

# Judicial Practices and Procedures Domestic Relations/Family Division “I”

(last modified the 2nd of December, 2025)

## Family Law Divisions Judicial Preferences Quick Reference Chart

Jeffrey M. Rich, Circuit Court Judge

Merissa Clark, Judicial Assistant

### Contact Information

Mailing Address: 800 E. Twiggs Street, Suite 424, Tampa, Florida 33602

Physical Address: 800 E. Twiggs Street, Suite 424, Tampa, Florida 33602

Telephone: (813) 276-2968

E-mail: FamLawDivI@fljud13.org

Attorneys, at all times, shall conduct themselves consistent with the [Guidelines for Professional Conduct](#) set forth on the Florid Bar Website, as well as the [HCBA Standards of Professionalism](#), and abide by the requirements of [Administrative Order 2025-013](#).

**If you are not represented by an Attorney, the Judicial Assistant (JA) cannot answer legal questions, give advice, or explain your situation to the Judge.** Your opportunity to speak to the Judge happens in **COURT ONLY**, when all parties are given the opportunity to be present and heard. If you are self-represented, the following information may be helpful:

[13<sup>th</sup> Circuit Self Help Information](#)

[Florida Courts Help](#)

[Bay Area Legal Services](#): (813) 232-1343

### Table of Contents

A. Communications with the Judicial Office.....	2
B. Scheduling Procedures .....	2
C. Remote Appearance.....	6
D. Submission of Orders and Judgments .....	7
E. Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents .....	8
F. Emergency and Other Urgent Matters.....	9
G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings.....	9
H. Pretrial Procedures and Conferences .....	10
I. Setting Case for Trial.....	10
J. Forms.....	11
K. Other Division Procedures.....	11

## A. Communications with the Judicial Office

- **Method of Communication:** The preferred method of communication with the Judicial Office is e-mail at [FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org](mailto:FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org). All communication with the Judicial Office should include: **case number, case name, which party you represent, what you are asking to be set, and how long you will need for the Hearing.** **ALTHOUGH THE JA MAY SEND COMMUNICATIONS OUTSIDE OF BUSINESS HOURS, SHE MIGHT NOT RESPOND TO INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS.**
- **Ex parte Communications:** All parties must be copied on any e-mail directed to the Judicial Office, unless an ex parte communication is authorized by law. 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.
- **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 CANNOT answer your legal questions and will not explain your situation to the Judge. Your opportunity to speak to the Judge happens in court.**

## B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:** Hearing times are provided on a first come first served bases, however they will not be held until all parties have agreed upon the hearing time. Do not include the Court/Judicial Assistant in your scheduling emails with the opposing party.
- **Scheduling Hearings:** The preferred method for scheduling is by JAWS. For any request for hearing times more than 30 minutes, please contact the JA. For any scheduling request:
  - The requesting party should e-mail the JA for hearing time(s) and copy opposing party (if opposing party is not included, it will delay the response).

- The JA will provide a minimum of two (2) available dates/times to the requesting party, also with a copy to opposing party.
- If the requesting party sends the dates the opposing party or attorney (whichever is applicable) by email, that responding party or the attorney's office is responsible for responding with his/her availability within two (2) business days of receiving the request.
- If the responding party or attorney fails to respond within two business days of the request, the requesting party may pick the hearing date and time of his/her choice per the Administrative Order.

The ability of the requesting party to choose a hearing date of his/her choice is an option ***only*** if:

1. *The requesting party has attempted in good faith to clear the dates/times with the opposing (or non-requesting) party, **AND***
2. *There has been no response from the responding party or attorney within two (2) business days of the request, **AND***
3. *The requesting party has documented the scheduling attempts through email.*

**Only** after the Court confirms the hearing date in the email, or if there has been no response from the other party pursuant to the above regarding the unilateral setting of a hearing, will the requesting party file and serve a Notice of Hearing.

**If the parties cannot agree** on the first set of proposed dates/times, they may request a second set of dates/times. If the parties cannot agree upon the second set of dates/times, the parties shall notify the JA of the scheduling impasse. If the parties reach a scheduling impasse, the Court will set a Case Management Conference to select a date or set the hearing regardless of prior attorney scheduling conflicts.

**Please Note:** *The Court will not provide hearing times before a motion has been filed on the issue the party is requesting hearing time for.*

- **Notice of Hearing:** The Court requires that a Notice of Hearing be filed for all hearings scheduled before the court. The notice shall be filed a reasonable amount of time for notice prior to the scheduled hearing. The hearing notice must include the following in addition to what the applicable law, including rules and administrative orders, requires:
  - The title of the motion to be heard
  - The date the underlying motion was filed and docket number, if available
  - The time and date of the scheduled hearing
  - The hearing location, including courtroom #
  - Whether the hearing is evidentiary
  - Whether a court reporter has been reserved for the hearing

- Zoom Information if granted/applicable (**Zoom ID: 370-4372-256**)

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

- **Submission Deadlines: Exhibits, responses to motions and copies of case law must be delivered or mailed to the Judge's chambers (copies of any documents provided to the Judge must be provided to all parties to the case) five (5) business days before the hearing. Any exhibits, responses to motions and copies of case law received by the Court less than five (5) business days before the hearing will not be reviewed or considered at 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:** Do not cancel a hearing without notification and agreement of all parties. A Notice of Cancellation **MUST** be immediately e-filed with the Clerk of Court **AND** a courtesy copy of said Notice of Cancellation sent to the division email address at [FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org](mailto:FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org).
- **Continuances:** If a continuance is agreed upon by all parties, contact the Judicial Assistant to remove the Hearing and/or trial from the docket. Upload the AGREED proposed Order for Continuance to the E-Portal for electronic signature. Before uploading to E-Portal, please ensure that the email of all parties associated with the case is listed on JAWS under "Associated Parties". The parties will receive an electronically signed conformed copy of the document.
- **Other Scheduling Procedures:**

**CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE (CMC):**

- The First Case Management Conference will not be canceled or rescheduled absent good cause shown by written motion and an order canceling or rescheduling.
- ***All Attorney CMC's will take place by Zoom until further notice (370-4372-256).***
- ***All Pro Se CMC's will be held in person in Courtroom #403 until further notice.***
- Parties requiring interpreters **MUST** provide their own interpreter. The Court will not provide interpreters for Family Law Hearings.
- The Court will cancel first CMCs set in post-judgment matters and refer the case to the General Magistrate if no order of referral has been submitted.

- Resetting CMC:
  - The parties must agree to a continuance of a reset CMC.
  - Contact JA by email, copying all parties, to request a continuance of CMC Reset.
  - Any agreed proposed order of continuance should include the CMC rescheduled hearing date and time.
  - All parties or attorneys must have an email address on file with the Court for service of the order. If a party does not have an email address on file, the proposed order must be submitted in hard copy to the Court with confirming copies and stamped envelopes.

## **UNIFORM MOTION CALENDAR (UMC)/OPEN DOCKET & 10 MIN HEARING**

### **DOCKETS:**

This multi-case docket may include but is not limited to: motions to compel discovery, motions for protective orders, motions to withdraw, uncontested final hearings, and motions to continue. Each side has 3 minutes to argue the motions/issues. Hearings set on these two styles of dockets will be conducted via Zoom (370-4372-256), until further notice, and can be scheduled in JAWS. **Complex matters will not be heard during the UMC docket and will be rescheduled.**

Attorneys must file a Notice of Hearing with the Clerk's Office and serve notice upon opposing counsel or a self-represented party in accordance with the applicable rules of procedure.

### **15 MIN/30 MIN HEARING DOCKET:**

This Motion Docket is for 15 or 30-minute hearings, and Default Final Hearings. **If your motion is Post-Judgment, IT MUST be referred to the General Magistrate and mediated if ordered to do so.** If you are unable to clear time on an available Motion Docket, you may email the Judicial Assistant to obtain alternative hearing times, with all parties copied on email. **Any hearing exceeding the time selected or appears to be evidentiary in nature will be rescheduled.** 15-Minute and 30-Minute hearings can be scheduled in JAWS by parties, once coordinated, and will be conducted in person in Courtroom #403.

### **MORE THAN 30 MIN HEARINGS:**

Please email our office for any scheduling request for more than 30 minutes. **If your motion is Post-Judgment, IT MUST be referred to the General Magistrate and mediated if ordered to do so.** You may contact the Judicial Assistant via email at [FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org](mailto:FAMLAWDIVI@fljud13.org). All parties must be copied on the email, and if a party encounters any issues obtaining hearing times, you may set a Case Management Conference (CMC) on the Open Docket so that the Court may address it. Please include in the Notice of CMC Hearing that the nature of the CMC is to discuss obtaining hearing time. All Hearings over 30 minutes will be conducted in person, in Courtroom #403.

### **MOTIONS:**

There will be no cross noticing on hearing time or “piggybacking” one motion upon a previously scheduled motion without timely notice to the parties and the Court. **No “piggybacked” motion will be heard unless otherwise determined by the Court that the docket will accommodate the hearing of the additional matters at the scheduled time.** The motions will be heard in the order in which they are scheduled.

- All motions will need to be typed (no handwritten motions) with opposing parties contact information included and filed with the Clerk of Court before asking for a hearing date. Parties on the case will need to be served with the filed motion or documents.
- All post-judgment motions must have an order of referral to the General Magistrate filed at the same time the motion is filed. All post-judgment matters **MUST** be mediated prior to the scheduling if ordered by the Court. You must email the Judicial Assistant to schedule post-judgment hearings.

### **TEMPORARY RELIEF:**

**Will be held pursuant to** Administrative Order S-2025-013. Regarding temporary relief hearings, mediation is mandatory prior to attending a hearing with the Court. If the moving party fails to schedule and/or cooperate in attending mediation prior to the Temporary Relief Hearing, the hearing **WILL BE CANCELLED** by the Judge. If the opposing (or non-moving) party fails to cooperate in attending mediation, the issue shall be addressed by the Judge at the Hearing where possible sanctions could be imposed. All Temporary Relief Hearings shall take place in person.

- At least two (2) business days prior to the scheduled Hearing, the moving party shall file the original [Temporary Relief Hearing Memorandum](#) with the Clerk of the Court and serve a copy on all parties, as well as deliver a copy to the Judge. A proposed [Parenting Plan](#) is also required if the case involves minor child(ren).
- Temporary Relief Hearings will be scheduled for sixty (60) minutes. If more than sixty (60) minutes is requested, please email explaining why more time is needed and whether the opposing party agrees to the additional time.

**FINAL HEARING/TRIALS** – See below.

**EMERGENCY MOTIONS** – See below.

### **POST-JUDGMENT HEARINGS:**

All post-judgment matters must have an order of referral to the General Magistrate filed at the same time the motion is filed. All post-judgment matters **MUST** be mediated prior to the scheduling if ordered by the Court. You must email the Judicial Assistant to schedule post-judgment hearings.

## **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 NO LESS THAN TEN (10) BUSINESS DAYS before the hearing.

- **Platform Used:** The court uses Zoom for remote appearances.
- **Platform Meeting ID#:** The Zoom Meeting ID for Judge Rich is 370-4372-256, no password is required.
- **Requirements:** It is the responsibility of the party who is appearing remotely, or the responsibility of the party who is calling the remote witness to ensure that the individual appearing remotely has any and all exhibits that may be referenced at the hearing.
- **Other Remote Appearance Procedures:**
  1. Individuals/parties appearing remotely must clearly indicate their name on screen.
  2. All parties are to remain muted until their matter is called or it is their turn to address the Court.
  3. All parties shall be appropriately dressed, as well as have their names displayed correctly. Parties will be brought in from the waiting room one case at a time to cut down on confusion and background noise. ***All parties are expected to still adhere to Guidelines for Professional Conduct. Any party not ready or causing a hinderance to the court process will be removed from the Zoom Hearing and rescheduled for an in-person.***

#### **D. Submission of Orders and Judgments**

- **Format:** Unless otherwise instructed, Proposed Orders that are agreed upon by both parties shall be submitted through the Florida E-Filing Portal in "PDF" format.

All Proposed Order should include a cover letter containing explanatory information, specifically: when the issue that is the subject of the proposed order was heard, the docket number of the motion, if the proposed order was provided to the opposing party, if an objection was received, if no response was received, and when the proposed order was provided to the opposing party.

Proposed Orders that are **NOT** agreed upon by the parties, in other words, Competing Orders, should be submitted to the Judicial Assistant by e-mail and attached as a "WORD" formatted document, which will be forwarded to the Judge upon receipt of both proposed competing Orders or with a cover letter indicating the objections to portions of the proposed order. The Court will determine if a hearing is necessary to resolve dispute.



**Incoming Withholding Orders** can be uploaded into E-Filing Portal. However, if one of the parties to the case is representing themselves and does not have an email address associated with the case, the individual submitting the Proposed Order through the E-Filing Portal must send a copy of the Proposed Order to the party that is self-represented and without an email address via mail.

- **Submission Method:** Proposed Orders that are agreed upon by the parties should be submitted to the Judge in Family Law Division "I" electronically through the Florida E-Filing Portal.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Unless otherwise specified by the Court, the Attorney or self-represented party directed to prepare the Order or Judgment must submit the proposed order to the Court within **ten (10) business days after the Court's decision**. If the Attorney or self-represented party designated to prepare the Order or Judgment fails to submit it, the Attorney for the opposing party or the opposing self-represented party may submit a Proposed order or Judgment within five (5) business days after that initial ten (10) day period.
- **Other Procedures Relating to Submission of Orders and Judgments:**

**FINAL DISPOSITION FORMS:**

A Final Disposition Form must be submitted at the time of submission of a proposed Final Order or Final Judgment in order to close the case.

**SIGNATURE BLOCK:**

Recent changes to JAWS regarding the judicial signature block added additional language and made the signature block larger. Proposed Orders should have sufficient space in the signature area for the Court to sign (with the larger signature block) and not cover any of the proposed Order's text. If there is insufficient space for the signature block, the Court may place the signature block in a location that does not cover any text on the proposed Order.

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

- **When Required:** Prior to any proceeding in which the case law/evidence is to be used.
- **Format:** Physical/paper/hard copies of the case law and/or exhibits must be submitted to the Court.
- **Submission Method:** Physical/paper/hard copies of the case law and/or exhibits may be submitted to the Court via U.S. mail or hand delivery.



- **Deadline for Submissions:** Courtesy copies must be submitted to the Court no less than five (5) days prior to any proceeding in which case law/evidence is to be used.
- **[Other Courtesy Copies Procedures]:** Responses to motions and copies of case law must be delivered to the Court three (3) days prior to any proceeding.

## **F. Emergency and Other Urgent Matters**

- **Requirements:** No party or Attorney should file an emergency motion without first studying *Smith v. Crider*, 31 F.L.W. D1018 (2<sup>nd</sup> DCA April, 2006). The moving party should file the original Emergency Motion with the Clerk of the Court, Edgecomb Courthouse, First Floor, 800 East Twiggs Street, Tampa, Florida 33602.
  - **Please Note: Do not hand-deliver** a copy of the Emergency Motion to the Judge's chambers. A Deputy Clerk provides the Emergency Motion to the Judge for review.
- **Scheduling:** Once the Judge has reviewed the court file and the Emergency Motion, the Judge will issue an Emergency Motion Handling Order to both parties. If a hearing is required, the Judicial Assistant will coordinate by email hearing dates/times with the parties.

## **G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings**

- **Submission Method:** Physical/paper/hard copies of the exhibits may be submitted to the Court via mail or hand delivery.
- **Format:** All attorneys and self-represented litigants must bring sufficient copies of each exhibit for 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". Please also organize the binders/documents with a "Table of Contents" with corresponding tabs displaying the documents.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Courtesy copies must be submitted to the Court no less than five (5) days prior to any proceeding in which case law/evidence is to be used.
  - Five (5) days prior to Trial in which alimony, child support and/or Attorney's fees are an issue, each party is required to provide the Court a copy of their respective final financial affidavit highlighting only the entries that are contested.
  - If Equitable Distribution (ED) is an issue, please provide a single ED Worksheet in Excel highlighting those items the parties agree upon and a different highlight color for those items not agreed upon. Attorneys are required to confer prior to the submission and create one document for the Court's consideration.

**Responses:** Responses to motions and copies of case law must be delivered to the Court three (3) days prior to any proceeding.

- **Other Procedures Relating to Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings:** Any material delivered to this court less than the deadline provided above for the hearing WILL NOT BE REVIEWED OR CONSIDERED AT THE HEARING.

## H. 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 parties. 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 the online scheduling platform (JAWS). If parties are unable to find a date or agree upon a date on the calendar, they may contact the Judicial Assistant for further assistance.

## I. Setting Case for Trial

- **Procedure:** Any trial request for over one (1) day must be set for a Case Management Conference. ". After the Case Management Conference is scheduled, a copy of the Notice of Hearing will be e-mailed to the Judicial Assistant at [FamLawDivI@fljud13.org](mailto:FamLawDivI@fljud13.org). ***All Pre-Trial Conferences (PTC) and Trials will be held in person in Courtroom #403.*** The parties in Dissolution of Marriage cases are required to upload an agreed [Equitable Distribution chart](#) prior to the PTC. In cases involving children, the parties are required to upload a Certificate of Completion of Parenting Course and a Proposed Parenting Plan prior to PTC. Failure to file these required documents may result in cancellation of the PTC and Trial.

Once all parties agree to the trial date, the [Uniform Order Setting Trial and Pre-Trial](#) shall be uploaded, through the E-Portal as a proposed order, ***within 48-hours.***

**NOTE:** A Pre-Trial Memorandum SHALL be electronically filed and served on each party by the other party, as well as a copy of both delivered to the Judge, at least three (3) business days prior to the Pre-Trial Conference. The parties should be prepared to discuss provisions set forth in the Pre-Trial Memorandums and Pre-Trial Conference Order.

- **Notice Period:** The Court sets date-certain trials. Attorneys, self-represented litigants, parties, and witnesses are expected to be available.
- **Other Procedures for Setting Case for Trial:** Unless the Court orders otherwise, the parties must have **completed mediation within the last six (6) months** prior to the trial request.

***No hearing or trial shall be delayed or continued beyond the scheduled starting time because parties need to confer with a witness or review evidence with a witness.***

## **J. Forms**

- **Access:** Division forms are available at [Link](#).
- **Usage:** Division forms must be used for all relevant filings.

## **K. Other Division Procedures**

- **ADA Accommodations:** If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact the ADA Coordinator via e-mail [ADA@fljud13.org](mailto:ADA@fljud13.org); telephone 1-813-272-7040; hearing impaired 1-800-955-8771; voice impaired 1-800-955-8770; or US Mail Administrative Office of the Courts, Attn.: ADA Coordinator, 800 E. Twiggs Street, Tampa, FL 33602.
- **Interpreter Requests:** If an interpreter is needed for a hearing or trial, the parties are responsible for contact and securing the necessary interpreters. The steps to secure interpreters must be done with enough time to have them present.
- **Other Division Procedures:**

Information about E-Filing is available from the [Hillsborough County Clerk Website](#).

- [Steps to Upload a Proposed Order to the Florida E-Portal](#)
- [Viewing Filed Documents \(HOVER\)](#)

The Hillsborough Online Viewing of Electronic Records (HOVER) provides remote viewing of court records maintained by the Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court, as authorized by [Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order 23-2](#). In this site, Attorneys of Record and Self-Represented Litigants (Pro Se) will have access to search case indexes and view case progress dockets not sealed or made confidential by Florida Rules of Judicial Procedure or court order.