

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Akron Municipal Court

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AKRON MUNICIPAL COURT CHOSEN AS AN ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PILOT COURT

Akron, Ohio, April 9, 2021 – The Akron Municipal Court was selected by the Supreme Court of Ohio to be an Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Pilot Court. The Akron Municipal Court is one of 17 courts chosen statewide. As part of the pilot program the Court’s Small Claims and Eviction Division will be piloting ODR software provided by the Supreme Court of Ohio through Matterhorn, a software vendor specializing in various court software platforms. The Akron Municipal Court received an acceptance notification for this opportunity in December 2020.

ODR is an online, court-monitored messaging and mediation program. The purpose is to resolve the case before it goes further through the legal system and, if a case is already filed, prior to it being heard by a Judge or Magistrate.

The Akron Municipal Court sees approximately 44,000 cases per year. About 25% of these cases, or 11,000, are filed annually in the Civil Division.

Mediation is a key component of resolving cases without help of a Judge or Magistrate. The Akron Municipal Court requires remote mediation for all small claims cases prior to trial. The addition of ODR for evictions is a new addition to the Mediation Program already in place at the Akron Municipal Court. The new ODR platform will allow parties to negotiate prior to the filing of a court case without a mediator, or after the filing of a court case and can involve a volunteer mediator if the parties feel they need their assistance.

“Mediation and online dispute resolution is extremely beneficial. With proper planning prior to online dispute resolution, the result is generally a positive outcome.” said Magistrate Angela Hardway who serves as Mediation Supervisor for the Akron Municipal Court. “Parties tend to agree that dispute resolution is more useful when everyone is readily prepared with a plan. Being proactive by thinking through solutions can save all involved time and money while eliminating stress.”

Flexibility is a large benefit to ODR because messages can be typed and posted during each party’s free time. As interested parties begin to utilize these tools and have success with communication, fewer individuals will need to request time away from work or arrange for childcare due to a mandatory court hearing.

Additionally, all mediators selected by the Akron Municipal Court meet the training requirements of the Ohio Supreme Court for general and eviction mediation, so should a mediator be needed, they are equipped with the knowledge needed to facilitate meaningful negotiations.

The ODR software for Akron is slated to launch in May 2021 and will be made available for those involved in a case assigned to the Small Claims and Evictions courtroom. Small Claims ODR/mediation will remain mandatory for all parties. Eviction ODR/mediation will be offered to the parties involved in the eviction process on a case-by-case basis.

The internal project leadership team includes Mediation Supervisor Magistrate Angela Hardway, Magistrate Jennifer D. Towell, Magistrate Thomas D. Bown, Magistrate Kani Hightower, Project Manager RaMona Benson, Service Bailiff Kenyona Matthews and Law Clerk for Judge Ron Cable Troy Nance.

To learn more about utilizing this opportunity, please call the Small Claims and Evictions courtroom at (330) 375-2285 or email smallclaims@akronohio.gov.

The Akron Municipal Court serves the cities of Akron and Fairlawn; the townships of Bath, Richfield and Springfield; the Villages of Lakemore and Richfield; and that part of Mogadore in Summit County, Ohio. For more information about Akron Municipal Court services and programs, please visit: <https://www.akronmunicipalcourt.org>

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