

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA**  
**UCN: \_\_\_\_\_ REF: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Petitioner,

vs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent.

**NOTICE FOR FAMILY LAW CASES WITH NO MINOR CHILDREN**

It is in the best interests of the parties in a family law case to learn about the problems, duties and responsibilities that may arise during their dissolution proceeding. It is also important for the parties to preserve their assets and comply with Court rules and orders. Therefore, the parties are advised:

1. **DISPOSITION OF ASSETS; ACCOUNTING:**

Neither party should conceal, damage, or dispose of any asset, whether marital or non-marital, and neither party should dissipate the value of an asset. The parties may spend their incomes in the ordinary course of their personal and family affairs. Neither party should conceal or waste jointly owned funds. Both parties are accountable for all money or property in their possession during the marriage and after separation. Attorney's fees and costs may be assessed.

2. **PERSONAL AND BUSINESS RECORDS/INSURANCE:**

Neither party may conceal from the other or destroy any family records, business records, or any records of income, debt, or other obligations. Any insurance policies in effect at the time the petition was filed should not be terminated, allowed to lapse, concealed, modified, borrowed against, pledged or otherwise encumbered. The beneficiaries on all insurance policies should not be changed. The parties should continue to pay all premiums on a timely basis.

3. **ADDITIONAL DEBT:**

Neither party should incur additional debt, which would bind the other party nor should either party tie up any assets. Joint credit cards should be used only for necessities of life, and any party using a joint credit card after separation must be prepared to justify all charges as reasonable and necessary for life's necessities.

4. **ALTERNATIVE COOPERATION TRACK:**

4.1. Mediation is encouraged early in the proceedings. This is an opportunity to reach a reasonable negotiated agreement on some or all issues and may result in substantial savings to the parties.

4.2. Litigation must be conducted courteously and cooperatively. The Court can sanction unprofessional and uncooperative behavior in any case and may award attorney's fees as required by law if either party or their counsel is found to have been unduly uncooperative, resulting in prolonged or needless litigation.

5. **Both parties must file and exchange financial affidavits and mandatory disclosure pursuant to Family Law Rule 12.285.**

**FAMILY LAW COURT COURTROOM POLICIES**

The following are the policies of family court. Read them carefully. All lawyers and parties are expected to know and obey these policies.

1. **COURTROOM CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR:**

**All courtroom proceedings shall be conducted with dignity, decorum, courtesy, and civility.**

1.1 **Dress appropriately** – Court business is important. Shorts, tank or halter tops, undershirts, and caps or hats are forbidden.

1.2. **Speaking and talking** – A court proceeding is not a free for all where anyone can say whatever they want whenever they feel like it. A party who is called as a witness must answer only the questions asked and may not volunteer information or make argument while testifying.

Do not interrupt the Judge when he or she is speaking. Interruptions, sarcasm, and insults will not be tolerated. **DO NOT** start an argument with or threaten anyone.

2. **BRINGING CHILDREN TO COURT IS FORBIDDEN** –

**Children as witnesses.** The Family Law Rules require that an order must be obtained from the Judge upon a motion and a hearing in advance before a child may testify. Therefore, do not bring children to court if an order allowing them to testify has not been signed.

3. **APPEARING IN COURT WITHOUT A LAWYER** –

A “Pro Se” Litigant, a party without a lawyer, is not entitled to special treatment or privileges, and must follow the same Rules or Procedure and ethical regulations that govern practicing lawyers.

3.1. **The court must treat a pro se party the same way it treats a lawyer.** Pro se litigants, although not expected to be as skilled and knowledgeable as lawyers, are nevertheless subject to all laws, rules and regulations that apply to a lawyer.

Judges and their assistance are forbidden by law from giving any advice or help to unrepresented parties. Judges and their assistants must remain entirely neutral and impartial. Judges and their assistants also may not give unrepresented parties special treatment.

3.2. The Family Division of the court has a Pro Se Litigant Program, telephone 727-582-7200, which can answer some questions and offer some assistance. The program staff is not the lawyer for an unrepresented party, a legal advisor, or a secretarial service for an unrepresented party.

3.3. **Contact with the Judge’s office.** A pro se party is authorized to contact the Judge’s office by telephone to set hearings on the court’s schedule. Personal visits to the office are discouraged because it disrupts the working routine in the office. Judicial Assistants assist Judges; it is not their job to advise or assist the parties with their case.