



PROCEDURES FOR CIRCUIT FELONY INMATE NEGOTIATED PLEAS
DATED APRIL 20, 2020

1. Discussion of Forms with the Defendant. Use the documents located on our website (<https://www.fljud13.org/Forms.aspx>) under Circuit Criminal Justice & Trial: Felony Plea Form, DNA Addendum to Plea Form and Waiver of Physical Presence in Court Addendum to Plea Form.

Attorneys are required by the terms of those forms to discuss each of them *line by line with the Defendant in a private, confidential setting that allows for meaningful question and answer discussions*. Please note the plea form indicates that the Defendant has seen and agrees with the scoresheet as prepared by the State, so you must go over that document with the Defendant as well, and be prepared to answer questions regarding the same.

2. Signature on Forms. Once the attorney has fully discussed **ALL** forms with the Defendant and obtained the Defendant's permission for the attorney to sign those forms **FOR** him/her (or, s/he has chance to sign them at or after the time of your video visitation,) the attorney will sign each form (either physically or electronically.)
3. Filing of Forms. Each form is then to be uploaded as a separate document via the E-Portal. Each individual case number requires each of these forms be filed separately (i.e. for 2 felony cases, you would have 6 separate forms uploaded.) VOP cases do not need the Felony Plea Form nor the DNA form, but DO require a waiver of physical appearance.
4. Docketing the plea(s). After all 3 forms have been signed *and filed*, contact Angela Freestone at the clerk's office (freeston@hillsclerk.com) and copy felonypleas@hillsclerk.com and the case(s) will be added onto on the next available Felony Plea Docket, and a clerk will email you with the date set. Dockets are currently set Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30-10:30 am each week.

DO NOT file a notice of hearing.

DO NOT contact the letter division judges or judicial assistants to add these cases onto the docket.

Samantha L. Ward
Circuit Court Judge, 13th Judicial Circuit
Circuit Criminal Administrative Judge
Tampa, FL
WARDSL@FLJUD13.ORG

5. Entering the Plea(s) You will then need to appear in the Courthouse Annex, Courtroom 17 (video courtroom) on that hearing date to enter any plea(s). We are working on procedures that will allow you to phone in or video in, but do not have that capability at this time.

The docket is limited in docket time available (by jail video conferencing) and thus number of pleas at this stage; so these dockets are for negotiated pleas only. (If you have an “open plea,” you will need to contact your letter division judge.) As a result of that limitation, if the Defendant is unsure about the process and/or indicates in any manner that he/she does not understand, nor has been given private or sufficient time with you to discuss the offer and options, and the waiver of appearance, DNA, and Felony Plea Form, the judge will likely stop the plea in progress and set it at a future date and time to ensure the record clearly indicates that the Defendant has a clear understanding of what is happening.

6. HCSO Inmate Visitation. For your convenience, we have included the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office official policy disseminated to the courts and bar as follows:

Sheriff Chad Chronister is opening up the video visitation center to the private bar as the preferred method of contact with clients in the jail, in response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus. The new hours for visitation will be 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., seven days a week. Members of the bar will be given priority access. The Sheriff is also ensuring that all equipment in the visitation center is regularly sanitized with disinfectants. The visitation Center is located in the Falkenburg Road Jail at 520 N. Falkenburg Road, Tampa, FL 33619.

The phone number is 813-247-8300. Alternatively, attorneys can register for an account to be able to video conference remotely off site, for a small fee. The link to register for an account is at: <https://hcsovisit.com/app>

Thank you for your patience in assisting us work through these issues that confront the criminal justice system in this time of National Emergency. Please contact me via email if you have any additional questions; with, of course, a copy to opposing counsel.