

Judicial Procedures and Instructions

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Contact Information

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A. Communications with the Judicial Office

- **Method of Communication:**

- Division E-mail

The preferred method of communication to the judicial office is by e-

mail to section15@jud6.org, the dedicated division e-mail account. The subject line of any e-mail to the judicial office must contain the case number, case name, and relevant matter (e.g., 2025 DR 001234 SC - Doe v. Doe - 2-Hour Hearing Requested).

- Telephone

Self-represented litigants and attorneys excused from e-mail service may communicate with the judicial office by telephone call to 727-464-3636. The judicial office does not accept text messages.

- **Ex parte Communications:**

All communications with the judicial office must comply with Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which prohibits a judge from initiating, permitting, or considering ex parte communications and from considering other communications outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding, unless authorized by law. All parties must be copied on any e-mail directed to the judicial office, unless an ex parte communication is authorized by law.

- **Unsolicited Communications:**

Parties may only contact the judicial office in accordance with these procedures and instructions. Unsolicited communications from non-parties will not be considered by the court.

- **E-Filing Portal Contact Information:**

- All attorneys and self-represented litigants must make and receive service by e-mail, which is generally through the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal, unless excused. Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.516.
- All attorneys and self-represented litigants must provide an e-mail address to receive signed orders electronically, unless excused. Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.516. It is the responsibility of attorneys and self-represented litigants to update their contact information using Form 2.603 any time there is a change in the e-mail account registered

for electronic service.

- **Response to Inquiries:**

- The judicial assistant is not authorized to provide legal advice.
- The judicial assistant strives to substantively respond to all inquiries within one business day. If the judicial assistant is unable to substantively respond within one business day, your message will be acknowledged as received with an indication of when to expect a substantive response and alternate contact for immediate assistance.
- When the judicial assistant is out of the office, your message will be acknowledged as received with an indication of when to expect a substantive response and an alternate contact for immediate assistance.

- **Other Communication Procedures:**

Any e-mail sent to or from the judicial office may be a public record subject to disclosure.

B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:**

- Trials are scheduled by the Court, the trial calendar may be viewed at the Sixth Judicial Circuit's website under Judges & Calendars and within this Section's practice preferences.
- The uniform motion calendar is scheduled for routine matters requiring 5 minutes or less on the first and third Friday of the month at 1:30 p.m. There will also be a separate foreclosure uniform motion calendar on the second and fourth Friday of the month at 1:30 p.m.

- **Scheduling Hearings:**

- Hearings of 30 minutes or less must be scheduled through JAWS. Hearings of more than 30 minutes must be scheduled by e-mailing the

judicial assistant at section15@jud6.org and copying opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.

- If parties are unable to identify a hearing date and time on JAWS, the scheduling party should e- mail the judicial assistant, copying opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant, to coordinate scheduling the hearing.
 - All requests for hearing time via e-mail must contain, in the subject line, the case number and motion to be heard.
 - All requests for hearing time via email must also contain the date the motion was filed, the docket entry number, the length of hearing time requested, and which party the sender represents.
 - If a hearing is to be conducted via Zoom, the judicial assistant will provide a meeting ID and passcode to include in the notice of hearing, as well as instructions for how properly to participate in a Zoom audio/video conference.
 - Motions must be filed prior to seeking hearing time.
- **Notice of Hearing:**
 - A notice of hearing must be filed and served immediately after reserving hearing time.
 - A notice of hearing involving any remote appearance must list the Zoom contact information supplied by the judicial assistant.
 - All notices of hearing must contain the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) notification required by Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.540.
 - Cross-noticing on another party's hearing time is not permitted without the approval of opposing party/counsel and the court.
- **Order of Proceedings:**

- Matters will be heard in the order in which they appear on the docket.
- Matters involving parties represented by counsel will generally be heard before other matters.
- **Continuance Procedure:**
 - Motions for continuance are disfavored and will be granted only upon good cause shown. Successive continuances are highly disfavored. Lack of due diligence is not grounds for granting a continuance. Except for good cause shown, the motion must be signed by the party requesting the continuance, as required by Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e).
 - Motions for continuance must be submitted at least seven (7) days prior to the scheduled court date for which the continuance is sought, barring exigent circumstances. Except for good cause shown, the motion must be signed by the party requesting the continuance, as required by Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e).
 - Motions for continuance must state with specificity: (1) the basis of the need for the continuance, including when the basis became known to the movant; (2) whether the motion is opposed; (3) the action and specific dates for the action that will enable the movant to be ready, including, but not limited to, confirming the specific date any required participants are available; and (4) the proposed date by which the case will be ready to proceed and whether that date is agreed by all parties. Except for good cause shown, the motion must be signed by the party requesting the continuance, as required by Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e).
- **Cancelling Hearings:**
 - You must cancel hearings by notifying the judicial assistant immediately. You must also immediately file and serve a notice of cancellation on opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.
 - Cancellation of a hearing requires notice to and agreement of all parties, unless the moving party seeking to cancel the hearing does so

by withdrawing the motion that is the subject of the hearing. A notice of cancellation should be immediately e-filed and a courtesy copy emailed to section15@jud6.org, with the word “CANCELLATION” in the subject field.

C. Remote Appearance

- **Remote Appearance Procedure:**

- The court maintains a hybrid virtual courtroom, allowing parties to appear either in person or remotely, as provided by Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.530. **Requests to use communication technology for an appearance must be made by motion.**
- Any objection to the use of communication technology must be filed no later than five (5) days from the date of service of a motion for remote appearance.
- Mere convenience of counsel is typically NOT good cause to permit a remote appearance by a party or their counsel.
- Section 15 does not utilize telephone conferencing for remote hearings.

- **Platform Used:**

With extremely rare exception, remote hearings will be conducted via Zoom audio/video conference, not telephonically.

- **Platform Meeting ID#:**

Once the Court approves a remote or hybrid hearing, the party requesting remote appearance must contact the judicial assistant at section15@jud6.org to obtain the meeting ID# and passcode for the remote hearing, which information must then be included in a notice of hearing, unless the party is advised that the Court will serve such notice.

- **Requirements:**

- Requests for remote appearance must be submitted seven (7) days prior to the scheduled court date, barring exigent circumstances.
- Certain hearings are eligible for remote appearance. These include most not-evidentiary proceedings scheduled for 30 minutes or less.
- Any person appearing remotely must be in a private location that is quiet and free from distractions. Under no circumstances will a participant be permitted to appear remotely from a moving vehicle.
- Any person appearing remotely must **dress and behave professionally** in the same manner as if physically present in the courtroom.
- Any person appearing remotely must enable the person's camera when joining the proceeding and keep the camera turned on until instructed otherwise by the court.
- Any person appearing remotely must mute the person's microphone when joining the proceeding and keep the microphone turned off until instructed otherwise by the court.
- If a witness appears remotely, the party calling the witness must ensure the witness has a functioning camera and microphone and has tested the internet connection before the hearing. The oath will be administered in accordance with Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.530.

D. Submission of Orders and Judgments

- **Format:**

- Unopposed proposed orders, unless directed otherwise by the Court, must be submitted in PDF/a format and provided to opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.

- All contested proposed orders, must be submitted in Word format and provided to opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.
 - All proposed orders should reference the hearing date, persons present, and whether a court reporter attended the hearing. There should be no blanks for the Court to fill in other than the date and signature line, which should not appear in isolation on the final page of any proposed order.
 - All proposed orders must be accompanied by a cover letter either (1) certifying that all parties agree to the order or (2) containing a statement identifying any disagreement of the parties as to the proposed order.
 - Correspondence accompanying a proposed order must include the case number, the date of the hearing, if a hearing was held, and the date on which the proposed order was served on the opposing party/counsel.
 - Counsel are reminded that all orders go out over the Court's signature and, as such, should be mindful to **proofread** all proposed orders prior to submission.
- **Submission Method:**
 - All disputed proposed orders must be submitted to the court by e-mail to section15@jud6.org. In the subject line the sender shall indicate "DISPUTED PROPOSED ORDER." The email must also attach a Word document with tracked changes showing the alternate language proposed by the other party.
 - All unopposed proposed orders, unless directed otherwise by the Court, must be submitted via JAWS.
 - Self-represented litigants excused from e-mail service may submit proposed orders to the court by U.S. mail or hand-delivered to the judicial office.
 - It is the responsibility of the attorney uploading the order to review

and ensure that all other parties to the case entitled to receive a copy of the order are affiliated with the case in JAWS such that the electronically conformed order will be sent to all parties.

- **Deadline for Submissions:**

Proposed orders must be submitted no later than ten (10) after any hearing.

E. Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents

- **When Required:**

Courtesy copies of all case law, statutory, or other legal authority must be submitted to the court for any hearing or trial.

- **Format:**

- Courtesy copies must be submitted in PDF/a format.
- All legal authority should be **highlighted** to reflect the relevance of the cited authority.
- Copies of all cited authority must be sent to the opposing party in the same format as provided to the Court, e.g. highlighted.

- **Submission Method:**

- Courtesy copies may be submitted to the court by e-mail to section15@jud6.org, with the case number and motion or matter to be heard noted in the subject line.
- Courtesy copies may be submitted to the court by U.S. mail or hand-delivered to the judicial office, with the case number and motion or matter to be heard noted in the subject line of an accompanying cover letter.

- **Deadline for Submissions:**

Courtesy copies must be submitted to the court no later than five (5) days

before any hearing or trial.

F. Emergency and Other Urgent Matters

- **Requirements:**

If a party believes there is a factual basis for setting an emergency hearing, a detailed motion setting forth the following must be filed: (1) the issues to be resolved, (2) reasons why an emergency hearing is necessary, and (3) the amount of time needed for each party's presentation.

- **Scheduling:**

If the court determines that an emergency exists, a hearing will be scheduled unilaterally by the court. All parties shall make themselves available for the emergency hearing, barring exigent circumstances.

- **Other Procedures Relating to Emergency and Other Urgent Matters:**

- It is the accepted procedure in this Circuit that a Judge will review an emergency motion or request for expedited relief on the same day that it is filed.
- Requests for expedited or emergency consideration must be brought to the attention of the Court by emailing a copy of the request to section15@jud6.org.
- Parties are cautioned as to the overuse of emergency motions and/or requests for expedited relief.

G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings

- **Submission Method:**

- The preferred method in this section is to submit all exhibits electronically using a cloud storage service link by contacting the judicial assistant at section15@jud6.org and requesting an upload link to the Court's OneDrive server.

- Alternatively, where the volume of documents is less than 50 pages, a party may submit all exhibits electronically by e-mail to section15@jud6.org;
 - Hand-deliver all printed exhibits to the clerk of court; or
 - Mail all printed exhibits to the clerk of court.
- **Format:**
 - Exhibits must be labeled in the following format: Petitioner/Plaintiff 1 or Respondent/Defendant A.
 - All attorneys and self-represented litigants must bring sufficient copies of each exhibit for the clerk, the court, the witness, and each party to review during the hearing or trial.
 - An index of exhibits should accompany any submission, which index should include for each exhibit, the party submitting the exhibit, the number of the exhibit, a brief description of the exhibit, and a space for the Court to indicate whether or not the exhibit was identified and admitted.
- **Deadline for Submissions:**
 - Electronic exhibits must be submitted seven (7) days before the evidentiary proceeding.
 - All other exhibits must be received in chambers seven (7) days before the evidentiary proceeding.

H. Pretrial Procedures and Conferences

- Case Management Conference (CMC):
 - Any party may request a CMC/Status Conference when a case requires.

- The court strongly encourages the early use of CMCs in more complex cases, multiple-party litigation, or any case that might benefit from court intervention.
 - Unless excused by the court in advance, all CMCs are mandatory for attorneys and self-represented litigants. Parties represented by counsel are not required to appear at a CMC.
 - Any request for a CMC or status conference must articulate the reasons for the necessity of the conference.
 - No motions will be heard at the CMC without prior approval of the Court.
- Scheduling:

If the court grants the request for a CMC or status conference, the moving party must schedule the CMC or status conference through the online scheduling platform.

- Pretrial Requirements:
 - In most case, a CMC is necessary to set a Pretrial Conference and Trial.
 - The attorney conducting the trial must attend the Pretrial Conference. The parties must also attend the Pretrial Conference. It is assumed at a Pretrial Conference that the case is ready to be tried, there are no pending motions, and discovery is completed.
 - Should a Pretrial Conference need to be reset, both parties must be in agreement in order to get a reset date without a hearing. Otherwise, a motion to continue should be filed and set for hearing.
 - The Court will strictly enforce its order setting pretrial conference, which requires the parties to draft and file an appropriate Pretrial Memorandum – including a Witness List, Exhibit List, and other documents – in advance of the Pretrial Conference. As such, counsel and all parties are directed to pay close attention to the requirements

of the order and to provide actual witness and exhibit lists without the use of catch-all categories, except for rebuttal and impeachment evidence.

I. Setting Case for Trial

- Procedure:

File a notice for trial to set the case for trial.

- Notice Period:

The court does not set date-certain trials. After the pre-trial conference, the court will assign cases to specific days during the trial period and may assign back-up cases. Attorneys, self-represented litigants, parties, and witnesses are expected to be available during the entire trial period.

J. Forms

- The court will, from time to time, make various forms available on the judicial practice preferences website.

K. Other Division Procedures

- ADA Accommodations:
 - If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact the Human Rights Office, 400 S. Ft. Harrison Ave., Ste. 300, Clearwater, FL 33756, (727) 464-4062 (V/TDD) at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.
 - Information on ADA accommodations can be found on the circuit's website at the following link:
<https://www.jud6.org/GeneralPublic/ADAAssistance.html>

- Interpreter Requests:
 - If an interpreter is needed for a hearing or trial, please refer to the website information below.
 - Information on interpreters' services can be found on the circuit's website at the following link:
<https://www.jud6.org/LegalCommunity/Interpreters.html>