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## **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PRACTICE PREFERENCES**

### **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

These Practice Preferences apply to everyone—*pro se* or with counsel. The Court's preferences are addressed in this document only.

#### ***Professionalism and Courtesy***

Manners are mandatory. The Court expects and requires professionalism, civility, and courtesy to the Court, the Court staff, Clerks, opposing counsel and parties, and all other people who come before the Court. Parties are directed to adhere to and abide by the Sixth Judicial Circuit's *Professionalism Expectations and Professionalism Implementation Procedures*, which may be found on the Court's website:

<https://www.jud6.org/LegalCommunity/Professionalism/2025-LLP-Report-Form-6-15-25.pdf>.

There is never a reason to be rude, and *ad hominem* are prohibited. Participants who are discourteous, bad-mannered, or otherwise fail to adhere to standards of professionalism may be subject to appropriate sanctions, including removal from proceeding and/or forfeit of their pleadings, motions, or responses.

#### ***Contacting Chambers***

Contact with Chambers is limited to scheduling hearings. The Judicial Assistant cannot answer legal questions, provide advice about what to do, or state how the Court will rule.

*Ex parte* communications to the Court are prohibited. The Court will only discuss the merits of a case during a properly scheduled hearing noticed to all parties, and not through a message conveyed by the Judicial Assistant. Parties

seeking relief from the Court are directed to file an appropriate motion and schedule the matter for hearing.

### ***Delinquency Calendar***

The Court's calendar is currently divided between probate/guardianship cases and juvenile delinquency cases. Probate / guardianship hearings are scheduled for Monday afternoons and Tuesdays. Juvenile delinquency hearings are scheduled for Monday mornings at 9:00 a.m. and Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. or 1:30 p.m.. All juvenile defendants represented by the Office of the Public Defender are required to be present at 9:00 a.m.

Sign-In Sheet: Private Counsel should sign-in with the bailiff before the start of hearings. The Court will take appearances by private counsel immediately following detention hearings, and in the order of appearance.

### ***Court-Appearence***

Appropriate clothing (i.e. business attire) is required for those attending in-person or attending via zoom. Appropriate clothing should cover the shoulders, mid-section, and knees. Additionally, appropriate attire should not include profanity, vulgarity, or language intended to incite. Violators may be considered in contempt of court. Mobile phones must be turned off or put on silent.

### ***In Person Hearings v. Zoom Hearings***

For arraignments, a defendant does not have to attend an arraignment only if (i) represented by private counsel, and (ii) a written plea of not guilty and a waiver of appearance has been filed with the Clerk. All others must attend the arraignment as set forth herein.

Defendants, parents/ guardians, and attorneys are required to attend hearings in person unless otherwise approved by the Court. Attendance by Zoom is disfavored and will not be permitted unless good cause is shown. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a defendant must be present in person for trials, to enter a plea, or otherwise resolve a case.

A request for attendance at a hearing by Zoom must be by motion, filed with the Clerk **7 calendar days** prior to the hearing, served on the State Attorney's Office, and emailed to the Judicial Assistant. The motion must clearly state the grounds for the request. The Court will consider the motion without a hearing only if the motion is unopposed or upon receipt of a response by the State Attorney's Office. If no order has been entered before the hearing, then the Juvenile is expected to be present at the hearing.

Attendance by Zoom may be permitted any time a request is made prior to the scheduled hearing only if the person is seriously ill (i.e. positive test for COVID, vomiting, or other serious ailment). The requesting party must email the Judicial Assistant with copy to the State Attorney's Office, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and defense counsel.

Good Cause may be shown, without limitation, by the following:

- Defendant does not live in the following Florida counties: Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Hernando, Citrus, Manatee, or Polk.
- Defendant has been admitted to a medical or mental health facility (regardless of distance);
- Defendant is in a commitment program;
- Defendant is in custody of the DJJ;
- A signed Doctor's Note excusing the Defendant's appearance;
- Defendant has a disability and needs a reasonable accommodation under the ADA.

Placement in Foster care is not considered good cause.

### ***Failure to Appear***

The Court may enter a mandatory pickup order if the Court has reason to believe from the record that a defendant is knowingly and willfully refusing to appear at a properly noticed hearing served on the Defendant. Upon a showing of cause, the Court may rescind a pickup order.

### ***Entry of Pleas***

Absent extraordinary circumstances, the Court will not accept no contest pleas.