



PAM VERGARA
CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE
FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA
Hernando County Courthouse
Room 200
20 N. Main Street
Brooksville, FL 34601

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING MOTION PRACTICE PROCEDURES
FOR THE CIVIL JURY AND CIVIL NON-JURY DOCKET FOR
THE HONORABLE PAM VERGARA
CIRCUIT CIVIL DIVISION
AND ADVERSARIAL PROBATE CASES**

The Court, having determined the need to facilitate an orderly progression of all civil jury matters scheduled before the Court, and to better assist this Court so that the huge volume of motions may be handled more efficiently and expeditiously, it is

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that all motions shall be handled as follows:

1. **Scope And Effective Date.** That this administrative order shall apply to ALL cases set on Judge Pam Vergara's civil jury and non-jury dockets and adversarial probate cases, unless a specific order is provided in the writing by the Court requiring a different procedure for the particular case before the Court. The procedures set forth in this administrative order shall be effective immediately upon signing of the above cited administrative order. If there is a conflict between this administrative order and any of the Rules enacted by the Florida Supreme Court, those rules control.

2. **Purpose.** The purpose of this administrative order and the motion practice order is to establish a protocol to efficiently, fairly, and timely handle a large, complex, and often unduly

contentious docket, while remaining consistent with Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, the Code of Judicial Conduct, and the highest standards of professional conduct possible.

3. **Reason.** When the “jury civil” division was reformulated in 2011, there were over one thousand (1,000) open case filings. As such, there was simply no practical method to provide to everyone that so requested, a hearing or oral argument on every motion or contested matter filed. Accordingly, it was anticipated that by trying to resolve the pleadings filed by methods other than calling for, setting, noticing, and holding a hearing or oral argument on every motion, that substantial judicial economy and efficiency would result through the use of motion practice order (MPO).

4. **Definitions.** As used in this order, the following definitions shall apply:

a. **Hearing.** Time requested from the Court for counsel to personally present contested matters because such time is required by the law of Florida based on a rule, a statute, or case law (such as is required for a motion for summary judgment); or as necessary for an evidentiary hearing required by law (such as to determine the amount of attorney fees).

b. **Oral Argument.** Time given to the litigants (purely at the discretion of the Court, and not required by law in Florida) that the Court believes is necessary or appropriate to more fully understand and develop the litigants’ arguments and positions on the issue before the Court. Oral argument will rarely be granted by the Court because it should not generally be necessary.

5. **Procedure Anticipated.**

a. First, contact the opposing counsel and see if they will stipulate to the relief requested or at least stand mute, so that an “Agreed Order” may be prepared. If so, promptly send the Court the stipulation and order or “Agreed Order” with the appropriate cover letter copy to each side. Stipulations or other matters agreed to will not require a memorandum.

b. If the other side, for any reason, cannot or will not stipulate or agree to the relief requested, then, as further set forth in this order, counsel shall succinctly and cogently, subject to the page limitation of paragraph 13 below, set forth in their motion the relief they are requesting and the reasons they believe that they are entitled to such relief, supported by a concise legal memorandum containing their attached and indexed legal authority.

SEE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER AS TO “MEET AND CONFER”

c. If a hearing is required by law, please succinctly so state in a prominent location on the face of your initial motion directed to that issue, and cogently **provide the legal authority** for your belief that a hearing on this subject is required by Florida Law.

6. **Legal Memoranda Required.** Except as specifically listed as an exception in paragraph 5(a) above and 7 below, when making any written motion, or other application to the Court for the entry of an order of any kind, the moving party shall file and serve with such motion or application a legal memorandum with citations of authority, in support of the relief requested. This legal memorandum shall not exceed six (6) pages (see paragraph 13) and may be incorporated into the body of the motion as a speaking motion but should be clearly titled “MOTION to/for and Memorandum of Law.” A proposed Order must be delivered to the judge contemporaneously (see paragraph 20).

7. **Exceptions To Memoranda Requirement.** The following listed motions shall be exempt from this requirement and shall not require supporting written memoranda unless specifically requested by the Court:

- a. Motion for Default, addressed to the Court.
- b. Motion for Continuance (provided that specific reason demonstrating “good cause” are set forth in the motion).
- c. Motion to withdraw; or motion to substitute counsel (need written consent of client).
- d. Motion for confirmation of sale.
- e. Motion for enforcement of settlement (provided adequate explanation and basis is provided in the motion).
- f. Motion to withdraw/substitute exhibits.
- g. Motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*.
- h. Motion for extension of time in which to complete discovery (provided that “good cause” supporting the request is set forth in the motion).
- i. Motion to deposit funds with the Court.
- j. Motion to compel (provided that the moving party submits a written statement that a good faith attempt has been made to resolve the matter and

follows the other provisions of this order pertinent thereto. See paragraphs 10 and 11 below.

k. Motion to appear *pro hac vice*. See Rule of Jud. Admin. 2.510. See paragraph 19 herein as to the procedures to be utilized for these exceptions.

8. **Timely Opposing Memoranda.** Each party opposing any written motion or other application shall file with the Clerk of Court and serve all opposing counsel AND THIS JUDGE within **ten (10) days** after being served with such motion or application a legal memorandum not to exceed six (6) written pages (double spaced) with citations of authority in opposition to the relief requested. Failure to respond within the time allowed may be deemed sufficient cause for granting the motion by default. If a party has no objection to a motion and does not intent to file a responsive memorandum, counsel shall file a written notice of same with the Clerk of Court and provide a copy to the office of the judge, so indicating.

The Florida Rules of Civil Procedure controls the timing and presentation of required matters regarding motions for summary judgment.

9. **Replies.** If, upon receipt of an opposing memorandum (response), counsel determines further argument of his/her client's position on the initial motion is required, counsel must immediately within **two (2) business days** after receipt of the opposing memorandum inform the office of the judge that he/she intends to file and serve a reply memoranda. Such reply memorandum shall not exceed **three (3) pages**, double spaced. The reply must be filed and received by the Court within **five (5) days** after the receipt of the opposing memorandum by the Court.

MOTIONS CONTESTING DISCOVERY

10. **Discovery Motions Accompanied by Good Faith Certification.** Before filing a motion to compel pursuant to Fla. R. of Civ. P. 1.380, or a motion for protective order pursuant to Fla. R. of Civ. P. 1.280(c), counsel shall confer with counsel for the opposing party/pro se party in a good faith effort to resolve by agreement the issues raised, and shall certify to the Court (in writing) at the time of filing the motion that he/she has conferred with opposing counsel and has been unable to resolve the dispute.

11. **Content of Discovery Motions.** Except for motions grounded upon a complete failure to respond to discovery, discovery motions shall:

- a. Quote in full each interrogatory, question on deposition, request for admission, or request for production to which the motion is addressed; and
- b. Quote in full the objection and grounds given therefore; and
- c. State (with citations to authority) the reasons such objection should be overruled or sustained.

HEARINGS AND ORAL ARGUMENT

12. **Hearings and Requests for Summary Judgment.** Motions and other applications will ordinarily be determined by the Court on the basis of motion papers and legal memoranda unless a hearing is required by rule or law. For example, under the Rules of Civil Procedure, summary judgment motions must be set for a hearing. This would not, however, generally extinguish the requirement that the motion be accompanied by and responded to with memoranda. Such memorandum requirements are **required** for motions for summary judgment, and the time frame under Fla. R. of Civ. P. 1.510 controls for filing supporting and opposing affidavits, etc. If counsel files a motion for summary judgment, the party must contact the Court to request hearing dates and times to set the hearing and/or coordinate with opposing counsel. It is the party's responsibility to notice and set hearings on their motions. For other types of required hearings see paragraph 4(a) and 5(c) of this order.

13. **Oral Argument.** The Court may (but rarely) permit oral argument upon the **written request** of any interested party or upon the Court's own motion. Requests for oral argument must **accompany** the motion or opposing legal memorandum and must estimate the time required for argument. When a request for hearing is granted, counsel for the requesting party or *Pro Se* party will be asked to coordinate the hearing date and time with the calendars of the Court and opposing counsel.

THE COURT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO STRICTLY ENFORCE THE TIME LIMITATIONS IMPOSED FOR EACH HEARING OR ORAL ARGUMENT

14. **Page Limitation.** Absent prior permission of the Court, which will rarely be granted, no party shall file a legal memorandum in excess of **six (6) pages** in length (12-point font, double spaced) on any motion or request of the Court.

15. **Motions to be Filed with the Clerk and a Courtesy Copy Sent to the Assigned Judge.** All original pleadings and papers shall be filed (e-filed) with the Clerk of Court and a courtesy copy shall be provided to opposing counsel as well as directly to the judge's office

contemporaneous with said filing. **The judge's copy may be sent via email at jwhite@circuit5.org.**

16. **Form of Motions.** All applications to the Court requesting relief in any form, citing authorities, or presenting argument with respect to any matter awaiting decision shall be made in writing in accordance with this order and in appropriate form pursuant to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure. Unless invited or directed by the Court, motions shall not be addressed or presented to the Court in the form of a letter or the like.

17. **Time Calculation.** All time calculations herein shall be subject to Fla. R. of Civ. P. 1.090.

18. **Motions in Limine.** Unless hearing time or oral argument has been requested and granted by the Court, *in limine* motions will be resolved before pretrial, as set forth in the other standard orders of this Court specifically regarding the same. If the Court has not announced its ruling on such contested motions by pretrial, counsel should immediately advise the Court. The more specific Motion in Limine Order takes precedence over and controls such motions.

19. **Emergency Motions.** Motions of an emergency nature may be considered and determined by the Court at any time in its discretion. Such motion must **first** be filed in writing with the Court (courtesy copy directly to the Court) and copies e-mailed to all opposing counsel before such motion will be considered and must clearly and concisely explain why the Court should deem this motion an emergency.

20. **Procedures for Motions that are Exceptions to the Motion Practice Procedures.** Upon receipt of a motion or request that is facially excepted from the motion practice requirements contained herein per paragraph 5(a) and 7, the Court may proceed in any one or combination of the following methods:

- a. Grant or deny the relief requested without a hearing. Unless the matter is stipulated in writing by all interested parties, or is a matter that otherwise requires no response, or is otherwise clearly indicated to be uncontested, the Court may wait **ten (10) business days** to see if any further objections, pleadings, or responses directed to the issue are received. **IT IS INCUMBENT ON ANYONE OBJECTING TO ANY PROPOSED RELIEF TO NOTIFY THE COURT IMMEDIATELY AND IN WRITING WITHIN THE TEN BUSINESS DAY PERIOD.** The parties may file their

objection(s) with copies to all parties of record pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure but shall always follow up with hard copies to the Court.

b. If the motion is stipulated to, or otherwise uncontested, it may be signed immediately at the discretion of the Court, or all parties will otherwise be notified in writing by the Court as to what action the Court is taking and/or what action is expected of counsel.

c. Upon receipt of a timely objection, or otherwise at the discretion of the Court, the Court will determine how it will proceed, and the parties will be notified in writing. Possible courses of conduct at this point include but are not limited to, any one or combination of the following:

- i. Rule without further pleading, oral argument, or hearing.
- ii. Require a more formal response, including reporting to formal “motion practice” as further set forth in this Administrative Order.
- iii. Set the cause for hearing or oral argument without further pleading.

OTHER IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS/CONSIDERATIONS

21. **Requests for relief from the Court.** All requests must be e-filed with the Clerk of Court and then a courtesy copy sent to the Presiding Judge by mail (the clerk does not send the judges any e-filed motions or requests for relief). THIS COURT WILL NOT BE AWARE OF YOUR MOTION AND THUS CANNOT ACT ON IT UNLESS YOU SEND THE COURT A COPY (see Administrative Order paragraph 14 regarding courtesy copies).

22. **Proposed orders and envelopes.** All requests for relief (courtesy copy) must be sent **with proposed orders** in Word format to jwhite@circuit5.org and mail or deliver stamped pre-addressed envelopes for *pro se* and unrepresented parties. All others will be notified by e-filed order.

23. **Follow-up.** If you have properly followed all of the instructions in the Motion Practice Order and have not heard from the Court within approximately **forty-five (45) days**, it is appropriate to contact the judicial assistant and politely make sure the motion/request has been received. *We try to rule on all matters within **sixty (60) days**, but due to the huge volume of

paperwork and the several persons that may be handling such matters, we are always concerned of overlooking or misplacing some request.

***** ALL PARTIES ARE DIRECTED TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCEDURES AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE**

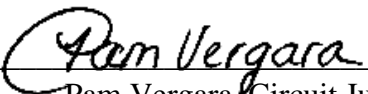
www.circuit5.org . SEE JUDGE PAM VERGARA'S LINK***

CAVEAT: Please do not call the judge's judicial assistant to request time from the Court unless such time for hearing or oral argument:

- a. is clearly required by Florida law; or
- b. has been previously granted by this Court under the terms of this motion practice order and you are emailing to obtain dates and time for same.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE TERMS OF THIS ORDER BY ANY PARTY MAY RESULT IN THE STRIKING PARTS OR WHOLE PLEADINGS, STAYING FURTHER PROCEEDINGS UNTIL THIS ORDER IS OBEYED, DISMISSING THE ACTION, RENDERING JUDGMENT BY DEFAULT AGAINST THE DISOBEDIENT PARTY, OR ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE SANTIION AUTHORIZED BY LAW, INCLUDING CONTEMPT OF COURT.

DONE AND ORDERED, in Chambers, Brooksville, Hernando County this __16__ day of January, 2024.


Pam Vergara, Circuit Judge