

Judicial Practices and Procedures

(established October 20, 2025)

Updates will necessarily be made to the judicial practices and procedures on the Thirteenth Circuit's website from time to time. It is the responsibility of every litigant (including self-represented individuals) to periodically check for updates. All litigants are expected to be familiar with **Administrative Orders S-2025-014** and **S-2024-086** and follow the judicial practices and procedures.

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A.	<i>Communications with Judicial Office</i>	2
B.	<i>Scheduling Procedures</i>	3
C.	<i>Remote Appearance</i>	6
D.	<i>Submission of Orders and Judgments</i>	8
E.	<i>Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents</i>	9
F.	<i>Emergency and Other Urgent Matters</i>	10
G.	<i>Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings</i>	11
H.	<i>Pretrial Procedures</i>	12
I.	<i>Setting Case for Trial</i>	16
J.	<i>Forms</i>	18
K.	<i>Small Claims Procedure</i>	19
L.	<i>Post Judgment Procedure</i>	23
M.	<i>YOUR COURT DAY</i>	24

A. Communications with Judicial Office

- **Method of Communication:** Email is preferred at civdivi@fljud13.org. When contacting the judicial office, copy opposing counsel/party, provide the case number, case style and request/subject in subject line.
- **Ex parte Communication:** All communication must comply with Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which prohibits a judge from initiating, permitting, or considering communications outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding, unless authorized by law. *Ex parte communications received by this office will be rejected.*
- **Unsolicited Communication:** Parties may only contact the judicial office in accordance with these practices and procedures. *Unsolicited communications received by the office will be rejected.*
- **E-Filing Portal Contact Information:** All attorneys and self-represented parties must provide an e-mail address to receive signed orders electronically, unless excused. See [Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.516](#). Self-represented parties may utilize [Form 2.602](#) to receive electronic communications. It is the responsibility of attorneys and self-represented parties to update their contact information using [Form 2.603](#) any time there is a change in the e-mail account registered for electronic service. *It is the responsibility of a self-represented party to either update their information to receive orders electronically or access the court file upon filing a motion/request that may have a short time frame to comply if granted (i.e. extensions of time; summary procedure-evictions).*
- **Responses to Inquiries:** The judicial assistant is happy to assist with the court's cases and docket. However, the judicial assistant may not provide legal advice or discuss specific case details. Self-represented parties are held to the same standard as a party represented by counsel and must follow the same rules of law, procedure, and evidence that lawyers are required to follow. *Inappropriate communication with the court that discuss specific, substantive case information or details, request legal advice, or inquire of information outside the purview of the judicial assistant's administrative role will be rejected.*
- **Court Reporters and Translators:** The court does not provide audio recording; court reporting; nor, translators. *It is the responsibility of the party requiring the service to make appropriate arrangements prior to the hearing. See [AO S-2025-014, paragraph 22](#).*

B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:** New court dates and times are released every thirty (30) days on the last Monday of each month, unless it falls on a court holiday, then they will be released on the Friday before the Holiday.
- **Scheduling Hearings:** Attorneys may access the court's calendar via online scheduling platform JAWS. If there are no dates/times available, please check JAWS frequently for cancellations, or contact the judicial office. When scheduling, counsel is certifying that they have reviewed the Judicial Practices and Procedures herein. Self-represented parties may contact the judicial office to request hearing dates and times.
 - (1) Uniform Motion Calendar (UMC): Hearings not to exceed five (5) minutes in total or three (3) minutes per side, set through JAWS directly. *Please do not set contested motions where both parties are represented; evidentiary motions; or anything that requires a binder of case law on the UMC.*
 - (2) Daily 15 and Daily 30: Hearings are offered daily in 15- and 30-minute increments. This is total hearing time. Parties should confer with opposing counsel on the exact time each side needs prior to selecting a time slot and set through JAWS directly.
 - (3) Case Management Conferences (CMC): CMCs may be set in either a Daily 15 or Daily 30 minute time slot through JAWS directly.
 - (4) Pretrial Conferences (excluding Small Claims): Pretrial Conferences are set by the court and require an order. **See Section I. Setting Case for Trial.**
 - (5) Final Hearings or hearings 1 hour or more: All Final Hearings are set by the court and require an order. Hearings one (1) hour or more are set by the court. Contact the judicial office to request hearing dates and times.
- **Notice of Hearing:** The scheduling party must file a notice of hearing and serve all parties immediately after reserving hearing time. The notice must contain the judicial Zoom credentials if appearance(s) will be remote and the ADA notification required by **Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.540.** **See Section C. Remote Appearance.**

If you need an ADA accommodation, please review <https://www.fljud13.org/businessoperations/courtfacilities/adaaccommodations.aspx>.

- **Order of Proceedings:** Scheduled hearings will be heard at the time noticed. Attorneys will generally be heard first on the UMC; Small Claims Pretrial Conference; and, Dismissal dockets.
- **Continuance Procedure:** A scheduling party may cancel a hearing as permitted below. An opposing party may file a motion complying with **Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e)**. Provide a courtesy copy to the judicial office via email, copying all parties, for the court's immediate consideration. To continue trial, **See Section I. Setting a Case for Trial.**
- **Cancelling Hearings:**
 - (1) Hearings scheduled to take place more than 24 hours may be cancelled by the scheduling party by filing a notice of cancellation; removing the hearing from JAWS; and, providing a courtesy copy to the judicial office via email, copying all parties.
 - (2) Cancelling within 24 hours of hearing:
 - **Case(s) with DCM Order/CMO with active deadlines-** the scheduling party may cancel a hearing same as above.
 - **Case(s) with expired DCM Order/CMO-** parties may NOT cancel the hearing. The court invokes **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200(j)** for the purpose of case management and your hearing time slot will be converted to a CMC. Parties shall familiarize themselves with the Rule, including the motion provision and be prepared to propose realistic deadlines for the court to impose. All parties may appear via Zoom.
- **Unilateral Scheduling:** Unilateral scheduling is not permitted. If it becomes necessary to involve the court in scheduling, the requesting party may submit a **Request for Court Date**. The court will select a hearing date and time for the parties at the court's convenience no less than thirty (30) days out from the request.
- **Mediation Requirement:** Mediation is required prior to a hearing on a Motion for Summary Judgment/Disposition; Final Hearing; or, Pretrial Conference for Non-Jury and Jury Trial, unless excused by the court. Per **AO S-2025-014, paragraph 11**, all PIP and Windshield cases must mediate prior to trial. *Failure to attend mediation will result in dismissal or default.*
- **Dismissal Docket:** For matters not removed from the dismissal docket by the Clerk of Court, the court requires:

- (1) Timely, written showing of good cause. See Fla. R. Civ. Pr. 1.420(e) and Fla. Sm. C. R. 7.110(e).
- (2) Appearance is mandatory in person for attorneys and self-represented parties. Parties represented by counsel are not required to appear. *The court will not consider proposed orders granting a showing of good cause prior to the hearing.*
- (3) The court invokes Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200(j) for the purpose of small claims case management. Parties shall familiarize themselves with the Rule including the motion provision and be prepared to propose realistic deadlines for the court to impose. *Preparation and compliance with this subsection will factor greatly in the showing of good cause.*

Scheduled matters not in compliance with the Judicial Practices and Procedures herein will be cancelled by the court. The court will cancel any hearing scheduled without motion or notice. Notices that do not include the correct judicial Zoom credentials for remote appearances will likewise be cancelled. It is the responsibility of the parties to reserve adequate time for both sides. The court may conclude and rule on the matter if the parties fail to reserve an appropriate amount of time for hearing.

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 Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.530 and herein.
- **Platform Used:** The court utilizes Zoom for remote appearances. Zoom may be downloaded free of charge for IOS and Android devices, and it may also be accessed via desktop computer.
- **Platform Meeting ID#:** 334 384 7719 Meeting Password: 705900. The judicial Zoom credentials are <https://fljud13-org.zoom.us/j/3343847719>
- **Requirements:**
 - (1) Uniform Motion Calendar (UMC) is conducted via Zoom only.
 - (2) The following hearings may be conducted via Zoom without permission from the court:
 - Non-evidentiary hearings not to exceed one (1) hour in length. *The filing of affidavits in a court file does not make a hearing non-evidentiary.*
 - Evidentiary hearings including Motions for Summary Judgment/Disposition not to exceed one (1) hour in length with a clerk's default entered. However, **See Section M. YOUR COURT DAY.**
 - Case Management Conferences (CMC)
 - (3) The following hearings are mandatory in person, there are no exceptions:
 - Pretrial Conferences
 - Contested Attorney Fee Hearings
 - Dismissal Docket
 - Final Hearings
 - Trials (non-jury and jury)
 - Any hearing exceeding one (1) hour in length
 - If requested by the court
 - (4) The following hearings are mandatory in person unless waived by court order:

- Small Claims Pretrial Conferences
 - Evidentiary hearings including Motions for Summary Judgment/Disposition not to exceed one (1) hour in length
 - Orders to Show Cause
- (5) A party requesting an order to appear via Zoom for any mandatory in person hearing specified in (4) may upload a proposed Motion and Order to Appear Via Zoom for Division I to the judge's queue. *Orders granting or denying a request to appear via Zoom are final and will not be reconsidered.*

• **Technology Needs/Prohibitions:**

- (1) Video and audio capability required. *Camera access is required, or appearance must be in person.*
- (2) Sign in with first and last name.
- (3) Immediately mute your microphone upon leaving the waiting room and entering the proceeding. Keep your microphone muted until your case is called.
- (4) Parties shall be dressed appropriately, in a quiet setting, minimize external distractions, and avoid moving around. Appearance shall be the same as if in a physical courtroom.
- (5) Witnesses must have an identification to verify identity.
- (6) The court does not permit screen sharing.
- (7) Any and all evidence, including affidavits/exhibits a party wishes the court to consider must be filed within the court file and properly identified. **See Section G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings.**

Appearing via Zoom is a privilege that may be lost. The court may require Parties attend in person for any reason. A court hearing held on Zoom, like a court hearing held in person, is an official court event subject to consequences for a failure to appear at the hearing. If you fail to appear at your properly noticed hearing on Zoom or fail to adhere to the court's practices and procedures herein, the consequences, may include, but are not limited to, cancellation of your hearing; conduct and resolution of the hearing without your participation; striking the motion if you are the moving party; dismissal of your case if you are a plaintiff; entry of a judgment against you if you are a defendant; and/or, requiring your appearance in person for future proceedings.

D. Submission of Orders and Judgments

- **Format:**
 - (1) Submit in PDF format;
 - (2) Contain date of hearing;
 - (3) Identify the motion; and,
 - (4) Accompanied by a cover letter certifying that all parties agree to the form and content of the order.
 - (5) If the Parties disagree as to the form or content of a proposed order, a competing order may be submitted as detailed herein.
- **Submission Method:** All proposed orders must be submitted using the Florida E-Filing Portal. *Orders uploaded using the case filing tab in the E-Filing Portal will not be forwarded to the judge's queue for consideration, they must be submitted as a proposed order, specifically select "Submit Proposed Order(s) to Judiciary (Court)" tab to be re-directed to the judge's queue.* Self-represented parties may submit proposed orders to the Clerk of Court.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Following an *ore tenus* pronouncement at hearing, proposed orders are due within ten (10) days. *The court intends the proposed order to be effective the date of the hearing, not from the date of the order. Failure to submit an order within this time frame, may result in the motion being denied.*
- **Competing Orders:** Competing orders will only be considered if requested by the court. Submit to the judicial office via email, copying all Parties; in Word format; and, "Competing Order" in the subject line. *Competing orders uploaded to queue will be rejected or set aside if signed in error.*
- **Unsolicited Orders** (direct submissions to judge's queue without hearing): Proposed orders submitted without a hearing must be permitted by Rule or herein and have an accompanying motion. *Unsolicited orders will be rejected.*
- **Rulings Reserved:** Please do not inquire about the entry of a proposed order prior to thirty (30) days of hearing. If the court reserved ruling, the court intends to publish ruling within thirty (30) days, but no later than sixty (60) days of hearing.

E. Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents

- **When Required:** Highlighted copies of case law in which a party relies on must be submitted to the court prior to any proceeding.
- **Format:** Case law must be PDF format.
- **Submission Method:** If the case law is five (5) or less cases the submission may be made to the judicial office via email, copying all parties. Any matters with more cases must be provided in paper form to the judicial office.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Courtesy copies must be submitted or delivered to the judicial office no later than three (3) business days before any proceeding.

F. Emergency and Other Urgent Matters

- **Requirements:** See [AO S-2025-014, paragraph 23](#).
- **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. Attorneys shall file the motion, provide a courtesy copy to the judicial office via email, copying all parties, for the court's immediate consideration. Self-represented parties shall file all Emergency Motions and documents with the Clerk of Court and designate that the matter is an "Emergency." All emergency motions must comply with *Smith v. Crider*, 932 So.2d 393 (Fla. 2nd DCA 2006). *It is the responsibility of a self-represented party to either update their information to receive orders electronically or access the court file upon filing a motion/request to obtain status on matters that may have a short time frame to comply if granted (i.e. extensions of time; summary procedure-evictions).*

G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings

- **Format:**

- (1) Attach to the motion or file contemporaneously (the same time) in support of the motion.
- (2) Clearly identify numerically or alphabetically.
- (3) Separate Filing Required. The court requires that any previously filed exhibit within the court file be specifically identified and filed separately for the purpose in which it is being offered.
- (4) An Exhibit List is required for Final Hearing or Trial.

- **Submission Method:** Exhibits shall be filed electronically through the Florida E-Filing Portal or with the Clerk of Court to be made part of the court file in accordance with **Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.525**.

- **Deadline for Submissions:**

- (1) Final Hearing and Trial: Deadlines for submission are established in Order Setting Pretrial and Trial and Order Setting Final Hearing. *Exhibit List(s) not received by the deadline may not be considered by the court.*
- (2) Exhibit Binders prepared in advance with exhibits sequentially tabbed are helpful and greatly assist in the orderly and speedy disposition of matters. All exhibit binders must be received in the judicial office three (3) business days prior to the evidentiary proceeding.

- **Paper Copies Required:** For each exhibit listed on the exhibit list (other than demonstrative exhibits), a party must provide enough paper copies for each party, the witness, the Clerk of Court, and the court.

- **Electronic Evidence:** Electronic evidence should be downloaded into paper form and filed with the Clerk of Court. *The court will not review smart phones, tablets, or electronic evidence not in the court file.*

H. Pretrial Procedures

- **Motions:**

- (1) Conferral: Represented parties must comply with **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.202** prior to filing a motion unless exempt. *Failure to comply with the requirements of this rule may result in an appropriate sanction, including denial of a motion without prejudice.*
- (2) Contents of Motion: A motion must include a concise statement of the precise relief requested; a statement of the legal basis for the request; and authority (rule or statute) that allows for the relief requested. *Pleadings filed without appropriate legal authority may be stricken or denied as facially insufficient.*
- (3) Artificial Intelligence (AI): If any attorney for a party, or self-represented party used AI in any way in the preparation of any paper filed with the court, and assigned to Division I, shall in a clear and plain factual statement, disclose that AI was used and certify that each and every citation to the law or the record in the paper, has been verified as accurate. *Failure to comply may result in sanctions, including dismissal.*
- (4) Agreed Motions: If the Parties agree to the relief sought in a motion, the title must include “agreed,” “unopposed” or “stipulated,” as appropriate. If the Parties agree, a proposed order may be submitted in lieu of a hearing.
- (5) Abandoned Motions: The court has an expectation that motions are filed with the intention of being resolved either by agreement or court intervention. *The court may sua sponte deem any motion pending more than sixty (60) days without a notice of hearing as abandoned and denied without prejudice.*
- (6) Ex-Parte Motions to Compel: See **AO S-2025-014, paragraph 16** and **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.380(a)(2)**.
- (7) Motions/Orders for Disbursement of Registry Funds: See **AO S-2025-014, paragraph 6 and 7**.
- (8) Motions for Summary Judgment: See below
- (9) Motions for Attorney Fees: Upon the filing of a Motion for Attorney’s Fees, the moving party must contemporaneously **upload an Order**

on Requirements Preliminary to Hearing on Motion to Tax Costs and Award Attorney's Fees to judge's queue.

(10) Submission Method: Motions shall be filed electronically through the Florida E-Filing Portal or with the Clerk of Court to be made part of the court file. Electronically filing a document transmitted through the Portal does not automatically notify the judge's office that the document has been filed.

- **Responses in Opposition to Motion:** To give the court and opposing counsel/party adequate time to prepare, if a response is required or desired, absent a Rule prescribing a time frame, it shall be filed at least ten (10) days prior to hearing.

- **Amending DCM Order/CMO:**

(1) Parties stipulate to new deadlines:

- **File agreed motion** alleging good cause and **upload an agreed proposed Amended Differentiated Case Management (DCM) Order** to judge's queue.
- **Hearing required** if the proposed Amended DCM Order extends a particular deadline beyond ninety (90) days. *Motions and/or proposed orders to generally extend all deadlines for a certain number of days without a proposed Amended DCM Order/CMO will be rejected.*
- Parties may submit an agreed motion and proposed order in lieu of a hearing to extend or enlarge time pursuant to Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.090 if that extension does not affect a deadline in the DCM Order/CMO or changing the date does not affect downstream dates without an Amended DCM Order.

(2) Motion to Amend Differentiated Case Management (DCM) Order:

- **File motion** prior to the deadline; in accordance with Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200(e)(3); and, **attach a proposed Amended Differentiated Case Management (DCM) Order.**
- **Set Case Management Conference** within ten (10) days of filing the motion. *Failure to append an Amended DCM Order/CMO for the court to consider with the motion and/or failure to timely set for hearing may result in the motion being denied.*

(3) Cases over three (3) years old require a Case Management Conference to extend/establish deadlines.

(4) Strict compliance.

- **Cases filed before the 2025 amendment:** All cases not exempt must have an active DCM Order/CMO. Cases with inactive DCM Order/CMO are subject to being set for trial. Absent a ratified Amended DCM Order/CMO, the court may *sua sponte* issue an Order Setting Pretrial and Trial. Once amended, deadlines are strictly enforced.

- **Cases filed after the 2025 amendment:** Deadlines in a DCM Order/CMO are strictly enforced. Notices of unavailability do not change the deadlines in the DCM Order/CMO. Requests (either by motion or stipulation) to extend a deadline must be made prior to their expiration. *Failure to make an extension request prior to the deadline may result in the denial of the request.*

- **Case Management Conferences (CMC):**

(1) The court treats status conferences as CMCs. Any party may schedule a CMC when a case requires a status or court intervention.

(2) Set through JAWS directly (if counsel) in either a Daily 15 or Daily 30-minute time slot or contact the judicial office.

(3) Appearance is mandatory for attorneys and self-represented parties. Parties represented by counsel are not required to appear.

(4) Zoom permitted without permission from the court.

(5) Parties shall familiarize themselves with **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200(j)** including the motion provision and be prepared to propose realistic deadlines for the court to impose.

- **Mediation Requirement:**

(1) Required:

- Unless excused by the court. *Failure to attend mediation will result in dismissal or default.*

- Prior to a hearing on a Motion for Summary Judgment/Disposition; Final Hearing; or, Pretrial Conference for Non-Jury and Jury Trial.
 - For all PIP and Windshield cases. See [AO S-2025-014 paragraph 11](#).
- (2) Waived for clerk defaults.
- **Clerk Defaults:**
 - (1) No Mediation Requirement.
 - (2) Entry of Final Judgment.
 - **File sufficient motion.**
 - **Attach affidavits/exhibits or file affidavits/exhibits contemporaneously** with the motion. See [Section G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings](#).
 - **No hearing required** if all damages liquidated.
 - **Upload a proposed order.** See [Checklist for Entry of Final Judgment](#). *Proposed orders submitted with insufficient motions will be rejected and set for hearing.*
 - **Motions for Summary Judgment (MSJ):**
 - (1) Mediation Requirement. *MSJs scheduled without a mediation report, will be struck from the docket.*
 - (2) MSJs are evidentiary. *The filing of affidavits in a court file does not make an MSJ hearing non-evidentiary.*
 - (3) Hearing required if there is any opposition. This includes both sides represented by counsel; an answer; participation in discovery; participation in mediation; and/or a formal response.
 - (4) Compliance with [Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.510](#).
 - **Pretrial Conference (excluding Small Claims):** See [Section I. Setting Case for Trial](#)

I. Setting Case for Trial

- Notice for Trial or Motion to Set Trial: See [AO S-2025-04, paragraph 17](#)
 - (1) **File stipulated notice or motion** prior to the deadline in the DCM Order/CMO (260 days after filing of complaint for Streamlined cases and 360 days after filing of complaint for General cases)
 - (2) **Must identify** the deadline of the pretrial conference and projected trial term (month and year) in the DCM Order/CMO; estimated time required for Parties to present their case (hours or days); estimated number of witnesses anticipated to testify; and request for bench trial (non-jury trial) or jury trial.
 - (3) **Provide a courtesy copy to the judicial office** via email, copying all Parties. court will issue an [Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial](#). The court will endeavor to set the Pretrial Conference on or around the deadline in the active DCM Order/CMO, but never before. The Order will set new deadlines and supersede the DCM Order/CMO. The actual trial date will be scheduled at the Pretrial Conference. *The court may issue an Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial sua sponte at any time consistent with the deadlines in the active DCM Order/CMO.*
 - (4) **If the DCM Order/CMO is inactive** (deadlines expired) or cases exempt from DCM Order/CMO, provide a courtesy copy of the filed stipulated notice or motion to the judicial office via email, copying all Parties. Upon receipt the court will schedule a Case Management Conference. Parties shall familiarize themselves with [Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200\(j\)](#) including the motion provision and be prepared to propose realistic deadlines for the court to impose. The court will issue an [Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial with DCM Merge](#) following the Case Management Conference.
- **Notice Period**: The court does not set date-certain trial in the Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial. Parties will be given a trial week. The actual trial date will be scheduled at the Pretrial Conference.
- **Pretrial Conference**:
 - (1) Every month has a designated Pretrial Conference Day and a corresponding trial week approximately thirty (30) days later. Jury picks are conducted on Fridays. See [2026 Pretrial and Trial Dates](#).

- (2) Set by the Court by issuance of Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial.
 - (3) Appearance is mandatory in person for all parties, even if represented by counsel. Counsel that intends to try the case must be present.
 - (4) Joint Pretrial Conference Statement and all other deadlines are established in Order Setting Pretrial and Trial.
- **Motions to Continue Trial:** If the court has entered an Order Setting Pretrial Conference and Trial, motions to continue must comply with **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.460**. Once filed, the moving party must provide a courtesy copy to the judicial office via email, copying all parties for the court's immediate consideration.
 - **Settlement:** If the case settles prior to the Pretrial Conference, Trial or Final Hearing, one of the parties must file a notice of settlement, joint stipulation or dismissal and provide a courtesy copy to the judicial office via email, copying all parties.

J. Forms

- **Access:** Division forms are available at <https://www.fljud13.org/JudicialDirectory/ChristineDEdwards/Forms.aspx>
- **Usage:** Division forms are outlined in **blue** herein and preferred for all relevant filings and ensure compliance with the Judicial Practices and Procedures.
- **References:** In addition to division forms, commonly referenced rules and administrative orders are outlined in **red** herein and also available at <https://www.fljud13.org/JudicialDirectory/ChristineDEdwards/Forms.aspx>

K. Small Claims Procedure

- *This section includes some common issues regarding small claims. However, Parties shall review all practice and procedures herein to ensure compliance.*
- **Extension/Enlargement of Time to Effectuate Service:**
 - (1) File motion prior to deadline alleging good cause. *Failure to make an extension request prior to the deadline may result in the denial of the request.*
 - (2) Upload a proposed order to judge's queue including the following language: "Court invokes **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.070(j)** for the purpose of extending the deadline for service of process. Plaintiff shall serve Defendant within (30, 60 or 90) days of this order; and, failure to effectuate service within the time frame prescribed herein may result in a dismissal of the complaint without prejudice."
 - (3) *Absent a Motion, cases pending for more than 120 days will be noticed administratively to serve within 60 days or the claim will be dismissed without prejudice for failing to timely serve defendant.*
- **Dismissal Docket:** For matters not removed from the dismissal docket by the clerk, the court requires
 - (1) Timely, written showing of good cause. See **Fla. R. Civ. Pr. 1.420(e)** and **Fla. Sm. C. R. 7.110(e)**.
 - (2) Appearance is mandatory in person for attorneys and self-represented parties. Parties represented by counsel are not required to appear. *The court will not consider proposed orders granting a showing of good cause prior to the hearing.*
 - (3) The court invokes **Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200(j)** for the purpose of small claims case management. Parties shall familiarize themselves with the Rule including the motion provision and be prepared to propose realistic deadlines for the court to impose. *Preparation and compliance with this subsection will factor greatly in the showing of good cause.*
- **Small Claim Pretrial Conferences:**
 - (1) Set by Clerk of Court. See **AO S-2025-014 paragraph 12**.

- (2) Appearance is mandatory in person unless waived by court order. **See Section C: Remote Appearance.** Parties represented by counsel are not required to appear. *Failure to appear may result in dismissal or default.*
- (3) Continuances only granted on limited basis by timely motion or as permitted by **Fla. Sm. Cl. R. 7.090(e).**

- **Mediation Requirement:**

- (1) Scheduled at Pretrial Conference.
- (2) Required:
 - Unless excused by the court. *Failure to attend mediation will result in dismissal or default.*
 - Prior to a hearing on a Motion for Summary Judgment/Disposition; Final Hearing; or, Final Pretrial Conference for Non-Jury and Jury Trial.
- (3) Waived for clerk defaults.

- **Clerk Defaults:**

- (1) No Mediation Requirement.
- (2) Entry of Final Judgment.
 - **File sufficient motion.** **See Section H. Pretrial Procedures (2) Contents of Motion.**
 - **Attach affidavits/exhibits or file affidavits/exhibits contemporaneously** with the motion. **See Section G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings.**
 - **No hearing required** if all damages liquidated.
 - **Upload a proposed order.** **See Checklist for Entry of Final Judgment.** *Proposed orders submitted with insufficient motions will be rejected and set for hearing.*

- **Motions for Summary Disposition:**

- (1) Mediation Requirement. *MSJs scheduled without a mediation report, will be struck from the docket.*
- (2) MSJs are evidentiary. *The filing of affidavits in a court file does not make an MSJ hearing non-evidentiary.*
- (3) Hearing required if there is any opposition. This includes both sides represented by counsel; an answer; denial at Pretrial Conference; participation in discovery; participation in mediation; and/or a formal response.
- (4) Compliance with **Fla. Sm. Cl. R. 7.135**.

- **Procedure for Setting Case for Final Hearing/Trial:**

- (1) Following an impasse at mediation, the matter will be set for Final Hearing.
 - Bench trials/non-jury trials.
 - **Set by the Court** by issuing an [Order Setting Final Hearing](#).
 - Appearance is **mandatory in person for all parties**, even if represented by counsel. Counsel that intends to try the case must be present.
 - Scheduled for **1 hour duration**.
 - **Objections** (jury trial demand, hearing time to exceed 1 hour, request for Final Pretrial Conference) must be received within ten (10) days of the date of Order Setting Final Hearing.
- (2) Any party may schedule a Final Pretrial Conference within ten (10) days of Order Setting Final Hearing.
 - **Mandatory** if jury trial requested or time for Final Hearing will exceed one (1) hour.
 - **Set through JAWS directly** (if counsel) as a CMC in a Daily 30 time slot or contact the judicial office.

- Appearance is **mandatory in person for all parties**, even if represented by counsel. Counsel that intends to try the case must be present.
- Parties shall **be prepared** to discuss disputed issues of fact and law, the number of witnesses expected to testify, all exhibits and evidence; and an estimate of the time needed.

L. Post Judgment Procedure

- **Claim of exemptions:** Any questions or concerns on the process shall be directed to ClaimofExemption@hillsclerk.com.

M. YOUR COURT DAY

- Any hearing that could result in a judgment is the functional equivalent of a trial. It is the court's expectation that on your court date, all evidence the court needs to decide the issue is presented **on that day**. The court may not allow a continuance or supplementation of the record absent a Rule that permits such relief, and proceed to ruling based on the merits, even if:
 - (1) Parties opted to appear remotely for hearing and evidence is not filed prior to hearing. The court does not permit screen sharing.
 - (2) The affidavits/exhibits filed in lieu of live testimony are insufficient or deficient. *In the event of a default, the moving party seeking final relief must still prove damages for each Count in the complaint.*
 - (3) The evidence relied upon is filed within the court file but not specifically identified and attached/filed contemporaneously for the purpose of the intended hearing.
 - (4) Electronic evidence is not downloaded into paper form and filed with the Clerk of Court.
 - (5) Technological issues, including camera access.
 - (6) Represented parties did not reserve adequate time for hearing.
 - (7) Parties failed to provide the court authority and case law prior to hearing.
 - (8) Witnesses are unavailable.
- Parties are always welcome to attend **any** hearing in person, regardless of whether remote (Zoom) appearance is allowed.