

## COVID-19 UPDATE TO PRACTICE PREFERENCES

The following are temporary changes to the regular practice preferences, these changes shall take priority over the regular preferences and will remain in effect indefinitely. The purpose of these changes is to allow parties to move forward with their cases while also protecting everyone. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

### 1. HEARINGS & TRIALS:

- a. We are continuing to conduct ALL hearings and trials. However, all hearings and trials, with the exception of domestic violence return hearings, may only be conducted by Zoom (audio/video) or telephone at this time. Per Florida Supreme Court Order, there will be no in-person hearings, with the exception of domestic violence return hearings. Please contact Judge Ellis' Judicial Assistant at [crfame2@jud6.org](mailto:crfame2@jud6.org) to request hearing times. To attend a Zoom hearing, please refer to the email you received from Judge Ellis' Judicial Assistant for directions. You may attend a Zoom hearing by audio/video or by simply calling the Zoom telephone number from your telephone (see emailed instructions from Judge Ellis' Judicial Assistant on how to call into a Zoom hearing). All persons wishing to attend a telephone only hearing, this includes court reporters and witnesses, must do so by calling the hearing line at (727) 815-7104. When you connect by telephone to the hearing line, you will experience silence until the Judge opens the hearing line.
- b. All evidence, orders, judgments and other documents you wish you use or have entered at a hearing or trial should be submitted at least three (3) days in advance to the Court ([crfame2@jud6.org](mailto:crfame2@jud6.org)) and opposing counsel/party by email with each individual pre-marked Exhibit in a separate pdf file. All documents must be provided to the Court and opposing counsel in the exact same form. All evidence must be provided to all witnesses in advance in the same format as provided to the Court and opposing counsel.
- c. Hard copy pre-marked Exhibits may only be submitted with prior approval of the Court, and must be pre-marked, and indexed in a binder if voluminous, and provided to the Judge's office by mail or hand delivery at least three (3) days prior to your hearing or trial.
- d. If you have a hearing or trial set which you do not believe can be conducted by Zoom or telephone, first consult with the opposing counsel/party and determine if there is an agreement to reschedule your hearing or trial for a later date. If there is an agreement to reschedule, you may submit a joint Motion and agreed order. If there is not an agreement to reschedule, then you must file a Motion to Continue and set the Motion for hearing. All requests to reschedule hearings and trials, without or without an agreement, are considered on a case by case basis.
- e. The Court will swear witnesses in over Zoom or the telephone, a Notary is not required to be with the witness (Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order No. AOSC20-16).

**2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RETURN HEARINGS:**

Domestic Violence return hearings will continue to be conducted in-person. We are taking special precautions to keep everyone separated in order to minimize personal contact as much as possible. If the parties agree to conduct their return hearing by telephone, please notify the Court by email at [crfame2@jud6.org](mailto:crfame2@jud6.org) and we will convert your hearing to a telephone hearing. If the parties agree to reschedule their return hearing for a later date, please notify the Court (preferably by email at [crfame2@jud6.org](mailto:crfame2@jud6.org)).

**3. ORDERS & JUDGMENTS:**

All Orders and Judgments must be submitted in pdf and Word ([crfame2@jud6.org](mailto:crfame2@jud6.org)) and shall include all email addresses for service of conformed copies. If a party does not have an email address, then their mailing address should be included in the service section of the Order.

**4. MEDIATION:**

Mediation may be conducted by audio and/or video technology methods. No one is required to participate in an in-person mediation. However, per Sixth Judicial Circuit Administrative Order, parties are still required to mediate their cases.

**5. PARENTING CLASS:**

The required family stabilization (parenting) class shall be taken online only and not in-person. No Order is necessary to take this class online.

**6. NOTARIZING DOCUMENTS:**

The Florida Supreme Court has ordered that all family law filings requiring a Notarized signature do not need to be Notarized provided they are verified by a signature and the following statement “Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read the foregoing (document title) and that the facts stated in it are true.” See Florida Statutes §92.525(2). This exception does not apply for any documents which would require a Notary in order to transfer interests in certain property, i.e. a document is transferring ownership of real property.