

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102-3688

Report

TO: Members of the Judicial Council

FROM: Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee
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Small Claims and Limited Cases Subcommittee
Hon. Thomas L. Surh, Chair
Cara Vonk, Subcommittee Counsel, 415-865-7669, cara.vonk@jud.ca.gov

DATE: April 11, 2007

SUBJECT: Miscellaneous Technical Corrections to Small Claims and Fee Waiver
Forms (revise forms SC-101, SC-104C, SC-120, SC-130, SC-150, and
FW-001) (Action Required)

Issue Statement

There are some technical errors in the existing forms used for small claims cases and to request fee waivers. These result from statutory requirements not yet reflected in the forms and from inadvertent omissions or typographical errors that should be corrected.

Recommendation

The Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective July 1, 2007:

1. Revise *Attorney Fee Dispute (After Arbitration)* (form SC-101), to delete two references on the form stating that the claimant can sue about a disagreement for \$7,500 or less, instead of the correct amount of \$5,000 or less, "if you are a natural person" and a footnote on page 2 that defines natural person, because the increased jurisdictional limit for a claim involving an attorney fee dispute was not included in Code of Civil Procedure section 116.220(a)(4) cleanup legislation (Sen. Bill 2618 [Berg]; Stats. 2006, ch. 167);
2. Revise *How to Serve a Business or Public Entity (Small Claims)* (form SC-104C), to add (a) under "Landlord," the instruction that the property manager may be served,

which is authorized under Civil Code section 1962, (b) next to “check that you have the *exact* names of the owner and business,” an instruction to check with the County Tax Assessor’s Office, which is the entity that maintains fictitious business name statements in at least one county; and (c) to the list of people to be served under “Corporation, Association,” “treasurer, controller, chief financial officer,” all corporate officers who have been added as designated agents for service of summons under a recent amendment to Code of Civil Procedure section 416.10(b);

3. Revise *Defendant’s Claim and ORDER to Go to Small Claims Court* (form SC-120), to correct the third bullet under “Instructions for the person suing” on page 1 to indicate that each Plaintiff (not Defendant) must be given a court-stamped copy of the claim, which consists of three (not five) pages, and update the “Requests for Accommodations” notice;
4. Revise *Notice of Entry of Judgment* (form SC-130), on page 2 (item 1d), to change a reference from the old form number for the *Civil Subpoena Duces Tecum* to the new form number of “(form SUBP-002)”;
5. Revise *Information for the Small Claims Plaintiff* (form SC-150), to amend the page 1 footnote on various guarantors’ monetary jurisdictional limits by excepting the Registrar of the Contractors State License Board, which is now subject to the \$5,000 or \$7,500 jurisdictional limit for natural persons under legislation that amended Code of Civil Procedure section 116.220(c)(1) (Assem. Bill 2455 [Nakanishi]; Stats. 2006, ch. 150); and
6. Revise *Application for Waiver of Court Fees and Costs* (form FW-001), to correct several typographical errors, i.e., under items 3a and 3b: “employees” should read “employer’s;” and under item 5 “area” should read “are a.”

The text of the revised forms is attached at pages 4–16.

Rationale for Recommendation

These changes are technical in nature and necessary to comply with statutory language, correct information, and correct typographical errors. A brief discussion of several of the revisions is provided below.

Attorney Fee Dispute (After Arbitration) (form SC-101)

The attorney-client fee dispute form was amended effective January 1, 2007, to show the increased jurisdictional limit for a claim by a “natural person” from \$5,000 to \$7,500 in anticipation of an amendment to Code of Civil Procedure section 116.220(a)(4) in cleanup legislation (Sen. Bill 2618 [Berg]; Stats. 2006, ch. 167). However, this provision was not included in the bill before the legislation was enacted due to concerns that the increased limit might not be beneficial to a consumer who is involved in a fee dispute with an

attorney. The language referring to the increased jurisdictional limit now has been eliminated.

How to Serve a Business or Public Entity (Small Claims) (form SC-104C)

The instruction under “Landlord” has been revised to read as follows: “The property owner or manager (~~If you can’t find the owner, r~~Read Civil Code sections 1962–1962.7 or talk to the Small Claims Advisor to see if you can serve the manager.)” Civil Code section 1962 authorizes a property manager to be served with process.

To check on the exact name of the owner or business, the form directs the claimant to the County Clerk–Recorder’s Office to ask to see the fictitious business name statement. A small claims advisor and member of the Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee noted that in his county, the fictitious business name statements are maintained by the county tax assessor’s office. Accordingly, this instruction is revised to read “County Clerk–Recorder’s or County Tax Assessor’s Office.”

Recently amended Code of Civil Procedure section 416.10(b) now allows a summons to be served on additional corporate officers such as the treasurer, controller, and chief financial officer of the corporation. These individuals have been added to the instructions under “Corporation, Association.”

Information for the Small Claims Plaintiff (form SC-150)

The jurisdictional limit for filing a claim against the Registrar of the Contractors State License Board to collect on a contractor’s bond was increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000 and \$7,500 for a claim by a natural person under an amendment to Code of Civil Procedure section 116.220(c) (Assem. Bill 2455 [Nakanishi], Stats. 2006, ch. 150). The instructional footnote at the bottom of page 1 on form SC-150 regarding claims against guarantors is, therefore, revised to except the Contractors State License Board from the other guarantor jurisdictional limits. Amended Code of Civil Procedure section 116.220 is attached at pages 17–18 for reference.

Alternative Actions Considered

No alternatives exist other than continuing to use incorrect or incomplete forms.

Comments From Interested Parties

These proposals were not circulated for comment because they are technical and noncontroversial.

Implementation Requirements and Costs

Implementation of the revised forms will incur standard reproduction costs.

Attachments

Case Number: _____

✓ This form is attached to Form SC-100, item 7. It tells the court that you are suing about a disagreement for \$5,000 or less in attorney fees and that you have tried to solve the disagreement through arbitration. Read page 2 of this form before you fill out this form. It explains your rights and some small claims terms.

1 How much money is in dispute? \$ _____ 2 You are (check one): Attorney Client

3 What did the arbitrator decide? (Check one):
a. The attorney client has to pay the other party this amount: \$ _____
b. Neither party has to pay the other party anything.

4 Write the date your Notice of Award was mailed here: _____ (Look at the bottom of the Notice.)

5 Why are you filing in small claims court now? (Check what you are asking the judge to do):
a. I want the court to confirm the award.
b. I want the court to correct the award because (check only one and explain below):
1. It contains an error in calculation or a mistake in describing someone or something in the award.
2. The arbitrator considered legal issues not allowed in this kind of hearing and the award can be corrected so it is fair.
3. It doesn't follow the rules for proper wording, information, or signature. (State Bar Rule 37.2 et seq.)

Explain: _____

c. I want the court to vacate (cancel) the award because (check only one and explain below):
1. It was obtained by fraud, corruption, or other unfair means.
2. The arbitrator was corrupt.
3. The arbitrator did something wrong that substantially hurt my case.
4. The arbitrator considered legal issues not allowed in this kind of hearing and the award cannot be corrected so it is fair.
5. The arbitrator unfairly refused to postpone my case or refused to consider important evidence that could help settle the dispute or conducted the hearing in another way that is not allowed.
6. The arbitrator knew of reasons why he or she could have been disqualified but did not disclose this information or did not disqualify himself or herself after I asked the arbitrator to do so at the proper time.

Explain: _____

Check here if you are asking for a new arbitration hearing.
d. I want a trial in small claims court to decide the fee dispute. (You can check this option only if you did not agree in writing to a binding award and you file this form within 30 days after the Notice of the Award.)

6 Did you (or your attorney) go to the arbitration hearing? Yes No (If no, explain below):

7 Attach a copy of the Arbitration Agreement and the Notice of Award (the arbitrator's decision).
If you do not attach them, explain why here: _____

Date: _____
Type or print your name

Sign your name

Your name: _____

What is arbitration?

Arbitration is when a neutral person (an arbitrator) hears evidence from each side and then makes a decision (award) in your case. It is less formal than a trial in court.

Do I *have* to use arbitration for this dispute?

In most cases, yes. The only exceptions are:

- Parties who did not sign an agreement to arbitrate fee disputes *and*
- Clients who do not want to use arbitration. The attorney *must* use arbitration if the client asks for it.

What is *nonbinding* arbitration?

Nonbinding arbitration allows you *or* the other side to ask for a trial if either of you does not like the arbitrator's decision. You have 30 days after the notice is mailed to ask for a trial.

What is *binding* arbitration?

Binding arbitration means you and the other side gave up your right to a trial and must accept the arbitrator's decision. Your arbitration is binding if:

- Both sides agreed to binding arbitration in writing (after they disagreed about fees or costs) *or*
- 30 days or more have gone by since the nonbinding decision was mailed.

What if I agree with the award?

If your award is *nonbinding* and the other party does not file papers asking for a trial, the award becomes binding in 30 days.

If the award is *binding* and it says the other party owes you money, send a letter asking to be paid within a reasonable time. If you don't get paid, ask the court to "confirm" the award. This allows you to ask the court to order payment from the other party's paycheck, bank accounts or property. You must do this within 4 years after the notice of award. (See page 1, item 5a.)

What if I am not happy with the award?

You can ask the court to **correct** the award if it contains an obvious mistake in calculating a number or describing a person, thing, or property. (See page 1, item 5b.)

You can ask the court to **vacate (cancel)** the award if certain kinds of misconduct or mistakes happened in the arbitration. (See page 1, item 5c.)

You can reject the award and **ask for a trial** if you and the other party did not agree in writing to binding arbitration. (See page 1, item 5d.)

How long do I have to ask for a trial?

You have up to 30 days after the date the Notice of Award was mailed to you. Look for the date on the bottom of the notice. If you do not ask for a trial within 30 days, the award will become binding.

How long do I have to ask the court to vacate or correct the award?

In most cases you have up to 100 days after the date the Notice of Award was mailed to you. But if the other side asks the court to confirm, correct, or vacate the award, you must ask the court to correct or vacate the award before the court's deadline to answer the other side's request. Your Small Claims Advisor can give you more information on court deadlines.

Which court do I use for a trial or to confirm, correct, or vacate the award?

If a lawsuit has already been filed about the fee disagreement, file your papers in the same court and use same case number as in that lawsuit. (Before filing, you must serve all parties named in the claim.)

If no lawsuit has been filed about the fee disagreement, file in the court of the county where the arbitration was held and ask for a trial or ask the court to confirm, correct, or vacate the award.

- If the amount in disagreement is \$5,000 or less, file in small claims court. Use Forms SC-100 and SC-101.
- If the amount in disagreement is more than \$5,000, file in superior court. See Form ADR-105.

What if an attorney doesn't pay the award?

If an attorney doesn't pay the award, the State Bar can help you. If you don't receive the award in 100 days after receiving the Notice of the Award, or if the award becomes a final judgment, contact the State Bar at:

Mandatory Fee Arbitration
180 Howard Street, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-1639
415-538-2020

More Information

California has special laws for arbitration of disputes over attorney fees. For more information, see:

- State Bar of California Web site: www.calbar.org
- Form ADR-105, *Information Regarding Rights After Attorney-Client Fee Arbitration*
- Cal. Business & Professions Code, §§ 6200–6206

SC-104C How to Serve a Business or Public Entity (Small Claims)

You must serve the *right* person and write the *exact* name of the business and the person to be served. Use this form to make sure you serve correctly, and follow the instructions on *Proof of Service*, Form SC-104.

Business Type:	Sole Proprietorship (Only 1 owner)	Partnership	Landlord	Corporation, Association	Limited Liability Company (LLC), Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), Limited Partnership (LP)	Unknown Business Type
Serve:	The owner	If you are suing a partnership , serve one of the partners. If you are suing a partnership and the partners, serve each partner.	The property owner or manager <i>(Read Civil Code sections 1962–1962.7.)</i>	Agent for service listed with Secretary of State or any corporate officer (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer), chief executive officer (CEO), controller, chief financial officer, or general manager	Agent for service listed with Secretary of State To serve a limited partnership, you can also serve the general partner.	Someone who seems to be in charge of the business during normal business hours
Write on your Proof of Service form:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business name Owner's name and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership name Name of partner, general manager, or agent for service and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business name (if there is one) Owner's name and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporation name Name of corporate officer or agent for service and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company or partnership name Name of agent or partner for service and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business name, form unknown Owner's name and job title <i>(if you know it)</i>
Check that you have the exact names of the owner and business with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Clerk–Recorder's or County Tax Assessor's Office (Ask to see the fictitious business name statement.) Your county's Web site may have this information. Check: www.csac.counties.org. City Clerk's Office (Ask to see the business license.) Your city's Web site may have this information. 		County Tax Collector	Search under Corporation, LP and LLC at the California Secretary of State Web site: www.ss.ca.gov/business Or call: 1-916-657-5448 OR County Clerk–Recorder's Office: (Ask to see the fictitious business name statement.) Your county's Web site may have this information. OR City Clerk's Office: (Ask to see the business license.) Your city's Web site may have this information.		Try the other resources listed on this page to see if they know more about the business's organization type, like corporation or sole proprietorship.



Need help?

For free help, contact your county's Small Claims Advisor:

[\[space for local info here\]](#)

Or, go to "County-Specific Court Information" at: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/smallclaims



SC-104C

How to Serve a Business or Public Entity (Small Claims)

You must serve the *right* person and write the *exact* name of the public agency and the person to be served. Use this form to make sure you serve correctly, and follow the instructions on *Proof of Service*, Form SC-104.

	City, County, or Public Entity	State of California, State Agency	Federal Agency
Serve:	City or county clerk, chief officer or director of public agency, or agent authorized to accept service	Use this general address for service: Office of the Attorney General 1300 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814 <i>Exception:</i> if your claim involves California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), serve it at: California Department of Transportation 1120 N Street Sacramento, CA 95814	<i>You cannot sue a federal agency in small claims court.</i>
	Important! <i>Before you sue, you must first file a claim with the public entity. Contact it and ask for the claim procedures.</i>	<i>Note:</i> <i>Before you sue, you must first file a claim with the state or the state agency. To file a claim, see:</i> www.boc.ca.gov/govclms.htm <i>Or call: 1-800-955-0045</i>	
Write on your Proof of Service form:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of city, county, or public entity Name of city clerk, county clerk, chief officer, or agent for service and job title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of the agency you are suing Name of agent for service 	
Check that you have the exact names of the agency and agent for service with:	<p>Call the city or county clerk. See the government pages of your phone book.</p> <p>Or search under the California Roster at the California Secretary of State Web site: www.ss.ca.gov/executive</p>	<p>Call the agency to confirm the name and address for service. Use the State Directory: 1-800-807-6755</p> <p>Or search: www.cold.ca.gov under "agency information"</p>	



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[\[space for local info here\]](#)

Or, go to "County-Specific Court Information" at: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/smallclaims

Clerk stamps date here when form is filed.

Notice to the person being sued:

- You are being sued by the person you are suing.
- You must go to court on the trial date listed below. If you do not go to court, you may lose the case.
- If you lose, the court can order that your wages, money, or property be taken to pay this claim.
- Bring witnesses, receipts, and any evidence you need to prove your case.
- Read this form and all pages attached, to understand the claim against you and to protect your rights.

Aviso al demandado:

- La persona que ha demandado lo está demandando a usted.
- Tiene que presentarse a la corte en la fecha de su juicio indicada a continuación. Si no se presenta, puede perder el caso.
- Si pierde el caso la corte puede ordenar que le quiten de su sueldo, dinero u otros bienes para pagar este reclamo.
- Lleve testigos, recibos y cualquier otra prueba que necesite para probar su caso.
- Lea este formulario y todas las páginas adjuntas, para entender la demanda en su contra y para proteger sus derechos.

Fill in court name and street address:

Superior Court of California, County of

Fill in case number and case name:

Case Number:

Case Name:

Order to Go to Court

The people in ① and ② must go to court: (Clerk fills out section below.)

Trial Date	Date	Time	Department	Name and address of court if different from above
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Date: _____ Clerk, by _____, Deputy

Instructions for the person suing:

- Before you fill out this form, read Form SC-150, *Information for the Plaintiff (Small Claims)*, to know your rights. Get SC-150 at any courthouse or county law library, or go to: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms
- Fill out pages 2 and 3 of this form. Then make copies of **all** pages of this form. (Make 1 copy for each party named in this case and an extra copy for yourself.) Take or mail the original and these copies to the court clerk's office and pay the filing fee. The clerk will write the date of your trial in the box above.
- You must have someone at least 18—not you or anyone else listed in this case—give each Plaintiff a court-stamped copy of all 3 pages of this form and any pages this form tells you to attach. There are special rules for “serving,” or delivering, this form to public entities, associations, and some businesses. See Forms SC-104, SC-104B, and SC-104C.
- **Go to court on your trial date listed above.** Bring witnesses, receipts, and any evidence you need to prove your case.



Case Number:

Defendant (list names): _____

1 The Plaintiff (the person, business, or public entity that sued first) is:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

If more than one Plaintiff, list next Plaintiff here:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Check here if more than 2 Plaintiffs and attach Form SC-120A.

Check here if any Plaintiff is on active military duty and write his or her name here: _____

2 The Defendant (the person, business, or public entity suing now) is:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

If more than one Defendant, list next Defendant here:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Street address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing address (if different): _____
Street City State Zip

Check here if more than 2 Defendants and attach Form SC-120A.

Check here if either Defendant listed above is doing business under a fictitious name. If so, attach Form SC-103.

3 The Defendant claims the Plaintiff owes \$ _____ . (Explain below):

a. Why does the Plaintiff owe the Defendant money? _____

b. When did this happen? (Date): _____

If no specific date, give the time period: Date started: _____ Through: _____

c. How did you calculate the money owed to you? (Do not include court costs or fees for service.) _____

Check here if you need more space. Attach one sheet of paper or Form MC-031 and write "SC-120, Item 3" at the top.



Case Number:

Defendant (list names): _____

4 You may ask the Plaintiff (in person, in writing, or by phone) to pay you before you sue. Have you done this? Yes No

5 Is your claim about an attorney-client fee dispute? Yes No
If yes, and if you have had arbitration, fill out Form SC-101, attach it to this form, and check here:

6 Are you suing a public entity? Yes No
If yes, you must file a written claim with the public entity first. A claim was filed on (date): _____
If the public entity denies your claim or does not answer within the time allowed by law, you can file this form.

7 Have you filed more than 12 other small claims within the last 12 months in California?
 Yes No If yes, the filing fee for this case will be higher.

8 I understand that by filing a claim in small claims court, I have no right to appeal this claim.

9 If I do not have enough money to pay for filing fees or service, I can ask the court to waive those fees.

10 I have not filed, and understand that I cannot file, more than two small claims cases for more than \$2,500 in California during this calendar year.

I declare, under penalty of perjury under California State law, that the information above and on any attachments to this form is true and correct.

Date: _____ Defendant types or prints name here Defendant signs here

Date: _____ Second Defendant types or prints name here Second Defendant signs here



Requests for Accommodations

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted, real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five days before the trial. Contact the clerk’s office or go to www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms for Request for Accommodations by Persons With Disabilities and Response (form MC-410). (Civil Code, § 54.8.)



Need help?

Your county’s Small Claims Advisor can help for free.

Or go to “County-Specific Court Information” at:
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/smallclaims

SMALL CLAIMS CASE NO.:

<p>NOTICE TO ALL PLAINTIFFS AND DEFENDANTS: Your small claims case has been decided. If you lost the case, and the court ordered you to pay money, your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court. Read the back of this sheet for important information about your rights.</p>	<p>AVISO A TODOS LOS DEMANDANTES Y DEMANDADOS: Su caso ha sido resuelto por la corte para reclarnos judiciales menores. Si la corte ha decidido en su contra y ha ordenado que usted pague dinero, le pueden quitar su salario, su dinero, y otras cosas de su propiedad, sin aviso adicional por parte de esta corte. Lea el reverso de este formulario para obtener informacion de importancia acerca de sus derechos.</p>
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PLAINTIFF/DEMANDANTE (Name, street address, and telephone number of each):

DEFENDANT/DEMANDADO *(Name, street address, and telephone number of each):

Telephone No.: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Telephone No.: _____

See attached sheet for additional plaintiffs and defendants.

NOTICE OF ENTRY OF JUDGMENT

Judgment was entered as checked below on (date):

- Defendant (name, if more than one):
shall pay plaintiff (name, if more than one):
\$ _____ principal and \$ _____ costs on plaintiffs claim.
- Defendant does not owe plaintiff any money on plaintiff's claim.
- Plaintiff (name, if more than one):
shall pay defendant (name, if more than one):
\$ _____ principal and \$ _____ costs on defendant's claim.
- Plaintiff does not owe defendant any money on defendants claim.
- Possession of the following property is awarded to plaintiff (describe property):
- Payments are to be made at the rate of: \$ _____ per (specify period): _____, beginning on (date): _____ and on the (specify day): _____ day of each month thereafter until paid in full. If any payment is missed, the entire balance may become due immediately.
- Dismissed in court with prejudice. without prejudice.
- Attorney-Client Fee Dispute (Attachment to Notice of Entry of Judgment) (form SC-132) is attached.
- Other (specify):
- This judgment results from a motor vehicle accident on a California highway and was caused by the judgment debtor's operation of a motor vehicle. If the judgment is not paid, the judgment creditor may apply to have the judgment debtor's drivers license suspended.
- Enforcement of the judgment is automatically postponed for 30 days or, if an appeal is filed, until the appeal is decided.
- This notice was personally delivered to (insert name and date):
- CLERK'S CERTIFICATE OF MAILING—I certify that I am not a party to this action. This Notice of Entry of Judgment was mailed first class, postage prepaid, in a sealed envelope to the parties at the addresses shown above. The mailing and this certification occurred at the place and on the date shown below.

Place of mailing: _____, California

Date of mailing: _____

Clerk, by _____, Deputy

The county provides small claims advisor services free of charge. Read the information sheet on the reverse.

INFORMATION AFTER JUDGMENT	INFORMACION DESPUES DEL FALLO DE LA CORTE
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Your small claims case has been decided. The **judgment** or decision of the court appears on the front of this sheet. The court may have ordered one party to pay money to the other party. The person (or business) who won the case and who can collect the money is called the **judgment creditor**. The person (or business) who lost the case and who owes the money is called the **judgment debtor**.

Enforcement of the judgment is postponed until the time for appeal ends or until the appeal is decided. This means that the judgment creditor cannot collect any money or take any action until this period is over. Generally, both parties may be represented by lawyers after judgment.

IF YOU LOST THE CASE . . .

1. If you lost the case on your own claim and the court did not award you any money, the court's decision on your claim is **FINAL**. You may not appeal your own claim.
2. If you lost the case and the court ordered you to pay money, your money and property may be taken to pay the claim unless you do one of the following things:
 - a. **PAY THE JUDGMENT**
The law requires you to pay the amount of the judgment. You may pay the judgment creditor directly, or pay the judgment to the court for an additional fee. You may also ask the court to order monthly payments you can afford. Ask the clerk for information about these procedures.
 - b. **APPEAL**
If you disagree with the court's decision, you may appeal the decision *on the other party's claim*. You may not appeal the decision on your own claim. However, if any party appeals, there will be a new trial on *all* the claims. If you appeared at the trial, you *must* begin your appeal by filing a form called a *Notice of Appeal* (form SC-140) and pay the required fees within 30 days after the date this *Notice of Entry of Judgment* was mailed or handed to you. Your appeal will be in the superior court. You will have a **new trial** and you must present your evidence again. You may be represented by a lawyer.
 - c. **VACATE OR CANCEL THE JUDGMENT**
If you did not go to the trial, you may ask the court to vacate or cancel the judgment. To make this request, you must file a *Motion to Vacate the Judgment* (form SC-135) and pay the required fee *within 30 days* after the date this *Notice of Entry of Judgment* was mailed. If your request is denied, you then have 10 days from the date the notice of denial was mailed to file an appeal. The period to file the *Motion to Vacate the Judgment is 180 days* if you were *not properly served* with the claim. The 180-day period begins on the date you found out or should have found out about the judgment against you.

IF YOU WON THE CASE . . .

1. If you were sued by the other party and you won the case, then the other party may not appeal the court's decision.
2. If you won the case and the court awarded you money, here are some steps you may take to collect your money or get possession of your property:
 - a. **COLLECTING FEES AND INTEREST**
Sometimes fees are charged for filing court papers or for serving the judgment debtor. These extra costs can become part of your original judgment. To claim these fees, ask the clerk for a *Memorandum of Costs*.

b. VOLUNTARY PAYMENT

Ask the judgment debtor to pay the money. If your claim was for possession of property, ask the judgment debtor to return the property to you. **THE COURT WILL NOT COLLECT THE MONEY OR ENFORCE THE JUDGMENT FOR YOU.**

c. STATEMENT OF ASSETS

If the judgment debtor does not pay the money, the law requires the debtor to fill out a form called the *Judgment Debtor's Statement of Assets* (form SC-133). This form will tell you what property the judgment debtor has that may be available to pay your claim. If the judgment debtor willfully fails to send you the completed form, you may file an *Application and Order to Produce Statement of Assets and to Appear for Examination* (form SC-134) and ask the court to give you your attorney's fees and expenses and other appropriate relief, after proper notice, under Code of Civil Procedure section 708.170.

d. ORDER OF EXAMINATION

You may also make the debtor come to court to answer questions about income and property. To do this, ask the clerk for an *Application and Order for Appearance and Examination (Enforcement of Judgment)* (form EJ-125) and pay the required fee. There is a fee if a law officer serves the order on the judgment debtor. You may also obtain the judgment debtors financial records. Ask the clerk for the *Small Claims Subpoena and Declaration* (form SC-107) or *Civil Subpoena Duces Tecum* (form SUBP-002).

e. WRIT OF EXECUTION

After you find out about the judgment debtor's property, you may ask the court for a *Writ of Execution* (form EJ-1 30) and pay the required fee. A writ of execution is a court paper that tells a law officer to take property of the judgment debtor to pay your claim. Here are some examples of the kinds of property the officer may be able to take: **wages, bank account, automobile, business property, or rental income.** For some kinds of property, you may need to file other forms. See the law officer for information.

f. ABSTRACT OF JUDGMENT

The judgment debtor may own land or a house or other buildings. You may want to put a lien on the property so that you will be paid if the property is sold. You can get a lien by filing an *Abstract of Judgment* (form EJ-001) with the county recorder in the county where the property is located. The recorder will charge a fee for the *Abstract of Judgment*

NOTICE TO THE PARTY WHO WON: As soon as you have been paid in full, you *must* fill out the form below and mail it to the court *immediately* or you may be fined. If an *Abstract of Judgment* has been recorded, you must use another form; see the clerk for the proper form.

SMALL CLAIMS CASE NO.:

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SATISFACTION OF JUDGMENT (*Do not use this form if an Abstract of Judgment has been recorded.*)

To the Clerk of the Court:

I am the judgment creditor assignee of record.
 I agree that the judgment in this action has been paid in full or otherwise satisfied.
 Date:

(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)

▶

(SIGNATURE)

INFORMATION FOR THE SMALL CLAIMS PLAINTIFF

This information sheet is written for the person who sues in the small claims court. It explains some of the rules of and some general information about the small claims court. It may also be helpful for the person who is sued.

WHAT IS SMALL CLAIMS COURT?

Small claims court is a special court where disputes are resolved quickly and inexpensively. The rules are simple and informal. The person who sues is the **plaintiff**. The person who is sued is the **defendant**. In small claims court, you may ask a lawyer for advice before you go to court, but you cannot have a lawyer in court. Your claim cannot be for more than \$5,000 or \$7,500 if you are a natural person (not a business or public entity) (*see below). If you have a claim for more than this amount, you may sue in the civil division of the trial court or you may sue in the small claims court and give up your right to the amount over \$5,000 or \$7,500 if you are a natural person. You cannot, however, file more than two cases in small claims court for more than \$2,500 each during a calendar year.

WHO CAN FILE A CLAIM?

1. You must be at least *18 years old* to file a claim. If you are not yet 18, tell the clerk. You may ask the court to appoint a **guardian ad litem**. This is a person who will act for you in the case. The guardian ad litem is usually a parent, a relative, or an adult friend.
 2. A person who sues in small claims court must first make a **demand** if possible. This means that you have asked the defendant to pay, and the defendant has refused. If your claim is for possession of property, you must ask the defendant to give you the property.
 3. Unless you fall within two technical exceptions, you must be the **original owner** of the claim. This means that if the claim is assigned, the buyer cannot sue in the small claims court.
- You must also appear at the small claims hearing yourself unless you filed the claim for a corporation or other entity that is not a natural person.**
4. If a corporation files a claim, an employee, officer, or director must act on its behalf. If the claim is filed on behalf of an association or other entity that is not a natural person, a regularly employed person of the entity must act on its behalf. A person who appears on behalf of a corporation or other entity must not be employed or associated solely for the purpose of representing the corporation or other entity in the small claims court. **You must file a declaration with the court to appear in any of these instances.** (See *Authorization to Appear on Behalf of Party, form SC-109.*)

WHERE CAN YOU FILE YOUR CLAIM?

You must sue in the right court and location. This rule is called **venue**. Check the court's local rules if there is more than one court location in the county handling small claims cases.

If you file your claim in the wrong court, the court will dismiss the claim unless all defendants personally appear at the hearing and agree that the claim may be heard.

The right location may be any of these:

1. Where the defendant lives or where the business involved is located;
2. Where the damage or accident happened;
3. Where the contract was signed or carried out;
4. If the defendant is a corporation, where the contract was broken;
5. For a retail installment account or sales contract or a motor vehicle finance sale:
 - a. Where the buyer lives;
 - b. Where the buyer lived when the contract was entered into;
 - c. Where the buyer signed the contract; or
 - d. Where the goods or vehicle are permanently kept.

SOME RULES ABOUT THE DEFENDANT (including government agencies)

1. You must sue using the defendant's *exact legal name*. If the defendant is a business or a corporation and you do not know the exact legal name, check with: the state or local licensing agency; the county clerk's office; or the Office of the Secretary of State, corporate status unit. Ask the clerk for help if you do not know how to find this information. If you do not use the defendant's exact legal name, the court may be able to correct the name on your claim at the hearing or after the judgment.
2. If you want to sue a government agency, you must first file a claim with the agency before you can file a lawsuit in court. Strict time limits apply. If you are in a Department of Corrections or Youth Authority facility, you must prove that the agency denied your claim. Please attach a copy of the denial to your claim.

HOW DOES THE DEFENDANT FIND OUT ABOUT THE CLAIM?

You must make sure the defendant finds out about your lawsuit. This has to be done according to the rules or your case may be dismissed or delayed. The correct way of telling the defendant about the lawsuit is called **service of process**. This means giving the defendant a copy of the claim. **YOU CANNOT DO THIS YOURSELF**. Here are four ways to serve the defendant:

1. **Service by a law officer** — You may ask the marshal or sheriff to serve the defendant. A fee will be charged.
2. **Process server** — You may ask anyone who is *not a party* in your case and who is at least *18 years old* to serve the defendant. The person is called a **process server** and must personally give a copy of your claim to the defendant. The person must also sign a proof of service form showing when the defendant was served. Registered process servers will do this for you for a fee. You may also ask a friend or relative to do it.
3. **Certified mail** — You may ask the clerk of the court to serve the defendant by certified mail. The clerk will charge a fee. You should check back with the court prior to the hearing to see if the receipt for certified mail was returned to the court. **Service by certified mail must be done by the clerk's office except in motor vehicle accident cases involving out-of-state defendants.**
4. **Substituted service** — This method lets you serve another person instead of the defendant. You must follow the procedures carefully. You may also wish to use the marshal or sheriff or a registered process server.

*Except for an action against the Registrar of the Contractors State License Board, the \$5,000 or \$7,500 limit does not apply, and a \$4,000 limit applies, if a "defendant guarantor . . . is required to respond based upon the default, actions, or omissions of another" (\$2,500 if the defendant guarantor does not charge a fee for the service).

4. **Substituted service** (*continued*)

A copy of your claim must be left

— at the defendant's business with the person in charge;

OR

— at the defendant's home with a competent person who is at least 18 years old. The person who receives the claim must be told about its contents. Another copy must be mailed, first class, postage prepaid, to the defendant at the address where the paper was left. The service is not complete until *10 days* after the copy is mailed.

No matter which method of service you choose, the defendant must be served by a certain date or the trial will be postponed. If the defendant lives in the county, service must be completed at least *15 days* before the trial date. This period is at least *20 days* if the defendant lives outside the county.

The person who serves the defendant must sign a court paper showing when the defendant was served. This paper is called a *Proof of Service* (form SC-104). It must be signed and returned to the court clerk as soon as the defendant has been served.

WHAT IF THE DEFENDANT ALSO HAS A CLAIM?

Sometimes the person who was sued (the **defendant**) will also have a claim against the person who filed the lawsuit (the **plaintiff**). This claim is called the *Defendant's Claim*. The defendant may file this claim in the same lawsuit. This helps to resolve all of the disagreements between the parties at the same time.

If the defendant decides to file the claim in the small claims court, the claim may not be for more than \$5,000 or \$7,500 if the defendant is a natural person (*see reverse). If the value of the claim is more than this amount, the defendant may either give up the amount over \$5,000 or \$7,500 and sue in the small claims court or file a motion to transfer the case to the appropriate court for the full value of the claim.

The defendant's claim must be served on the plaintiff at least *5 days* before the trial. If the defendant received the plaintiff's claim *10 days* or less before the trial, then the claim must be served at least *1 day* before the trial. Both claims will be heard by the court at the same time.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE TRIAL?

Be sure you are on time for the trial. The small claims trial is informal. You must bring with you all witnesses, books, receipts, and other papers or things to prove your case. You may ask the witnesses to come to court voluntarily. You may also ask the clerk of the court to issue a **subpoena**. A subpoena is a court order that *requires* the witness to go to trial. The witness has a right to charge a fee for going to the trial. If you do not have the records or papers to prove your case, you may also get a court order prior to the trial date requiring the papers to be brought to the trial. This order is called a *Small Claims Subpoena and Declaration* (form SC-107).

If you settle the case before the trial, you must file a **dismissal** form with the clerk.

The court's decision is usually mailed to you after the trial. It may also be hand delivered to you when the trial is over and after the judge has made a decision. The decision appears on a form called the *Notice of Entry of Judgment* (form SC-130).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER JUDGMENT?

The court may have ordered one party to pay money to the other party. The party who wins the case and collects the money is called the **judgment creditor**. The party who loses the case and owes the money is called the **judgment debtor**. Enforcement of the judgment is **postponed** until the time for appeal ends or until the appeal is decided. This means that the judgment creditor cannot collect any money or take any action until this period is over. Generally both parties may be represented by lawyers after judgment. More information about your rights after judgment is available on the back of the *Notice of Entry of Judgment* form. The clerk may also have this information on a separate sheet.

HOW TO GET HELP WITH YOUR CASE

1. **Lawyers** — Both parties may ask a lawyer about the case, but a lawyer may not represent either party in court at the small claims trial. Generally, after judgment and on appeal, both parties may be represented by a lawyer.
2. **Interpreters** — If you do not speak English, you may take a family member or friend to court with you. The court should keep a list of interpreters who will interpret for you. Some interpreters charge a reasonable or no fee. If an interpreter is not available, the court must postpone the hearing one time only so that you have time to get one.
3. **Waiver of fees** — The court charges fees for some of its procedures. Fees are also charged for serving the defendant with the claim. The court may excuse you from paying these fees if you cannot afford them. Ask the clerk for the *Information Sheet on Waiver of Court Fees and Costs* (form FW-001-INFO) to find out if you meet the requirements so that you do not have to pay the fees.
4. **Night and Saturday court** — If you cannot go to court during working hours, ask the clerk if the court has trials at **night** or on **Saturdays**.
5. **Parties who are in jail** — If you are in jail, the court may excuse you from going to the trial. Instead, you may ask another person who is not an attorney to go to the trial for you. You may mail written declarations to the court to support your case.
6. **Accommodations** — If you have a disability and need assistance, please ask the court immediately to help accommodate your needs. If you are hearing impaired and need assistance, please notify the court immediately.
7. **Forms** — You can get small claims forms and more information at the California Courts Self-Help Center Web site (www.courtinfo.ca.gov), your county law library, or at the courthouse nearest you.
8. **Small claims advisors** — The law requires each county to provide assistance in small claims cases free of charge. (*Small claims advisor information*):

Code of Civil Procedure

116.220. (a) The small claims court has jurisdiction in the following actions:

(1) Except as provided in subdivisions (c), (e), and (f), for recovery of money, if the amount of the demand does not exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

(2) Except as provided in subdivisions (c), (e), and (f), to enforce payment of delinquent unsecured personal property taxes in an amount not to exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000), if the legality of the tax is not contested by the defendant.

(3) To issue the writ of possession authorized by Sections 1861.5 and 1861.10 of the Civil Code if the amount of the demand does not exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

(4) To confirm, correct, or vacate a fee arbitration award not exceeding five thousand dollars (\$5,000) between an attorney and client that is binding or has become binding, or to conduct a hearing de novo between an attorney and client after nonbinding arbitration of a fee dispute involving no more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) in controversy, pursuant to Article 13 (commencing with Section 6200) of Chapter 4 of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code.

(b) In any action seeking relief authorized by subdivision (a), the court may grant equitable relief in the form of rescission, restitution, reformation, and specific performance, in lieu of, or in addition to, money damages. The court may issue a conditional judgment. The court shall retain jurisdiction until full payment and performance of any judgment or order.

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), the small claims court has jurisdiction over a defendant guarantor as follows:

(1) For any action brought by a natural person against the Registrar of the Contractors' State License Board as the defendant guarantor, the small claims jurisdictional limit stated in Section 116.221 shall apply.

(2) For any action against a defendant guarantor that does not charge a fee for its guarantor or surety services, if the amount of the demand does not exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500).

(3) For any action against a defendant guarantor that charges a fee for its guarantor or surety services or an action brought by an entity other than a natural person against the Registrar of the Contractors' State License Board as the defendant guarantor, if the amount of the demand does not exceed four thousand dollars (\$4,000).

(d) In any case in which the lack of jurisdiction is due solely to an excess in the amount of the demand, the excess may be waived, but any waiver is not operative until judgment.

(e) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), in any action filed by a plaintiff incarcerated in a Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation facility, the small claims court has jurisdiction over a defendant only if the plaintiff has alleged in the complaint that he or she has exhausted his or her administrative remedies against that department, including compliance with Sections 905.2 and 905.4 of the Government Code. The final administrative adjudication or determination of the plaintiff's administrative claim by the

department may be attached to the complaint at the time of filing in lieu of that allegation.

(f) In any action governed by subdivision (e), if the plaintiff fails to provide proof of compliance with the requirements of subdivision (e) at the time of trial, the judicial officer shall, at his or her discretion, either dismiss the action or continue the action to give the plaintiff an opportunity to provide that proof.

(g) For purposes of this section, "department" includes an employee of a department against whom a claim has been filed under this chapter arising out of his or her duties as an employee of that department.