

Welcome to the Courthouse



**TWENTY-FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT: Kankakee County
First Edition, 2017**

In the Courthouse

When you first enter the courthouse, you'll walk through a security line. Phones, laptops, mobile devices, cameras, and weapons **are not allowed** in the courthouse – be sure to leave these in your car.

You can find your courtroom by looking at the courthouse directory, which is hanging on the wall by the first-floor elevator. If you want to check the time of your hearing, look for the judges' **docket** (schedule of cases), which is posted daily on a bulletin board in the first floor lobby.

Courthouse staff members are a good source of information. You may see bailiffs (blue shirts), deputies (brown shirts), and clerks walking through the building. A JusticeCorps volunteer is also often seated at a desk in the main lobby.

The Circuit Clerk is on the second floor in Room 209. This is where you take forms to be filed. Blank forms are available to the public from the form cabinets inside the clerk's office.

Courtrooms are open to the public. You may observe any courtroom, with the exception of juvenile court and some criminal cases. You are usually permitted to enter even if the judge is already on the bench, although you must remain quiet. Take a seat in the visitors' benches. In some courtrooms, a bailiff or the judge's clerk may direct you to a particular seat.

In the Courtroom

How Are Things Scheduled?

When a case is brought before a judge for any reason, it's called a **hearing**. Some hearings are very short. For example, **status dates**, where the parties discuss where the case stands at the moment, and **settings**, where the parties schedule the next court date, can take no more than a few minutes. Short hearings happen in the morning in all courtrooms. Longer hearings, such as **trials**, are typically set in the afternoon. You can check any judge's schedule by looking at the **dockets**, or daily schedules, which are posted on a bulletin board in the lobby for public viewing.

Who Will Be In The Courtroom?

You will see the **judge**, his or her **clerk**, and maybe a **bailiff** or **sheriff's deputies**. The judge sits at the bench and the clerk sits next to the judge. Bailiffs usually sit or stand near the door. Deputies normally provide security at criminal hearings.

You'll also see lawyers and their clients, self-represented litigants, and visitors. Lawyers and their clients sit at **counsel's table**, near the judge's bench, when their case is called. People who are waiting for their case to be called sit in the wooden visitors' benches at the back of the courtroom.

Tips For Your Court Date

Remember, courtroom behavior is formal, not casual.

Wear clean, mended clothes to the courthouse. Head coverings and sunglasses must be removed, with the exception of some religious attire.

Call a judge "**Judge [their last name]**" outside the courtroom.
Call a judge **Your Honor** when you are addressing them in the courtroom.

Speak clearly and respectfully. Speak to the judge, not to the opposing side.

Only one person may speak at a time. Proceedings are recorded, so it is important that the recording is clear in order to be accurate.

The person who brought the matter to court is the person who goes first. Each side will get a chance to speak. Court rules say that the **moving party** gets the chance to speak *first* on that day.

Have patience. Sometimes the court cannot get to all the scheduled issues in one hearing. The judge will set another hearing date before you leave court.

Get there early. Give yourself time to find a spot to park, get through the courthouse security line, and find your courtroom.

Enter the courtroom quietly and find a seat on the wooden visitors' benches. Remember, you are welcome to observe a hearing at the courthouse before your court date.

If you are unsure whether you are in the right place, ask the judge's clerk. Before the judge enters the courtroom, the clerk will be happy to direct you if you have questions.

When the judge enters the courtroom from his or her chambers, stand up. The clerk or bailiff may say "All rise," which is your cue to stand. You may sit when you hear the judge say "Be seated," or after the judge sits.

Be aware that several litigants might share the same hearing time. For example, multiple short hearings are often set at the same time in one courtroom to ensure that everyone shows up on time. Lawyers may have several hearings in different courtrooms at the same time. Because they are so busy, the lawyers will likely go first.

Listen for your case number. The judge will **call** case numbers from his or her docket sheet. When you hear your number, you may stand up and approach the bench.

If you don't hear your case number... The judge will usually ask if anyone is present who has not yet been called. If the judge does not, you can announce yourself. First, wait for an appropriate pause. Stand up and ask "**Permission to approach the bench?**" Wait until the judge agrees. Then you can tell the judge why you are there.

If you don't understand what the judge or lawyer said... Ask for clarification. You have the right to understand what is being discussed in your case.

Kankakee County Resources for Self-Represented Litigants

Kankakee Courthouse

450 East Court Street
Kankakee, IL 60901
Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Phone: (815) 937-2908
<http://www.co.kankakee.il.us/circuitclerk.html>

Kankakee Courthouse Online Forms

http://www.k3county.net/circuitclerk_files.html

Prairie State Legal Services

Free legal services to low-income qualifying citizens.
191 South Chicago Avenue
Kankakee, IL 60901
Phone: (815) 935-2750 and (800) 346-2864
<https://pslegal.org>

Child Support Enforcement

Illinois Department of Health and Family Services: 1-800-447-4278
Online Application: <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/csassist/Pages/csapplVD.aspx>

Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO)

Legal information and legal forms for Illinois residents.
English: <https://www.illinoislegalaid.org>
Español: <https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/es>

Kankakee County Bar Association (KCBA)

The Bar Association is an association of Kankakee County lawyers. If you need to find a local lawyer, you can contact KCBA online at:
<http://www.kankakeecountybarassociation.org>

Kankakee County Sheriff's Office

3000 South Justice Way
Kankakee, IL 60901
Phone: (815) 802-7100
<http://kankakeecountysheriff.com>

Kankakee Public Library

Internet access and law resources.
201 East Merchant Street
Kankakee, IL 60901
Phone: (815) 939-4564