



706 City-County Building
414 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Telephone: 412-350-1849

Standard Operating Procedures *for* Judge Andrew F. Szefi (Civil Division)

(Effective as of January 3, 2023)

Please note that the below operating procedures are in addition to and supplement the applicable Rules of Civil Procedure and Local Rules.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Except for matters relating to Housing Court (landlord-tenant cases)(addressed below), and exceptional circumstances, the Court's functions and proceedings are being conducted in person. Unless otherwise notified by the Court, counsel/the parties are expected to appear for arguments, trials, conciliations, conferences, *etc.* in person in Courtroom 706, City-County Building.
- Any correspondence or filings should be directed to Judge Szefi's Administrative Assistant, Dawnika Hopkins at dhopkins@allegheycourts.us. You may also contact Chambers at 412-350-1849.
- When communicating with the Court via email about a particular case, ALL parties must be included on the email unless directed otherwise. The email addresses of the other parties/opposing counsel must be included either in the "To" or the "CC" boxes so that they are visible to the Court. Do NOT "BCC" the parties/opposing counsel on your communications.
- With respect to filings, note that the Court does not automatically receive copies of documents filed with the Department of Court Records and a courtesy copy must be provided to chambers at dhopkins@allegheycourts.us. Please send all documents in PDF or Microsoft Word format. **Proposed orders must be attached separately in Microsoft Word format to allow editing by the Court.**
- All documents must include attorney or party (if self-represented) contact information including a phone number and an email address.
- If counsel/a party has concerns or needs clarification about scheduling in a case, they should contact dhopkins@allegheycourts.us.

PRETRIAL CONCILIATIONS

Counsel for Plaintiff and Defendant must bring their respective clients. If the clients are business entities, individuals from the business entities who have the authority to settle the case must attend in person. If a party is insured, a representative of the insurance carrier with "check writing and signing" authority must be physically present. The Court requires the physical attendance of all persons mentioned in this paragraph unless excused in advance by the Court.

CIVIL JURY TRIALS

1. **Pretrial Conference** – Upon assignment of the trial judge, the judge will schedule a pretrial conference as soon as practicable. Counsel is expected to advise the court on the status of settlement discussions. Counsel must also be prepared to identify and discuss the nature of the trial, any unusual legal or evidentiary issues, matters that must be decided prior to trial, plans for visual aids/technology, stipulations, other forms of evidence to be introduced at trial, and schedule.
2. **Motions in Limine** - The trial judge handles these motions immediately before trial. All counsel should resist the temptation to conduct the trial by Motions in Limine. Immediately upon assignment of the trial judge, the parties shall deliver two (2) paper copies of any motions in limine and written responses thereto to Chambers. The parties shall also meet and confer regarding resolution of any Motions in Limine prior to presentation to the Court.
3. **Witness List** - At the commencement of trial, counsel for each party shall provide a complete list of potential witnesses to the court reporter and the Court. The list should also include the name of any witness whose testimony will be presented by deposition or videotape and the approximate length of that testimony.
4. **Exhibits** - Plaintiff shall identify exhibits with Arabic numerals, and Defendant shall use letters. At a minimum, the witness, opposing counsel and the Court must be provided with a copy. Exhibit binders are preferred.
5. **Objections During Trial** – When making objections to questions or testimony during trials, the basis for the objection shall be described briefly. Argument concerning objections shall be conducted outside of the jury and/or witnesses, usually at sidebar. Whenever an objection is stated, examination of a witness shall be suspended and shall not continue until the objection is resolved or counsel is directed to go forward. This procedure is not intended to discourage parties from fully stating on the record their objections to or disagreements with the Court’s rulings. It is intended only to have such matters conducted outside the hearing of the jury.
6. **Videotaped Depositions/Transcripts** – If depositions will be read or videotaped depositions played during a jury trial, counsel shall attempt to resolve any objections between themselves. Counsel shall notify the Court if any objections cannot be resolved and the disputed matters will be decided.
7. **Prior Deposition Testimony** - Counsel seeking the use of prior deposition transcripts to impeach a witness should first advise all counsel of which deposition(s) and page and line number(s) he/she intends to use and then provide the witness with a copy before commencing to question the witness on same.
8. **Trial Motions** - Motions for non-suit, *etc.* may be oral, but a writing is preferred.
9. **Charge/Verdict Slip** – Counsel shall confer on points for charge and a proposed verdict slip at the earliest feasible point so that a joint submission for each is submitted to the Court. A written supplement may be provided by each party to address points and matters upon which the parties are unable to agree. The Court will hold a charging conference to resolve any matters to which the parties have not agreed. Please note that the Court wishes to utilize PaSSJIs whenever possible.
10. **Miscellaneous/Trial Matters** - Counsel shall agree as to what exhibits, photos, *etc.* may go out with the jury. All counsel shall provide the tipstaff with telephone numbers for quick contact once the verdict is returned.

NONJURY TRIALS

- Plaintiff shall identify exhibits with Arabic numerals, and Defendant shall use letters. At a minimum, the witness, opposing counsel and the Court must be provided with a copy. Exhibit binders are preferred.
- The Court may request submission of proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law and/or a proposed Order. These shall be submitted in word format to dhopkins@allegheycourts.us with copy to opposing counsel.

POST-TRIAL MOTIONS

- A copy of any filed post-trial motion must also be served upon the trial judge in chambers or electronically at dhopkins@allegheycourts.us. The Court will contact the parties about scheduling argument. The post-trial motion must contain a copy of the request for transcript of the trial testimony and the moving party must promptly see that the Court Reporter is timely paid for preparing the transcript.

HOUSING COURT MOTIONS

Housing Court Motions will be scheduled for remote argument by Housing Court Staff. If you need to file a motion regarding a housing matter, please contact the Housing Court Help Desk by either:

Emailing your motion to: HCHelpdesk@allegheycourts.us; or
Calling: 412-350-4462

CONTACT INFORMATION

You may contact Chambers through the following contact information for judicial staff:

- Dawnika Hopkins - Administrative Assistant - 412-350-1849; dhopkins@allegheycourts.us
- Cameron McCrum - Law Clerk - 412-350-1847; McCrumc@allegheycourts.us
- Giulia Schaub - Law Clerk - 412-350-1846; gschaub@allegheycourts.us