

Judicial Practices and Procedures
(last modified June 1, 2025)

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Contact Information

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Circuit Criminal, Division M (Adult Mental Health Treatment Court)

- Location: Courtroom 52 (Courthouse Annex, Fifth Floor)
- Telephone: (813) 301-3825
- E-mail: MentalHealthDivM@fljud13.org

Circuit Criminal, Division V (Veterans Treatment Court)

- Location: Courtroom 52 (Courthouse Annex, Fifth Floor)
- Telephone: (813) 307-4475
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Circuit Criminal, Division W (Adult Drug Treatment Court)

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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 the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above. The subject line must contain the case number, case name, and relevant matter (e.g., 2025-CF-001234 – State v. John Doe – One Hour Hearing Requested). The e-mail should also expressly state whether the opposing party opposes or agrees to the request.
- **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 judge. Parties may only contact the judicial office in accordance with these practices and procedures.
- **E-Filing Portal Contact Information:** All attorneys and self-represented defendants must provide an e-mail address to receive signed orders electronically, unless excused. See Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.516. It is the responsibility of attorneys and self-represented defendants 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 provide legal advice or convey your situation to the judge. If the judicial assistant is out of the office, other judicial assistants may be assigned to temporarily cover the judicial assistant's duties as deemed necessary by the judge.

B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:** It is important to note that each Circuit Criminal Division listed above (e.g., Adult Mental Health Treatment Court; Veterans Treatment Court; and Adult Drug Treatment Court) are considered "Problem-Solving Courts". These Problem-Solving Courts operate on a bi-weekly calendar, consisting of individual case staffings and court hearings, which begin at 9:00 AM and 1:30 PM, Monday through Thursday. Please note, individual case staffings are conducted virtually using the judicial Zoom™ credentials and court hearings are conducted in person or, upon timely motion, telephonically. The judicial office will separately schedule motion hearings, competency hearings, and other evidentiary hearings, as needed.
- **Scheduling Hearings:** Requests for a hearing must be submitted by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above. Parties should identify a hearing date and time that is convenient for both sides; however, if a hearing date and time cannot be agreed upon, the judicial assistant will schedule the hearing date and time based upon the earliest availability of the judge.
- **Notice of Hearing:** A notice of hearing must be filed and served immediately after reserving the hearing date and time. A notice of hearing involving virtual appearance must list the judicial Zoom™ credentials. All notices of hearing must contain the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) notification as required by law. See Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.540.
- **Submission Deadlines:** The judicial office must receive all materials for the hearing no later than three (3) business days before the hearing.
- **Order of Proceedings:** Cases will be heard in the order they appear on the docket, however, parties represented by attorneys will generally be heard first. Please note, the judge may hear select cases first or early on the docket as an incentive for a defendant's compliance in treatment, which is based upon Florida Problem-Solving Court Best Practice Standards. All cases should be ready to proceed on the date and time for which they have been set. A defendant given notice and required to appear may be subject to a bench warrant (referred to as a "capias") for failing to appear.
- **Continuance Procedure:** Continuances are disfavored and will be granted only upon good cause shown. A motion for continuance must be submitted at least five (5) business 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 law. See Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e).

- **Cancelling Hearings:** Requests to cancel a hearing must be submitted immediately by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above. The party requesting the cancellation must also immediately file and serve a notice of cancellation on opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.

C. Remote Appearance

- **Remote Appearance Procedure:** Each Circuit Criminal Division listed above operates a hybrid courtroom, allowing parties to appear either in person, telephonically, or virtually using the judicial Zoom™ credentials as provided by law. See Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.530. Because each Circuit Criminal Division listed above is subject to strictly enforced confidentiality laws and privacy guidelines regarding the release, sharing, and/or exchange of information regarding a defendant's medical, mental health, and/or substance use disorder treatment, requests to use the judicial Zoom™ credentials for virtual appearances must be submitted at least three (3) business days in advance by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above. Please note, use of the judicial Zoom™ credentials for virtual appearances is subject to the judge's approval.
- **Platform Used:** Each Circuit Criminal Division listed above uses the judicial Zoom™ credentials for virtual appearances.
- **Platform Meeting ID#:** The judicial Zoom™ credentials will be provided to the requesting party upon the judge's approval.
- **Requirements:** Requests to use the judicial Zoom™ credentials for virtual appearances must be submitted at least three (3) business days in advance by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above. Please note, use of the judicial Zoom™ credentials for virtual appearances is subject to the judge's approval.
- **Technology Needs:** Parties appearing virtually using the judicial Zoom™ credentials should be dressed appropriately, positioned in an appropriate location, and ensure good lighting and clear audio. All parties in the virtual courtroom must equip themselves with the necessary cameras and audio equipment to make the proceeding function effectively.

D. Submission of Orders and Judgments

- **Format:** All proposed orders must be submitted in Microsoft Adobe Acrobat™ (.PDF) format. Stipulated orders must be reflected as such in the title or body of the proposed order. If the parties are in disagreement, the proposed order must be accompanied by a cover letter containing a statement identifying any disagreement of the parties as to the proposed order.
- **Submission Method:** All proposed orders shall be uploaded through the E-Filing Portal. If an order is disputed, each party shall submit a marked-up version in Microsoft Word™ (.DOC) format by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal Division listed above.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** All proposed orders must be submitted within five (5) business days after the hearing.

E. Courtesy Copies of Case Law and Other Documents

- **When Required:** Courtesy copies of case law and any other proposed reference materials shall be submitted to the judge no later than two (2) business days before the scheduled hearing. Please note, parties should avoid submitting case law at the hearing when neither the judge nor the parties have had an opportunity to review.
- **Submission Method:** Courtesy copies of case law and any other proposed reference materials must be submitted to the judicial office by e-mail to the applicable Circuit Criminal

Division listed above

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.
- **Scheduling:** If the judge determines that an emergency exists, a hearing will be scheduled unilaterally by the judge's judicial assistant. All parties shall make themselves available for the emergency hearing, barring exigent circumstances..

G. Exhibits for Evidentiary Proceedings

- **Submission Method:** All exhibits must be submitted electronically through the E-Filing Portal.
- **Format:** Exhibits must be submitted to the clerk of court in paper format. All attorneys and self-represented defendants must bring sufficient copies of each exhibit for the clerk, the judge, and each party to review during the hearing or trial. Exhibits must be labeled in the following format: State's Exhibit 1 or Defendant's Exhibit 1.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Unless otherwise ordered, all exhibits must be brought to court at the time of the hearing or trial.

H. Pre-Trial Procedures and Conferences

- **Case Management Conference:** It is important to note that each Circuit Criminal Division listed above (e.g., Adult Mental Health Treatment Court; Veterans Treatment Court; and Adult Drug Treatment Court) are considered "Problem-Solving Courts". In accordance with Florida Problem-Solving Court Best Practice Standards, individual case staffings, similar to case management conferences, are conducted regularly to review a defendant's progress, develop a plan to improve outcomes, and prepare for the defendant's court hearing. However, unlike case management conferences, case staffings are closed and discussions are not transcribed or recorded; the meeting is not open to the public or to defendants, unless the judge determines that a defendant may attend to discuss a specific matter. The judge may include defendants in case staffings when clinically indicated or necessary to protect a defendant from serious harm resulting from public disclosure of highly sensitive treatment information. In sum, case staffings are held to ensure the Problem-Solving Court team members, to include, but not limited to, the attorneys, court personnel, and participating entities and agencies have an opportunity to consider the needs of each defendant, thereby, develop a unified plan of engagement before the defendant's next court hearing.
- **Status Conference:** Status conferences are the routine hearings through which the judge manages cases. Any party may request a status conference when a case requires.
- **Disposition:** Disposition hearings are how the judge generally refers to changes of plea.

I. Setting Case for Trial

- **Procedure:** It is important to note that each Circuit Criminal Division listed above (e.g., Adult Mental Health Treatment Court; Veterans Treatment Court; and Adult Drug Treatment Court) are considered "Problem-Solving Courts". In accordance with Florida Problem-Solving Court Best Practice Standards, cases assigned to Problem-Solving Courts follows a non-adversarial, evidence-based approach to treatment for defendants charged with crimes who struggle with a substance use disorder or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder. In other

words, cases assigned to Problem-Solving Courts are not set for trial; instead, Problem-Solving Courts address the root causes of justice system involvement through specialized dockets utilizing a multidisciplinary, non-adversarial team approach. By offering evidence-based treatment, coupled with judicial supervision and accountability, Problem-Solving Courts provide individualized interventions for defendants, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting confidence and satisfaction with the justice system process.

J. Forms

- **Access:** Forms for each Circuit Criminal Division listed above are available on the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court website at www.fljud13.org. For questions, please contact the Administrative Office of the Courts Problem-Solving Courts Program Office at (813) 307-3356.
- **Usage:** Division forms must be used for all relevant case matters.

K. Other Division Procedures

- **ADA Accommodations:** If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact the ADA Coordinator via e-mail ADA@fljud13.org; telephone 1-813-272-7040; hearing impaired 1-800-955-8771; voice impaired 1-800-955-8770; or U.S. Mail Administrative Office of the Courts, Attn.: ADA Coordinator, 800 E. Twiggs Street, Tampa, Florida 33602.
- **Interpreter Requests:** The parties are responsible for contacting and securing the necessary interpreters. The parties may request interpreter services by emailing: interpreterrequest@fljud13.org or by completing a request form on-line at: <https://www.fljud13.org/CourtPrograms/CourtInterpreterCenter/ContactUs.aspx>