

## **Q & A from PACER Case Locator Application Programming Interface Town Hall December 7, 2020**

### **Accessing the New PACER Case Locator (PCL) Application Programming Interface (API)**

1. When will the new API be available to the public?

The API will be available to the public after confirmation that it is working as anticipated, based upon feedback from the beta testing process. We have tentatively planned the release for summer 2021.

2. When will the new API documentation be available?

The AO will initially release the API documentation to the beta testers. After beta testing, we will release it to the general public on the [Developer Resources](#) page of the PACER website.

3. How will authentication work when using automated processes to access the new PACER Case Locator API?

A PACER authentication API will be provided as part of the PCL API. The authentication API will accept your current PACER username/password combination and return a session token that must be included in the header of PCL API search requests. This will be detailed in the PCL API documentation.

4. Will there be restrictions on accessing the PACER Case Locator API, such as time of day or number of searches performed?

The AO will ask users to follow the same protocol as they do when accessing the current PCL with automated scripts, including accessing PACER after business hours. We will evaluate whether the use of the API takes sufficient load off of the system to allow us to revise this guidance in the future.

### **Testing the PACER Case Locator API**

5. What is the process for obtaining an account number for the PCL API QA environment?

Visit [qa-pacer.uscourts.gov](http://qa-pacer.uscourts.gov) to register. More information will be provided about the QA environment to PCL API beta testers.

6. What is the email address through which I can register to be a beta tester for the new API?

[PACER\\_Feedback@ao.uscourts.gov](mailto:PACER_Feedback@ao.uscourts.gov)

7. How will you select beta testers if more than 45 applicants register?

If more than 45 beta testers volunteer, we will assign each applicant a random number, and draw 15 unique applicants for each set of testing. There will be three sets of testing.

8. Is it possible to participate in the beta test without a static IP, such as from local development environments or cloud instances without static IPs?

The AO will open access to specific IPs for testing, and it would be more efficient if testers could use static IPs. We would need to develop a process for users to notify us when switching IPs.

9. Will bugs and added features be visible to non-testers?

In the QA environment, if there is a bug or an error, we expect public testers to identify and report it as part of their testing process. Users not selected for the beta test will not have access to the PCL API until it is released to the general public.

### **Features of the API**

10. Will the API functionality mirror the current PCL user interface?

API functionality will mirror the current user interface, but not the legacy PCL.

11. What data fields will be available in the API?

A list of data fields will be included in the API documentation, and are the same fields available now in the PCL.

12. How soon after a case is filed will it be available in the API?

The data in the API will be updated nightly as is done currently in the PCL.

13. Does the PCL API support submitting multiple names when searching?

At this time, the PCL API will have the same search capabilities as the current PCL.

14. Will the API allow for webhooks to listen for new docket activity?

This API is for functionality provided by the PACER Case Locator only. Since the docket activity occurs in CM/ECF and not in the PACER Case Locator, we are not able to include the ability to listen for new docket activity within the PCL API.

15. Will the API support additional data sets, for example, some courts have a Judgment Index?

At this time, the API supports only functionality currently provided in the PACER Case Locator.

16. Will this API be a suitable way to maintain a full replica of the PACER case dataset?

At this time, the API is only for data available in the PACER Case Locator.

### **Previous Versions of the PACER Case Locator**

17. Is the PACER Case Locator user interface going away? What's the difference between legacy PCL and the PCL user interface?

The AO maintains a legacy PCL, which was active until 2017. We released a new PCL in 2017 at [pcl.uscourts.gov](http://pcl.uscourts.gov) but maintain the legacy PCL for several automated users who still access it. Once the API is released to the general public, we will provide a retirement date three to four months before phasing out the legacy PCL to allow automated users time to switch to the API. The new (2017–present) PCL user interface is not going away.

18. How long after the API is released will the PCL Legacy site remain supported?

As noted above, the AO will maintain the legacy PCL for a period of three to four months after the release of the API. We will determine a more specific date to retire the legacy PCL in the future and give users appropriate notice once a date is set.

19. Can we obtain information about the current legacy site, including how to do a search programmatically and sample code?

We do not have sample code. Because we are planning to phase out the legacy PCL, we will not assist in any new automated access to that system.

## **Costs for API**

20. Is there a cost to use the PCL API, and if so, how is it calculated?

For now, the cost to use the PCL API will remain the same as the cost of using the user interface, and will be calculated in the same manner.

21. You mentioned pricing will be the same under the API. Does that mean \$0.10 per 54 results? Will each page of results require a separate request, or will there be an option to get more results in a single request and get billed for the entire amount as one transaction?

The PCL API provides two different types of search services. The first type returns and bills for one page of results at a time. The second type starts a batch search, and the user is charged for the entire result set once the results are retrieved.

## **Future Development**

22. Are there any plans to develop an API for CM/ECF data in the near or long term?

At this time, there are no plans to develop an API for CM/ECF, but that may change.

23. Currently some docket entries do not have a docket number but are blank. Searches on the web interfaces (when searching using docket # from to docket # to) will not return results for those searches. Will this be updated/changed on the API?

Docket entry is a CM/ECF functionality and not available within the PACER Case Locator. The PCL API will only provide functionality available in the PACER Case Locator.

24. Will additional search capabilities be added to the API in the future?

The AO is exploring additional search capabilities, but no timeline has been set.