

Magisterial District Court Landlord/Tenant Dockets Now Available Online

[On behalf of Dornish Law Offices, PC](#) | Jan 13, 2013 | [All, Landlord-Tenant, Real Estate Practice](#)

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For years, I have been showing landlords how to search the Pennsylvania Unified Judicial System web portal for free and detailed information about potential tenants' criminal records, traffic citations and more. The one glaring absence in the online information has always been that landlord/tenant eviction proceedings and judgments from the Magisterial District Courts web docket sheets. Some records appeared briefly online during a testing phase a few years ago, but the records never came up after that until now.

On January 7th, 2013, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, AOPC for short, issued a news release that 4.1 MILLION landlord tenant records will now be available online for free with a few clicks. I've checked it out, and it appears that many years of old eviction records are now online. The system shows the L/T complaints filed for possession and money damages, and their disposition through the magisterial district courts. Unfortunately, following the cases which are appealed to the county Courts of Common Pleas is not a seamless search, since only Criminal, Miscellaneous and Summary Appeal cases are available through the AOPC web dockets for common pleas courts. Most counties have their own civil online dockets, so you can follow up. You just have to get to the information a different way, and in many courts pay fees. And Philadelphia County does not have Magisterial District Courts. Its Municipal Courts handle evictions, and their L/T records are not yet available on the AOPC web dockets. It is easy to get the online information for all Pennsylvania's Magisterial District Court L/T cases. To begin with, you should have the correct full name of the prospective tenant you are searching, and especially for those with common names, their last few addresses. For criminal searches, the tenant's date of birth is a great filter, but at least for now, tenant dates of birth are not collected when L/T cases are filed, so entering a date of birth won't help to filter L/T results.

At this point, you may want to be sitting in front of your computer, and follow each instruction. To begin my searches, I go to the Unified Judicial System web portal, at <http://ujportal.pacourts.us>. At the top of that page, there is a gold menu band with drop down menus. Pick the one labeled “Docket Sheets” and from the drop downs, check “Magisterial District Courts”. Once in that search page, change the search type from the default by “Docket Number” to “Participant Name”. For participant searches, the required criteria include first and last names. Date of birth is an optional additional criterion, and you must pick at least one limiting filter from selections below. Pick the “Docket Type” filter and select “Landlord Tenant” as the docket type.

Once all the right information is entered, click search. You will either get a message at the bottom of the page that no records are found, or a list of the cases found by docket number, court office and caption. For each case listed, you can click the icon to the left of the docket number, and several pages of information will appear. The pages can be printed, and you can return to the search screen and change the docket type. I usually search criminal, non-traffic and traffic dockets on prospective tenants, employees and contractors using the same website. Once you finish there, search the criminal dockets in the Common Pleas web docket sheets before you leave the web portal. Then search civil dockets on your own county court prothonotary’s or court records website. This search will drastically reduce your risk of renting to someone who has been evicted by prior Pennsylvania landlords.

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