

**HONORABLE JAMES R. STEARNS**  
Juvenile Dependency/Delinquency Unified Family Court  
Jessica L. Smith, Judicial Assistant  
West Pasco Judicial Center  
(727) 847-8095  
[jsmith@jud6.org](mailto:jsmith@jud6.org)

As of January 1, 2019, unless it is an emergency, counsel will be expected to appear in person at all hearings. It is becoming increasingly an issue and is very difficult to have multiple attorneys and parties appearing telephonically at hearings. All future hearings are set in court at the time of the previous hearing, so it is vital that you have your calendar available. If you are unavailable for the proposed hearing time, please inform the Court at that time so the next hearing may be set when you are available. The Court may authorize counsel for any party or the attorney ad litem to appear telephonically at the time of setting such hearing, and the Court will note that authorization on the calendar. In the case of an emergency, it will be necessary for you to find coverage for your hearing and the covering attorney must appear in person. In addition, you must contact my judicial assistant, Jess, to let her know who is covering for you. If your hearing is before Judge Firmani, contact his judicial assistant, Ellen at (727) 847-8184. In the event you are unable to find coverage, you must e-mail my chambers and request to appear telephonically; if the hearing is with Judge Firmani, email Ellen at [edacey@jud6.org](mailto:edacey@jud6.org). We will then provide you with authorization to appear telephonically or deny such request. Please make every effort to consult with your clients prior to their hearing time, and please arrive at the courthouse early so that court may start on time. If you have cases on the 9:00 docket, court will start promptly at 9:00 a.m. Furthermore note, there may be a long line to get into the Pasco County Courthouse each and every day, so please plan accordingly.

When submitting a proposed Order by mail for entry by the Court, the proposed Order must be reviewed and approved by all counsel associated with the case, and your cover letter must state that you have provided the proposed Order to counsel and there is no objection to the content of the Order. Copies and stamped envelopes must also be provided.

With regard to all requests to have motions heard on an emergency basis, please email a copy of the motion to my judicial assistant, Jess, at [jsmith@jud6.org](mailto:jsmith@jud6.org) for my review prior to requesting a hearing. I will review the motion prior to approving an emergency hearing.

Please make every effort to have a copy of all reports, home studies and motions provided to me at least a week prior to any scheduled hearing so that I have time to review same in preparation for hearing.

With regard to any case that is ready to be set for Final Hearing of Adoption, the Petition for Adoption and related documents must be filed and the file reviewed before a hearing date will be set. Petitions must be filed at least two (2) weeks prior to the Final Hearing to allow sufficient time for staff counsel and this Court to review the file. Once you have filed the Petition, please contact my judicial assistant at 727-847-8095 or by email at [jsmith@jud6.org](mailto:jsmith@jud6.org) and provide her with the case number for the adoption. She will then order the file and have it reviewed, and upon completion of the review, you will be contacted to set a hearing date.