



# IDFPR

## Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation

Division of Real Estate

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### Real Estate Virtual Offices F.A.Q.

#### General

- **What is a virtual office?**

An office from which real estate brokerage services are provided, without a dedicated office space or fixed physical location under the supervision of the designated managing broker.

- **Who is eligible to register a virtual office?**

Any currently licensed brokerage, newly formed brokerage, or self-sponsored managing broker.

- **Who must register a virtual office?**

Any currently licensed brokerage, newly formed brokerage, or self-sponsored managing broker who does not have a principal office with a physical location in Illinois must register a virtual office.

- **How must a virtual office be set up?**

A virtual office must have a digital infrastructure through a virtual office website, URL, or other digital platform where the general public is invited to transact business and it is utilized to conduct the communication, advertising, and real estate services related to that business.

- **When will the Department begin registering virtual offices?**

As of February 2022, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Real Estate has begun accepting virtual office applications.

- **Why is the Department beginning to regulate and register virtual offices?**

Section [5-45\(f\)](#) of the Real Estate License Act of 2000 allows for the Department to adopt Rules for the regulation of virtual offices.

- **Who can I contact if I have questions about registering a virtual office?**  
Please send an email to [FPR.RealEstate@illinois.gov](mailto:FPR.RealEstate@illinois.gov) with your question and someone will reply to you as soon as possible.

## **Addresses**

- **Does a physical address need to be supplied to the Department in addition to a website address to register a virtual office?**  
Yes. A physical address in Illinois for the sponsoring broker must be provided for service of process. If licensees or applicants do not maintain a physical address in Illinois, an entity may utilize the same address provided to the Secretary of State for its registered agent in Illinois.
- **Can someone register a virtual office and still maintain a physical office?**  
Yes. A brokerage must maintain both types of offices as either a principal or a branch office. Every office, physical or virtual, must be registered on forms provided by the Department.
- **Can the email address remain the same after converting from a physical office to a virtual office?**  
Yes. The most current email address where the Department can best communicate with the licensee must be updated with the Division of Real Estate. Conversion to a virtual office does not change the email address unless the licensee so chooses.

## **Licensing**

- **Will virtual offices have a separate license number prefix?**  
Yes. The new prefix for virtual offices is 495 and will be a subordinate to the sponsoring broker license.
- **Is there a fee associated with registering a virtual office?**  
Yes. The fee for registering a virtual office is described [here](#).
- **What is the process for sponsorship changes for a virtual office?**  
Licensees will still be able to use the Online Services Portal or mail in their sponsorship changes.

## **Recordkeeping**

- **How do records and files need to be stored and kept?**  
Virtual offices shall keep electronic records securely stored in the format they were originally created, sent, or received. The records and files are to be made accessible to its employees, licensees, independent contractors, and the Division of Real Estate upon request.

- **For an entity converting to a virtual office, can they still maintain paper records?**

Yes. However, the virtual office in Illinois requires that all records be in an electronic format. Documents originally created in paper form may be converted to an electronic format but only if the content is not altered.

- **Can an out-of-state entity with a virtual office in Illinois keep and maintain paper records out-of-state?**

Yes, but also the virtual office in Illinois shall maintain all records in an electronic format. Documents originally created in paper form may be converted to an electronic format but only if the content is not altered.

### **Digital Platforms/Websites/URLs**

- **Will the virtual office be required to have a unique URL or digital address?**

Applicants may utilize a personal website or any internet platform available to the public that allows for communication, advertising, the facilitation of business, and has a designated web address to the virtual office.

- **What kind of cybersecurity is sufficient for a virtual office?**

The Department does not require any specific type of secure intranet or portal for use by the licensee, however much like keys or an alarm system used by a physical office, the virtual office must contain a firewall or secured network that prevents unauthorized access.

- **Do the same advertising rules apply to a virtual office?**

Yes. The virtual office website or digital platform shall comply with all advertising requirements under Sections [1450.715](#) and [1450.720](#), including sponsoring broker and team name requirements, identifying where the property being advertised is located, the location of all offices registered with the Division of Real Estate, and/or a direct link on any advertisement to the virtual office website or digital platform address.

- **What information must be displayed on the virtual office website?**

The virtual office website shall include, at a minimum, the following: a current registry of all sponsored licensees prominently displayed with their names and Illinois license numbers; a list of the city(ies) or geographic location(s), and state(s) where real estate services are being offered; property listings and their current status; the Illinois license numbers of the physical office and virtual office, once obtained; an access point/link to the secure portal or intranet where records are stored; and full contact information for all designated managing brokers and a list of who they supervise.