

DCF Order #25

Guidance on Electronic Signatures on Child Welfare and Youth Justice Forms and Tools Available

Introduction

The department is committed to supporting the children and families in our communities, and to keeping our workforce and families safe and healthy. Child protection and youth justice is an essential community service for some of our most vulnerable residents and families who are struggling to safely care for their children. In general, there is various guidance and requirements for a physical in-person signature on the multitude of forms we use with our youth and families. Given the current COVID-19 pandemic it is necessary and prudent to balance the need to collect required signatures on required documents in person versus using electronic signatures. This guidance is effective until the end of the public health emergency, or until new guidance is released.

Form Guidance and Applicability

This guidance does not apply to forms requiring a signature that **are required to be filed with a court**. For these forms, local child welfare agencies must follow state statute and any applicable local circuit court rules regarding how the signature is obtained. See Wis. Stat. § 801.18.

For forms **that are not required to be filed with a court**, one of the available free tools DCF is aware of is listed below may be utilized in order to obtain an electronic signature from the signatory **unless otherwise directed or ordered by the court (please note that although some forms are not statutorily required to be filed with the court, some counties have a practice of doing so)**

If you are unsure about whether a form is required to be filed with a court, please consult with your local agency's legal representative.

Child welfare agencies are encouraged to reach out to their local courts for assistance prior to using alternative methods of signatures to ask if an alternative is acceptable or not.

The PDF form should only be used when it is sent directly to the signatory, to assure that it is the signature of the submitting person.

Available Tool

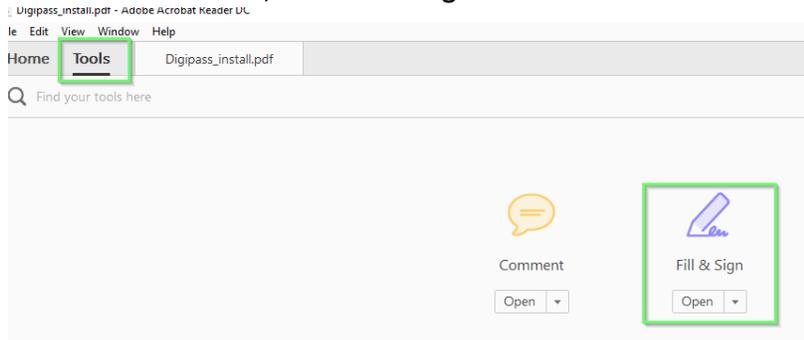
Adobe Acrobat Reader is free and is available for Windows, Mac, Android, and iPhone/iPad. We have attached a quick guide for agencies on how to use the electronic signature function, and it can create an actual signature via mouse or touchscreen on a phone/tablet. Please note you may want to consult with your IT department for other available tools.

Using Acrobat Reader to 'sign' documents

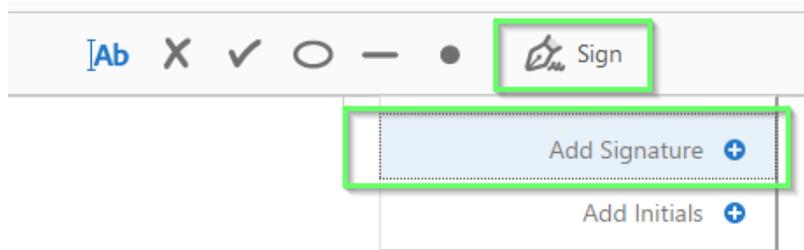
Acrobat Reader (the free version) has a feature that allows you to create a signature and use it to sign documents. This can be done with any PDF document.

Creating your Signature

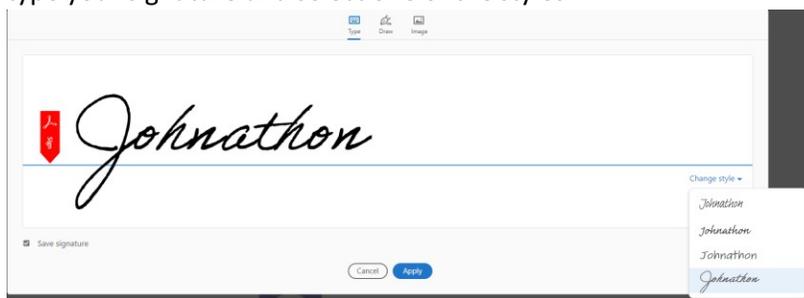
1. Open a PDF with Acrobat Reader. A file has to be open to configure your signature.
2. From the **Tools** Menu, select **Fill & Sign**



3. From the Fill & Sign toolbar, click Sign and then Add Signature



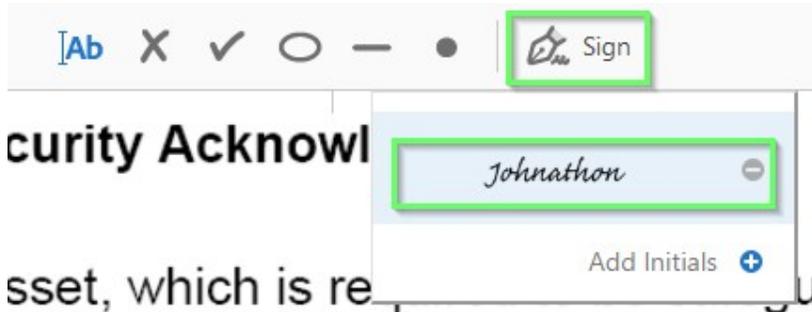
4. In the Add Signature window, you can create a signature three ways.
 - a. type your signature and select one of the styles



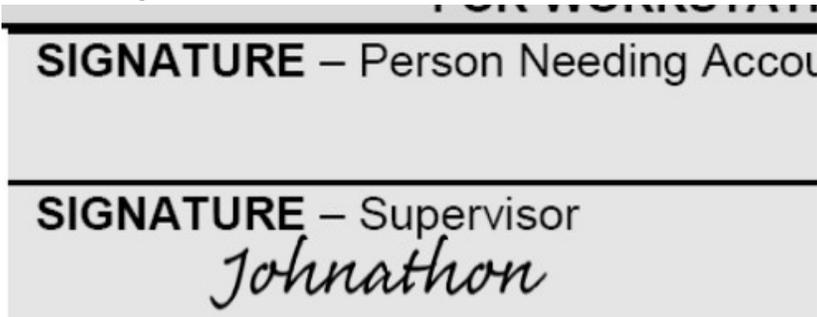
- b. Or, select the **Draw** option and 'write' your signature with your mouse or touchscreen.
 - c. Or, select the **Image** option to import a picture of your signature.
5. Once you have your signature as you like it, click **Apply**. You can now use this signature in PDF files.

Signing a Document with your signature.

1. Open the document that needs a signature.
2. From the **Tools** Menu, select **Fill & Sign**
3. Click **Sign**, and select your signature



4. Place the signature where needed on the PDF



5. Save the PDF. Your PDF now has a signature and you can send it to who needs it.

Making a Word Document or Protected PDF able to be signed.

If the document you need to sign is not a PDF, or is a protected PDF, you can use the Print function to print the document to a new PDF that you can sign.

1. Use the Print function to open the print settings.
2. Change the printer to Microsoft Print to PDF
3. A window will appear to save the new PDF. Name the file and click Save
4. Open the new PDF with Acrobat Reader.
5. Follow the steps for **Signing a Document with your Signature**