Judicial Practices and Procedures

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A. Communications with the Judicial Office

- **Method of Communication:** All communications to the judicial office must be submitted by e-mail to childsupportstpete@jud6.org. The subject line must contain the case number, case name, and relevant matter (e.g., 2024 DR 001234 SC – Doe v. Doe - Hearing Requested.)

- **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. All parties are prohibited from contacting the hearing officer regarding their matter via the hearing officer's personal email and social media. Doing so may result in the hearing officer's recusal from the case at issue.

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

- **E-Filing Portal Contact Information:** 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 and is not authorized to provide opinions or recommendations regarding a specific case, including outcomes or strategy. In addition, the judicial assistant cannot discuss or speculate on how the hearing officer or judge might rule in a particular case. If the Judicial Assistant is out-of-

office, instructions will be provided via the automated voicemail and email response.

- **[Other Communication Procedures]:** Email is the preferred method of communication and should be the first option utilized. However, if email is not accessible, parties may reach the judicial assistant by phone at: 727-582-7732, unless otherwise indicated herein.

B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:** Hearings are scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday. Beginning at 9:30 a.m., unless otherwise indicated in the Notice of Hearing.

- **Scheduling Hearings:** (1) Hearings must be requested by e-mail to childsupportstpete@jud6.org; or (2) Contact the judicial assistant at 727-582-7732.

- **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 judicial Zoom credentials. All notices of hearing must contain the ADA notification required by Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.540.

- **Submission Deadlines:** The court must receive all materials for the hearing no later than three business days before the hearing.

- **Order of Proceedings:** (1) The hearing officer will call cases in the order deemed most efficient. Please reserve at least 2 hours from the scheduled start time of your hearing to account for potential delays. While the hearing officer strives to stay on schedule, additional time may be necessary to ensure each case receives the attention it deserves. (2) Parties represented by attorneys will typically be prioritized and heard first, at the discretion of the hearing officer.

- **Continuance Procedure:** Continuances are disfavored and will be granted only upon good cause shown. A request for continuance must be submitted at least five days prior to the scheduled court date. Except for good cause shown, the motion must be signed by the party requesting the continuance, as required by Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.545(e).

- **Cancelling Hearings:** You must cancel hearings by notifying the judicial assistant immediately. Only the party who filed the motion for which the hearing was scheduled has the authority to cancel the hearing unilaterally. You must also immediately file and serve a notice of cancellation on

opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant. This can be conveniently noticed on all parties via the e-filing portal.

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.

- **Platform Used:** The court uses Zoom for remote appearances.

- **Platform Meeting ID#:** Meeting ID#: 743 057 4206 Passcode 328690

- **Requirements:** Under the amendments to Rule 2.530, a motion to present testimony through communication technology is required to set forth good cause and specify whether each party consents to the form requested. A party requesting to appear by zoom or by telephone must file a written motion within **10 days** prior to hearing and certify that a copy of the motion has been provided to all parties. A party may file an objection, in writing, within **5 days** of the request. After the 5 day objection period, the movant must contact the Hearing Officer's assistant via email at childsupportstpete@jud6.org to request a ruling on the motion. A ruling on the motion will not be provided prior to the 5 day objection period.

D. Submission of Orders and Judgments

- **Format:** All proposed orders must be submitted in Word format, unless otherwise indicated by the hearing officer. 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.

- **Submission Method:** All proposed orders must be submitted to the judicial assistant via email, only.

- **Deadline for Submissions:** Proposed orders must be submitted within 10 days after any hearing.

E. Emergency and Other Urgent Matters

- The Hearing Officer does not have the authority to classify a motion as an emergency. Parties wishing to have their motions considered as emergencies must obtain a determination from the section judge prior to scheduling. The section judge will instruct the hearing officer on the

appropriate timing for hearing the emergency motion.

- **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.

F. Pretrial Procedures and Conferences

- **Case Management Conference:** Any party may request a case management conference (CMC) when a case requires. The court strongly encourages the early use of CMC 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.

- **Requirements:** Any request for a CMC or status conference must articulate the reasons for the necessity of the conference.

- **Scheduling:** If the hearing officer agrees that a CMC or status conference is required, the moving party may schedule the CMC or status conference through the online scheduling platform.

G. Forms

- **Access:** Division forms are available at www.jud6.org and additional family law forms are available on the Florida's Supreme Court's website at Family Law Forms / Domestic Relations Court Resources / Family Courts / Services - - Florida Courts.

H. Other Division Procedures

- **ADA Accommodations:** If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact:

  Human Rights Office
  400 S. Ft. Harrison Ave., Ste. 500
  Clearwater, FL 33756
  Phone: 727.464.4062 V/TDD
  Or 711 for the hearing impaired

- **Interpreter Requests:** If an interpreter is needed for a hearing or trial, please contact www.jud6.org

- **Policy on Profanity and Decorum in the Courtroom and Waiting Area:** Profanity or any offensive language is strictly prohibited in the

courtroom and waiting areas. All individuals are expected to communicate respectfully, refraining from using language that is disruptive or derogatory. All participants must conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the court proceedings. Attire should be appropriate and respectful. No offensive clothing will be permitted. Individuals should remain quiet and refrain from engaging in discussions that may disrupt court proceedings or distract others.

Electronic devices must be silenced or turned off to prevent interruptions. The hearing officer, deputy, or court staff may address any violations of this policy. Individuals who use profanity or behave disruptively may be warned, removed from the courtroom, or face further consequences as deemed necessary. Any person who observes a violation of this policy should report it to the deputy or court staff immediately for appropriate action. This policy aims to create a respectful and professional atmosphere in the courtroom and waiting areas, ensuring that all individuals can participate without distraction or discomfort. Compliance is mandatory, and violations will be addressed promptly.