

## **Judicial Practices and Procedures**

(last modified 6-5-25)

D. Melissa Dister, Judge  
Brittany Jones, Judicial Assistant

### **Contact Information**

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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 **[Bjones@circuit7.org](mailto:Bjones@circuit7.org)**. The subject line of any e-mail to the judicial office must contain the case number, case name, and relevant matter (e.g., 2024 MM 1234 – 1-Hour Hearing Requested on Defendant’s MTS).
- **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 provide legal advice.

The judicial assistant strives to substantively respond to all inquiries within one business day. If the judicial assistant is unable to substantively respond within one business day, your message will be acknowledged as received with an indication of when to expect a substantive response and alternate contact for immediate assistance.

When the judicial assistant is out of the office, your message will be acknowledged as received with an indication of when to expect a substantive response and an alternate contact for immediate assistance.

- **Other Communication Procedures:**

Any e-mail sent to or from the judicial office may be a public record subject to disclosure.

## B. Scheduling Procedures

- **Court Schedule:** The Court's monthly calendar is available upon request via email. Trial weeks are published.
- **Scheduling Hearings:** Hearings must be requested by e-mail to [bjones@circuit7.org](mailto:bjones@circuit7.org). The requesting 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 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 all materials for the hearing no later than two (2) business days before the hearing.
- **Order of Proceedings:** Matters may be heard in the order in which they appear on the docket, parties represented by attorneys may be heard first, and parties who have complied with or completed sanctions may be called first.
- **Continuance Procedure:** Continuances of evidentiary hearings are disfavored and will be granted only upon good cause shown.

A request for continuance must be submitted at least **two** business days prior to the scheduled court date.

Motions for continuance must state with specificity: (1) the basis of the need for the continuance, including when the basis became known to the movant; (2) whether the motion is opposed; (3) the action and specific dates for the action that will enable the movant to be ready, including, but not limited to, confirming the specific date any required participants are available; and (4) the proposed date by which the case will be ready to proceed and whether that date is agreed by all parties. 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:** You must cancel hearings by notifying the judicial assistant immediately. You must also immediately file and serve a notice of cancellation on opposing counsel and any self-represented litigant.

## 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.
- **Platform Used:**  
The court uses Zoom for remote appearances.
- **Platform Meeting ID#:**  
Meeting ID#: 386-313-4520
- **Requirements:** Requests for remote appearance must be submitted within two (2) business days prior to the hearing.

Certain hearings are eligible for remote appearance. These include pretrials and arraignments. The Court requires in-person if the defendant is accepting a plea.

Any person appearing remotely must be in a private location that is quiet and free from distractions. Under no circumstances will a participant be permitted to appear remotely from a moving vehicle.

Any person appearing remotely must dress and behave professionally in the same manner as if physically present in the courtroom.

Any person appearing remotely must enable the person's camera when joining the proceeding and keep the camera turned on until instructed otherwise by the court.

Any person appearing remotely must mute the person's microphone when joining the proceeding and keep the microphone turned off until instructed otherwise by the court.

If a witness appears remotely, the party calling the witness must ensure the witness has a functioning camera and microphone and has tested the internet connection before the hearing. The oath will be administered in accordance with Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.530.

- **Technology Needs:**  
Any party appearing via Zoom will need to verify they have a stable internet connection and identify themselves when logging on to zoom.

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

- **Format:** All proposed orders must be submitted in PDF or Word format.
- **Submission Method:** All proposed orders must be submitted to the court by the proposed order portion of the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal unless otherwise directed by the Court.
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Proposed orders must be submitted within ten (10) days after any hearing.
- **Other Procedures Relating to Submission of Orders and Judgments:**  
Do not email proposed orders unless requested by the Court.

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

- **When Required:** Courtesy copies of case law must be submitted to the court for any evidentiary proceeding.
- **Format:** PDF or Word document
- **Submission Method:** E-mail to the Judicial Assistant, [bjones@circuit7.org](mailto:bjones@circuit7.org).
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Courtesy copies must be delivered to the Court no later than two business days before any evidentiary proceeding.

## **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 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.

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

- **Submission Method:** Submit all exhibits to the Clerk in court at the time of the hearing.
- **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:** Exhibits need to be brought to court the day of the scheduled hearing.

## **H. Pretrial Procedures and Conferences**

- **Scheduling:** Pretrials are scheduled on a monthly basis and noticed by the Clerk.

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

- **Procedure:** If a case is set Ready for Trial at the Pretrial conference, a Docket Sounding date will be set. The Defendant must be present at the Docket Sounding, unless otherwise ordered by the Court.
- **Notice Period:** The Court does not routinely set date-certain trials. On the scheduled docket sounding, 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**

Division forms are available on the Court's Circuit page or you can request the forms from the Judicial Assistant via email.

## **K. Other Division Procedures**

- **ADA Accommodations:** If you need an ADA accommodation, please contact Court Administration at least seven (7) business days prior to your scheduled hearing.

### **Court Administration**

**101 N. Alabama Ave., Ste. B-206**

**DeLand, FL 32724**

**(386) 257-6096**

- **Interpreter Requests:** If an interpreter is needed, please use one of the resources below at least five (5) business days prior if requesting a Spanish Interpreter and ten (10) business days prior for any other language.

- Email: [interpreter@circuit7.org](mailto:interpreter@circuit7.org)

- Link:

<https://interpreterrequest.circuit7.org/Interpreter/CheckCaseNumber>

- Phone Number: 386-626-6566