



Case API Service

Technical Documentation

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1 Expected Knowledge

We assume that you know the following:

- One of these data formats:
 - XML (see [w3schools XML Tutorial](#) for more information)
 - JSON (see <http://json.org> for more information)
- At least one programming language (such as one of these):
 - Java
 - C#
 - PHP
 - Python
 - Ruby

How to construct HTTP GET requests with query strings.

2 Getting Started

Data Formats

You can start an inquiry at one resource URI: /case. You choose the data format by appending an extension.

- For XML the URL starts with /case.xml
- For JSON the URL starts with /case.json

Note: If extension is omitted (/case) it would default to XML.

3 More Technical Information

3.1 *Request reference*

3.1.1 *Overview*

The API is a REST style interface. Response content can be XML or JSON. We support API key based authentication over HTTPS.

3.1.2 *REST style interface*

The Web Service is a RESTful style interface. You define the "resources" like cases. The API is then essentially a browsable, searchable interface into collections of these resources. The advantage of this approach is that it's largely self-documenting. For the customer, that means we can easily offer the same data in multiple formats (e.g., XML, JSON) and they can go from browsing through it in a web browser to requesting it in XML or JSON. This greatly simplifies development.

3.1.3 *Requests*

Requests are submitted via HTTPS using the GET method. Operations will return multiple formats depending on what the customer requested. At the moment customers can request XML or JSON format with a MIME type extension (*.xml, *.json).

Returned collections for search requests are limited to a maximum of 200 results. Client applications should keep track of how many resource items are returned and make additional requests with the pageNumber parameter (refer Technical Documentation (Request Parameters).doc) to get more results. By default, the request will serve the first page (i.e., first 200 records fulfilling the criteria).

3.1.4 *Authentication*

The authentication uses an Authentication Key via the query string. This Authentication key is created by the user in the “Manage API Services” page after the user subscribes to the API service in the Clerks website. An API Key is mandatory to be able to use the API Services. The benefit of creating multiple keys is that user can distribute the keys among the developers without compromising the secure access to the API services.

3.1.5 *Encryption*

Requests must be submitted via TLS encrypted HTTP (a.k.a. HTTPS). This precludes the possibility of stream inspection or intermediate processing.

3.1.6 *Resources*

Since this a RESTful API, all data is represented by browsable "resources". Most customer inquiries will begin with the cases_filed resource which accepts several request parameters to narrow the set of resources according to the customer's interest. The URI for the cases_filed resource request is composed of the transport (HTTPS), host (api.browardclerk.org), "/cases_filed", and format extension (.xml or .json) followed by any query string parameters.

3.1.7 *Request Parameters*

Query string parameters are appended to a basic URI to specify the desired set of actors and/or cases the customer is interested in receiving. See the “Technical Documentation (Request Parameters).doc” Document.

3.1.8 *Responses*

Examples of URLs and the responses are available. See the “Technical Documentation (Request Parameters).doc” Document.

3.2 *Response reference*

Responses to API requests can be in JSON or XML. Most of the fields in a response contain information from the court. There are a few other kinds of fields.

Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) fields

In the API responses there can be Uniform Resource Identifier (URI). Any field with a name that starts with "uri_" points to a resource that is related to the resource. For example, a case resource will have URIs for charges, parties, events_and_documents, etc. related to that case.

Client applications can follow a URI by constructing a full URL request from it. The URL begins with <https://api.browardclerk.org/api>. Next is the text from the URI field. Finally, the desired format of the response (XML or JSON) is appended. For a URI field, "/case/15000333CF10A/charges", the full URL might be "https://api.browardclerk.org/case/15000333CF10A/charges.json".

Data freshness

Information from our "case management system" is frequently being updated throughout the day; a subsequent call with the same query could result in different information in the data response

4 API Methods

Search Methods

Search methods allow you to search for cases or case information that match certain criteria. For example, to find information about cases filed you can use parameters to filter the data.

Example URL's looks like this:

JSON Request

https://api.browardclerk.org/api/search_cases_files.json?court_type_code=TM&date_to_use=files&date=2014-04-23,2014-04-25&page_number=1&case_type_code=TI,TC&case_disposition_code=open&auth_key=<Authentication Key>

XML Request

https://api.browardclerk.org/api/search_cases_files.xml?court_type_code=TM&date_to_use=files&date=2014-04-23,2014-04-25&page_number=1&case_type_code=TI,TC&case_disposition_code=open&auth_key=<Authentication Key>

Case Detail Methods

Case Detail methods access specific information for a single case. Once you have the case number you can learn more about the case. In the results XML you will find several elements that begin with "uri_". These are much like links in a web site. Inside the **<uri_charges>** element is some text that will lead you to information about the charges filed against the defendant.

You need to construct a full URL from the text in the **<uri_charges>** element. The URL starts with <https://api.browardclerk.org/api>. The next part of the URL is the text you find in the **<uri_charges>** element, in this example, **/case/15000333CF10A/charges**. Finally, optionally, append the data format extension, **.xml or .json**.

The full URL's look like this:

XML:

https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/case.xml?auth_key=<Authentication Key>
https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/charges.xml?auth_key=<Authentication Key>

JSON:

https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/case.json?auth_key=<Authentication Key>
https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/charges.json?auth_key=<Authentication Key>

Omitted will return XML:

https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/case?auth_key=<Authentication Key>
https://api.browardclerk.org/api/case/15000333cf10a/charges?auth_key=<Authentication Key>

See “Technical Documentation (Request Parameters).doc” document for more information on all the methods offered.

5 Developing and Testing

The API available at <https://api.browardclerk.org> provides access to all the court information available through the clerk's website. Customers are charged for searches made through the API. A minimal charge is also charged for accessing URI's. After subscribing to the service you will need to purchase units so that you can code and test.

6 Authentication Keys

Customers who subscribe to the service must generate an Authentication Key in the “Manage Commercial Data Service” page. This Authentication Key is used in the API request header for HTTP POST requests or is included as a parameter for HTTP GET requests.

7 Third Party Resources

Resources for JSON using Java

- <http://code.google.com/p/json-simple/>

Resources for REST using Java

- <http://www.restlet.org>
- <http://jersey.java.net>
- <https://github.com/harikrishnan83/rapa>