

PERTAINING TO GENERAL COUNTY CIVIL MATTERS IN DIVISION M

Scheduling Hearings and Cancellation of Hearings:

- A motion must be filed with the Clerk of Court before setting the matter for hearing in JAWS. Parties are encouraged to wait at least 10 days after filing a non-dispositive and/or non-evidentiary motion before setting the motion for hearing, in order to determine whether the non-movant intends to file a response in opposition or objection to such motion. If no response in opposition or objection is filed by the non-movant within 10 days, then a hearing may not be necessary, unless otherwise required by the Court or the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.
- All matters requiring 60 minutes or less of hearing time must be scheduled through JAWS.
- Any matters requiring more than 60 minutes of hearing time must be scheduled through the Judicial Assistant. You may email the judicial assistant at civdivm@fljud13.org to obtain available hearing times lasting over 60 minutes.
- After obtaining a hearing time either through JAWS or the Judicial Assistant, a Notice of Hearing must be e-filed with the Clerk of Court and a copy mailed or emailed to chambers at civdivm@fljud13.org.
- Any hearing cancellation (except an Initial Pretrial Conference Hearing) must be made in writing, e-filed with the Clerk, and emailed to civdivm@fljud13.org at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled hearing. The Court will always review relevant motions and responses prior to a scheduled hearing. Accordingly, last minute cancellations (less than 1 business day notice) made without good cause may result in the Court ruling on the pending motion without a hearing. Even if the parties reach an agreement in regard to the pending motion, the movant must appear at the scheduled hearing time to inform the Court of the outcome unless a timely cancellation notice or a signed stipulation of the parties is emailed to civdivm@fljud13.org.

Submitting Orders:

- Attorneys should submit and upload proposed orders (in pdf format) to the Court for review via the e-filing portal.
- Please submit proposed orders to the Court within one (1) week of the hearing and/or ruling.

Appearing at Hearings:

- All hearings shall be held in person.

- Zoom hearings are not available in Division M. Telephonic appearance by legal counsel is discouraged for disputed legal arguments or where the opposing party is not represented by counsel. If counsel of record does not want to appear at a scheduled hearing because they do not want to drive to Hillsborough County, then coverage by local counsel is highly recommended. If an attorney files a case in Hillsborough County or an attorney agrees to defend a party sued in Hillsborough County, then such attorney should expect to appear in Hillsborough County or anticipate the need to retain local counsel for disputed, evidentiary or final hearings.
- No party may appear by phone or zoom for a small claims initial pre-trial conference.
- No legal counsel may appear by phone or zoom for a trial, final hearing, potentially dispositive motion or an evidentiary hearing. Out of town witnesses that are simply confirming business records to be admitted into the record or amounts owed may appear at final hearing or trial telephonically, however, a motion to allow appearance of witness via phone must be filed and a proposed order submitted to Division M at least five (5) days prior to such final hearing or trial.
- No party may appear by phone or zoom for a hearing scheduled for 30 minutes or longer.
- In county court cases in which the full Florida Rules Of Civil Procedure have been invoked, **hearings are not required for most unopposed, non-dispositive and/or non-evidentiary motions** (e.g. motion to compel, motion for protective order, motion for leave to amend, motion for relief from technical admissions, motion for default, motion to withdraw, motion to dismiss without prejudice, motion to transfer venue, motion to strike affirmative defenses, motion to invoke full rules, motion for extension of time, agreed or joint motions, etc.). If the non-movant does not file a response in opposition or an objection to the motion within ten (10) days of the filing of the motion, then such motion shall be deemed by the Court to be “unopposed” (except where the Rules of Civil Procedure specifically allow for a longer period of time to respond).
- Any special request to appear by phone at a hearing by any party or attorney that is not located in the Tampa Bay Area must be submitted to the Court through a written motion filed at least five (5) days prior to the hearing. Such motion shall provide good cause why such exception is necessary (decreasing the spread of COVID is no longer considered good cause). In addition, a proposed order granting appearance by phone must be uploaded to the Division M work queue through the e-filing system at least five (5) days prior to the hearing. If a proposed order is not uploaded, then the Court will not be aware that a motion is pending.
- In the event parties are unable to coordinate any non-emergency hearing, deposition, or motion within a reasonable period of time (not less than 72 hours) and after 3

documented attempts, the moving party may unilaterally set the issue for hearing pursuant to divisional instructions to occur no less than 30 days after the third attempt.

Pre-Trial Conferences:

- Whoever appears for a party must have full authority to settle for all amounts from zero to the amount of the claim without further consultation. Failure to comply may result in the imposition of sanctions, including costs, attorney fees, entry of judgment, or dismissal.
- Defendant(s) must appear in Court on the date specified in order to avoid a default judgment.
- Plaintiff(s) must appear in Court on the date specified in order to avoid having the case dismissed.

E-Filing By Attorneys:

- All motions, affidavits, stipulations, responses, exhibits or similar pleadings (except proposed orders) should be electronically filed with the Clerk through the e-filing portal.

Case Law and Legal Authority:

- Please provide case law and any legal authority by hard copy to the Court at least 3 business days prior to a scheduled hearing.