motions, has been amended to remove the requirement that motions be supported by an affidavit or sworn testimony. Under the revised language of the Rule, the court may still require the submission of evidence and parties may still support motions with affidavits or other forms of sworn testimony, but such support is not required.

Rule 15, Judgment, has been amended to add a new requirement that [a]ll requests for entry of judgment by confession or consent must be submitted to the court. Therefore, under this new Rule, parties can no longer submit a judgment by confession or by agreement without court approval.

In addition, several provisions ? for example, former Rules 3(b) (case styling); and 7(a) and (b) (court scheduling) ? were removed because they simply addressed the administrative process of the court.

As stated above, this article is an overview and is, of course, not a complete analysis of all the Rule changes. For a complete listing of the changes and to read the text of Promulgation Order 18-01 on the D.C. Bar website, [click here](#).

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