

# 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 CirCivDivE@fljud13.org. The subject line must contain the case number, case name, and relevant matter (e.g., 2024 DR 001234 SC – Doe v. Doe - 2-Hour 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.

- **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 answer questions about anything but scheduling and preferences.

## **B. Scheduling Procedures**

- **Court Schedule:** Trial and Pretrial dates are listed under the “Schedule” link in the gray box in the upper left hand side of this page. A uniform motion calendar (UMC) docket is scheduled each week, a long with daily hearings, except for during trial weeks. A foreclosure docket is scheduled once a month. Available dates and times are listed in JAWS (the Court’s online scheduling platform) for hearings lasting 30 minutes or less.
- **Scheduling Hearings:** (1) The UMC docket is a multicase docket, and hearing should only be scheduled on the docket if it can be heard within 5 minutes; (2) Hearings of 30 minutes or less must be scheduled using the 15-minute or 30-minute daily time slots listed in JAWS; (3) Hearings requiring more than 30 minutes must be requested by e-mail to CirCivDivE@fljud13.org and include the case name, case number, the title of the motion or matter to be heard, the date the motion or matter was filed, and the amount of time needed; or (4) 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 the scheduling of the hearing.
- **Notice of Hearing:** A notice of hearing must be filed and served immediately after reserving hearing time. A notice of hearing should include (1) the title of the motion or matter to be heard, and date filed, (2) the amount of time reserved, (3) if the hearing is an evidentiary hearing, and (4) if the hearing is remote or in person. 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 a hard copy of all materials for the hearing no later than **three** business days before the hearing.

- **Order of Proceedings:** Matters will be heard in the order they appear on the docket.
- **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:** Hearing time is a limited resource. If you no longer need a hearing time, you must cancel hearings by notifying the judicial assistant immediately at [CirCivDivE@fljud13.org](mailto:CirCivDivE@fljud13.org). If you scheduled the hearing through JAWS, you should be able to cancel the hearing through JAWS. You must also immediately file and serve a notice of cancellation on opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant. Court-ordered hearings cannot be canceled except by court order.

### C. Remote Appearance

- **Remote Appearance Procedure:** The Court uses remote appearances for the UMC docket, the Foreclosure docket, Case Management Conferences, and hearings lasting 30 minutes or less. **Pretrials and hearings lasting more than 30 minutes are in person.**
- **Platform Used:** The Court uses Zoom for remote appearances.
- **Platform Meeting ID#:** Meeting ID#: 808 831 4751 (password not required).
- **Requirements:** Hearings scheduled for 30 minutes or less, other than pretrials, are automatically held via Zoom. If an in-person hearing is needed for hearing lasting 30 minutes or less, please notify the judicial assistant at [CirCivDivE@fljud13.org](mailto:CirCivDivE@fljud13.org) before scheduling.
- **Technology Needs:** If a remote appearance is needed for an out-of-town or expert witnesses, a request for a remote appearance must be made by motion.
- **[Other Remote Appearance Procedures]:** For hearings lasting more than 30 minutes, a request for a remote appearance must be made by motion. Please note: the Court does not conduct hybrid hearings. All parties either appear in person or via Zoom.

### D. Submission of Orders and Judgments

- **Format:** All proposed orders must be submitted in PDF format through Florida's E-filing Portal. 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:** E-Filing Portal to Circuit Civil Division E work queue. If parties are submitting competing orders, the proposed orders should be e-mailed, in Word format, to the judicial assistant at [CirCivDivE@fljud13.org](mailto:CirCivDivE@fljud13.org).
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Proposed orders must be submitted within 10 days after any hearing.
- **[Other Procedures Relating to Submission of Orders and Judgments]:** A proposed order should be submitted for the judge's review only after (1) the proposed order has been shown to the other side, (2) the other side has either agreed to the order, failed to respond after five days, or indicated that they object to the proposed order and will submit their own competing order. If a party is pro se and does not have an e-mail address associated with the case, the attorney will be responsible for mailing copies of the order to pro se parties.

## **E. Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents**

- **When Required:** If you intend to rely on case law in support of a motion or the matter to be heard, copies of the case law must be submitted no later than three business days prior to the hearing. Courtesy copies of case law, motions to be heard, and/or hearing binders must be submitted to the Court in advance of the hearing.
- **Format:** Hard Copies (Paper)
- **Submission Method:** U.S. mail or delivery
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Courtesy copies must be delivered to the Court no later than three business days before any hearing. If case law is not submitted prior to the hearing, it will not be considered by the Court.
- **[Other Courtesy Copies Procedures]:** Hearing binders must be indexed and tabbed.

## **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. The party must identify the motion as an emergency when submitted through the e-portal. The Clerk of Court will notify the judge when they receive an 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.
- **[Other Procedures Relating to Emergency and Other Urgent Matters]:** Please follow all instructions and requirements provided by the Clerk of Court and Administrative Order S-2024-046.

## G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings

- **Submission Method:** Please contact the Clerk's office at [Joylynn.martinez@hillsclerk.com](mailto:Joylynn.martinez@hillsclerk.com) for instructions on the numbering and marking of exhibits for trials and in person hearings.
- **Format:** Exhibits must be submitted to the Clerk of Court in paper format. All attorneys and self-represented litigants must bring sufficient copies of each exhibit for the clerk, the Court, and each party to review during the hearing or trial. Exhibits must be labeled in the following format: 'Petitioner/Plaintiff 1' or 'Respondent/Defendant A.'
- **Deadline for Submissions:** All exhibits must be received in paper format in chambers three business days before the evidentiary proceeding.

## H. Pretrial Procedures and Conferences

- **Differentiated Case Management Conferences (DCMs):** DCMs are held on Zoom. DCMs will be cancelled if all parties have been served and the Court issues a Uniform Order Setting Trial & Pretrial. The parties are encouraged to upload to the ePortal a Uniform Order Setting Trial & Pretrial with a cover letter indicating "This case is set for a DCM on x. However, the parties are in agreement with the trial dates as outlined in the DCM and have uploaded a proposed Uniform Order Setting Trial & Pretrial for the Court's consideration."
- **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.

- **Status Conference:** Any party may request a status conference when a case requires.
- **Requirements:** Any request for a CMC or status conference must articulate the reasons for the necessity of the conference.
- **Scheduling:** If the Court agrees that a CMC or status conference is required, the moving party may schedule the CMC or status conference through JAWS.
- **[Other Procedures Relating to Pretrial Procedures and Conferences]:** Controlling documents. Our case management obligations and processes are governed by rule and administrative order. See Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.200; Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.250, 2.545; AOSC21- 17 Amendment 3 (Fla. Jan. 8, 2022); 13th Cir. Admin. Order S-2024-085 found at fljud13.org.

## **I. Setting Case for Trial**

- **Procedure:** For all cases filed after May 1, 2021, a Differentiated Case Management Order was entered by the Clerk at the time the case was filed. It is essential to read that Differentiated Case Management Order (DCMO) in its entirety, calendar the deadlines, and follow its instructions. The trial will be scheduled according to the DCMO at the Differentiated Case Management Conference if not already scheduled.
- **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**

- **Access:** Division forms are available in the gray box in the upper left hand side of this page, under “Forms”.
- **Usage:** Division forms must be used for all relevant filings.
- **[Other Forms Procedures]:** There are a number of forms provided under the Forms tab that are specific to the Differentiated Case Management

process. For example, there is a specific trial order to be used with the Differentiated Case Management process, and several forms to be used when seeking an Amended Differentiated Case Management Order.

## **K. Other Division Procedures**

- **ADA Accommodations:** If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact (813) 272-7040; Hearing Impaired: 1-800-995-8771; Voice impaired: 1-800-955-8770; e-mail: [ADA@fljud13.org](mailto:ADA@fljud13.org) .
- **Interpreter Requests:** The Court does not provide interpreters. If an interpreter is needed for a hearing or trial, the party needing the interpreter is responsible for providing an interpreter.
- **[Other Division Procedures]:** The Court does not provide a court reporter. If a court reporter is needed, the parties are responsible for making the necessary arrangements.