

## NOTICE OF PROPOSED PUBLIC ACCESS POLICY CONCERNING OFFICIAL CASE RECORDS OF THE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts is planning to recommend that the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopt this proposed public access policy concerning official case records of the magisterial district courts. At my direction, a working group comprised of magisterial district judges, district court administrators, and Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts/Supreme Court staff crafted this proposed policy that is being published for public comment. The proposed policy covers official case record information that would be accessible by the public, how requests for access are to be handled, applicable fees, and other pertinent recommendations.

*In particular, the working group recommends eliminating the inclusion of social security numbers and financial account numbers in publicly filed documents with the magisterial district courts.* Cases of the magisterial district courts are initiated via forms designed by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. It is the recommendation of the working group that the fields for social security numbers and financial account numbers should be removed entirely from those forms. If sound reasons exist for collection of this information by the courts, then alternatively the working group recommends either the truncation of these numbers to the last four digits on the forms, or adding a "public inspection copy" page to the forms that would not display these numbers. In recognition however that sometimes such information is integral to a case, the working group recommends that litigants or their attorneys be required to place this sensitive information on a separate confidential form filed with the court that would be inaccessible to the public. For more information, please review Section 7.00 of the proposed policy and accompanying commentary.

Balancing the public's right of access to official records with an individual's privacy interests is an important public policy issue. This proposed policy is one more step in the Unified Judicial System's continual effort to achieve that balance.

The Explanatory Report highlights the working group's considerations in formulating this proposed policy. I request that interested persons submit suggestions, comments, or objections concerning this proposal to the working group through

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**no later than May 28, 2008.**

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COURT ADMINISTRATOR OF  
PENNSYLVANIA