

SAMPLE ANSWER

(must be completed on 8-1/2" x 11" paper)

IN THE COUNTY/CIRCUIT COURT,
CIVIL DIVISION, IN AND FOR
_____ COUNTY, FLORIDA

CASE NO: _____
JUDGE: _____
DIV: _____

Plaintiff(s)
vs.

Defendant(s)

ANSWER

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Defendant

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

I hereby certify that a copy hereof has been furnished by hand-delivery/mail to Plaintiff/Plaintiff's attorney this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Defendant

About Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. (CLSMF)

The mission of CLSMF is to provide access to justice through high quality legal assistance to low-income persons.

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. provides free legal assistance to eligible low-income persons in civil matters (we do not provide legal assistance in criminal or traffic matters).

CLSMF offers free educational seminars and informational brochures regarding the areas of law we practice. Call your local office (listed on the back of this brochure) for further information.

This brochure is for general education only. It is not intended to be used to solve *individual problems*. If you have specific questions, see an attorney. CLSMF offices are listed on the back of this brochure.
Do not ignore your bills. The sooner you face these issues, the easier it will be to resolve them.



The Florida Bar Foundation, with *Interest on Trust Accounts* program funding, provides



Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. Offices:

BREVARD — (321) 636-3515
803 N. Fiske Blvd. Cocoa, FL 32922

CITRUS & SUMTER —
1300 Highway 41 North, Suite A
Inverness, FL 34450
(352) 726-8512 — CITRUS
(352) 568-0257 — SUMTER

FLAGLER & PUTNAM —
Flagler client toll-free number:
1-866-886-1799

216 S. 6th St., Palatka, FL 32177
(386) 328-8361

HERNANDO — (352) 796-7238
51 West Fort Dade Ave.
Brooksville, FL 34601

LAKE— (352) 343-0815
226 West Main St., Tavares, FL 32778

MARION— (352) 629-0105
222 SW Broadway St., Ocala, FL 34474

ORANGE — (407) 841-7777
122 E Colonial Dr., Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32801

OSCEOLA — (407) 847-0053
800 North Main St., Kissimmee, FL 34744

SEMINOLE — (407) 322-8983
315 Magnolia Ave., Sanford, FL 32771

VOLUSIA — (386) 255-6573
128 Orange Ave., Suite 100,
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
Client toll-free number: 1-888-379-4729

info@clsmf.org
http://www.clsmf.org



A brochure prepared by
Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc.

Filing Your Answer to a Complaint



WHY FILE AN ANSWER?

If you are served with a summons and complaint (or petition), this means someone has filed a lawsuit against you. A **summons** notifies you that you have been sued and informs you that you must respond to the lawsuit. A **complaint** sets forth the reason and basis for the suit. *If you do not want to lose your right to defend yourself and participate in the court proceedings, you must file an answer within the time frame stated in the summons.*

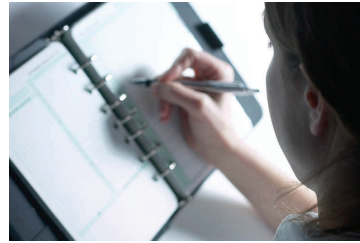
WHAT IS THE TIME FRAME TO RESPOND?

You have a limited time to respond. The summons will tell you exactly how many days.

A summons for eviction of a rental property gives you only five (5) working days to file your answer with the court. Count five days starting with the day *after* you are served the summons. Do not count Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays.



All other summonses will give you twenty (20) days to file your answer. Count twenty days starting with the day after you are served, and count every day, including Saturdays and Sundays.



WHAT IF I DO NOT RESPOND OR DO NOT MEET THE DEADLINE?

If you do not respond or meet the deadline, the person filing the lawsuit will win a judgment against you. This is called a default. There are some limited circumstances where a default can be challenged. One of them is if you were not properly notified of the lawsuit and did not have a chance to respond. Contact Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. *immediately* if you receive this kind of a default judgment or if you do not understand the response time frames.

WHAT DO I SAY IN MY ANSWER?

Read the complaint or petition to see why you are being sued and what the person wants the court to do. Then write a response. It is best to respond to each numbered paragraph of the complaint or petition. Every allegation in a complaint is usually given a number. You should number your answer the same way.

If you have other facts that you want the judge to know, add additional numbered paragraphs. Place your responses under the heading “Answer.” You may refer to the sample answer format in this brochure.

After you have written your responses, be sure to fill in the other blanks such as the names of the parties and the case number. If you are attaching any copies of important documents, write the names of these documents under the heading “Attachments” at the bottom of the page (above your signature).



BE SURE TO ATTACH THE COPIES OF THE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS (COPIES ONLY — NO ORIGINALS)

Finally, look at the very last paragraph of the answer and choose how you will give a copy to the party filing the lawsuit (either hand-deliver or mail), then sign and date the answer.

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Make at least two copies of your completed answer. The original, with any attachments, goes to the Clerk of the Court where the lawsuit was filed. Look at the top of the summons to see if it was filed in the County or Circuit Civil Court. Once your original is filed, the court will keep you advised of all hearings so that you can continue with your defense.

You must mail one copy (with any attachments) to the plaintiff or the plaintiff's attorney. Look at the name and address on the summons to see where to send the plaintiff's copy. Keep one copy in a safe place for your records.



Contact Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. if you have any questions or if you need assistance in preparing your defense.

DO NOT DELAY!