

Background Regarding Changes to Juvenile Court Proceedings

Iowa courts began moving counties to a new electronic filing system in the mid-2010s. When juvenile cases were moved to the electronic filing system, two different practices developed for the filing of juvenile court social records (i.e., social investigation reports, guardian ad litem reports, and reports of physical and mental examinations of the child): some counties and judges required that confidential social records be filed as proposed exhibits and others required that they be filed using a specific document type in the electronic filing system. Because no agreement could be reached at the time concerning how social records should be filed, the two different practices have continued ever since.

Over the past few years, the two different practices have started causing problems for parties, attorneys, and the judicial branch. The most significant issues are:

- Proposed exhibits have a security level 2 and social records filed to the docket have a security level 3; consequently, social records filed as proposed exhibits are not adequately protected.
- Having two different practices creates confusion for filers who file in more than one county.
- Having social records filed in two different ways affects the uniformity and completeness of the record for appellate review.
- Filing social records as proposed exhibits results in juvenile case exhibits being exempted from exhibit maintenance orders, which affects the judicial branch's ability to conserve computer server space by cleaning up unoffered proposed exhibits.
- Filing social records as proposed exhibits results in cluttered judge exhibit screens in the judicial interface.

To create a uniform practice for the filing of social records in juvenile cases, the supreme court is amending the Chapter 16 Iowa Rules of Electronic Procedure to require that filers use a specific Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) document type when filing social records in juvenile court proceedings. As a result of this rule change, there is no longer a need to exempt juvenile court proceedings from the chapter 16 exhibit

maintenance order rule. Requiring exhibit maintenance orders in juvenile court proceedings will assist the judicial branch in conserving electronic resources as well as assist the appellate courts by providing cleaner records for review.