

Standard Judicial Operating Procedures

HONORABLE DWAYNE D. WOODRUFF

Juvenile Family Division
Court of Common Pleas, Allegheny County
440 Ross Street, Rm. 531
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-350-6281 412-350-6279(fax)

Admin Assistant: akleinschnitz@alleghenycourts.us
Tipstaff: cjenkins@alleghenycourts.us
Law Clerk: burkea@alleghenycourts.us

COMMUNICATING WITH THE COURT

- A. **Inquiries** – Inquiries concerning Court procedures and the appropriate method for contacting or communicating with the Court should be directed to the Administrative Assistant, Tip Staff, or Law Clerk.
Judicial staff are prohibited from answering inquiries regarding substantive and legal matters.
- B. **Email Correspondence** – Counsel and/or the parties should not correspond with the Court by email unless specifically invited to do so or as permitted by these Standard Operating Procedures.
- C. **Ex Parte Communication** – Counsel and/or the parties shall not engage in *ex parte* communication concerning a pending case with the Court or staff. Such communication may be deemed a cause for referral to the disciplinary authorities, or other appropriate sanctions.
- D. **Hours of Operation** – The Judge’s Chambers is staffed from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. On most days, staff goes to lunch from Noon to 1:00 PM.
- E. **TEAMS Links/Virtual Appearances** – In the event where one cannot attend in person, one must request a TEAMS link 48 hours in advance. Requests will be sent to cjenkins@alleghenycourts.us.

SCHEDULING AND BEING PROMPT

- A. **Be On Time** – Lawyers or unrepresented persons and witnesses must be on time. If you are late, you risk what are called sanctions, meaning you risk fines or other penalties such as having to pay the lawyer fees for the other side. Proceedings might begin without latecomers.
- B. **Settling Before Trial** – If counsel for all parties believe that meeting with the Court on the day of a trial or hearing prior to the proceeding may help resolve the dispute, counsel should inform the tipstaff as early as possible.
- C. **Respecting the Time Set Aside for Your Case** – You should always plan carefully to use the time set aside for your court case wisely and efficiently. Bear

in mind that if you run out of time, additional trial time may not be available for several months. If you settle your case before your trial, inform the Court as soon as possible.

- D. **Postponing/Continuance** – Continuances will not be granted if your case is inside 30 days of a scheduled hearing date. If you want an exception, you must explain thoroughly in a motion for continuance.

CUSTODY, SUPPORT, & OTHER DOMESTIC RELATIONS MATTERS

A. Motions

1. **Attorney Motions** – The motion shall include a proposed order. Motions must be served on opposing counsel. Motions shall be properly filed with the Department of Court Records.
When all parties are represented by counsel, motions shall be presented electronically by sending a copy of the motion **7 days prior to the hearing date** to the Court via email at:
akleinschnitz@allegheycourts.us
cjenkins@allegheycourts.us and
cwright@allegheycourts.us.
2. The party presenting the motion must indicate in the email that they have conferred with the opposing counsel and/or the other parties and whether opposing counsel and/or other parties have an objection, no objection, or consent to the motion.
3. If a party does not consent to or opposes the motion, the Court will rule on the motion or schedule a hearing on the motion.
4. **Unrepresented Parties** – If a party is not represented by counsel, motions shall be presented in open court on any day that Judge Woodruff is on the bench. Motions shall be served upon counsel and the other parties personally or via mail. The motion shall contain notice of the date and time for presentation of the motion. The party presenting the motion shall contact the chambers of Judge Woodruff to obtain a date and time for presentation of the motion. If the motion is an emergency, and Judge Woodruff is unavailable to hear the motion, then the motion shall be presented to a judge that is hearing Family Division Motions. The motions court schedule is available on the Court website at www.allegheycourts.us.
5. The motion shall include a proposed order. Motions shall be properly filed with the Department of Court Records.
A copy of the motion should also be emailed by **7 days prior to the hearing date** to:

akleinschnitz@allegheycourts.us
cjenkins@allegheycourts.us and
cwright@allegheycourts.us

6. The party presenting the motion must indicate in the email that they have conferred with opposing counsel and/or the other parties and whether opposing counsel and/or the other parties have an objection to, no objection to, or consent to the motion.

B. Hearings & Trials

1. Hearings and trials will be in person. Attorneys and Parties are expected to appear in person.
2. Parties may appear remotely with the permission of the Court.
3. Witnesses may appear remotely upon agreement of counsel or the parties.
4. Any person appearing remotely must appear by video unless participation by telephone is approved by the Court.
5. When documents are to be entered into evidence and/or presented to the Court, counsel should provide copies to opposing counsel and to the Court. Except in atypical circumstances, Court staff will not make copies of exhibits or documents. Exhibits should be pre-marked.
6. Everyone entering Judge Woodruff's courtroom will be treated with respect and thus expects the same level of respect from anyone who enters.
 - a. All electronic devices shall be turned off or placed on silent.
 - i. If a device goes off during court, the owner of said device will be subject to a fine not less than \$50.
 - b. Only attorneys at counsel table are permitted to use laptop computers. If you need to use your cell phone or electronic device, please quietly leave the courtroom.
 - c. Please do not read newspapers or magazines in the courtroom.
 - d. If you are an attorney waiting for your case, you may quietly review your files while seated in the courtroom.
 - e. Food and drink (with the exception of water) are generally not permitted.
7. Appropriate dress is also required. The follow clothing is not permitted: shorts, halter tops, tank tops, t-shirts with inappropriate imagery or writing, crop tops, or other inappropriate or revealing clothing.
8. It is the responsibility of counsel to instruct their clients and witnesses on appropriate behavior and dress.

JUVENILE COURT MATTERS (INCLUDING TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS)

A. Motions

1. Delinquency Motions are heard every Monday and Tuesday that Judge Woodruff is sitting. They will be heard between 8:30 and 9 am on these days.
2. Dependency Motions are heard every Wednesday that Judge Woodruff is sitting. They will be heard between 8:30 and 9 am on these days.
3. The motion shall include a proposed order. A copy of the motion will be emailed to all counsel. All motions shall be filed electronically through PACfile. A copy of the motion, which shall be sent **7 days prior to the hearing date**, shall also be emailed to:
akleinschnitz@allegheycourts.us
cjenkins@allegheycourts.us and
cwright@allegheycourts.us
 - i. For a TPR, please note the changes in who to email. The list is as follows:
akleinschnitz@allegheycourts.us
cjenkins@allegheycourts.us
burkea@allegheycourts.us and
4. A copy of the motion shall be emailed to the caseworker in dependency matters and the juvenile probation officer in delinquency matters. For dual supervision cases, both the caseworker and the probation officer shall be served as well as counsel for the parties in both the dependency and delinquency case. If a Court appointed advocate (CASA) has been appointed, a copy to the motion shall be sent to CASA via email.
5. The party presenting the motion must indicate whether opposing counsel and/or the other parties have an objection to, no objection to, or consent to the motion.
6. If a party consents to or does not object to the motion, the Court will enter an order through CPCMS/PACFile.
7. Motions requiring argument or a hearing may be presented in court at 9:00 AM on any day that Judge Woodruff is hearing juvenile cases. If a full hearing is needed, the Court will schedule a hearing for a date and time certain.
8. If the motion is an emergency, and Judge Woodruff is unavailable to hear the motion, then the motion shall be presented to the judge who is hearing Juvenile Motions.

B. Hearings & Trials

1. Unless otherwise specified, hearings and trials will take place in Courtroom 223 of the Family Law Center, 440 Ross St, Pittsburgh PA 15219.
2. Hearings and trials will be in person. Attorneys and Parties are expected to appear in person, unless given permission 48 hours in advance by the court to appear remotely.
3. Witnesses may appear remotely upon agreement of counsel or the parties.
4. Any person appearing remotely must appear by video unless participation by telephone is approved by the Court.
5. When documents are to be entered into evidence and/or presented to the court, counsel should provide copies to opposing counsel and to the Court. Except in atypical circumstances, Court staff will not make copies of exhibits or documents. Exhibits should be pre-marked.
6. Everyone entering Judge Woodruff's courtroom will be treated with respect and thus expects the same level of respect from anyone who enters.
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 - i. If a device goes off during court, the owner of said device will be subject to a fine not less than \$50.
 - b. Only attorneys at counsel table are permitted to use laptop computers. If you need to use your cell phone or electronic device, please quietly leave the courtroom.
 - c. Please do not read newspapers or magazines in the courtroom.
 - d. If you are an attorney waiting for your case, you may quietly review your files while seated in the courtroom.
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7. Appropriate dress is also required. The follow clothing is not permitted: shorts, halter tops, tank tops, t-shirts with inappropriate imagery or writing, crop tops, or other inappropriate or revealing clothing.
8. It is the responsibility of counsel to instruct their clients and witnesses on appropriate behavior and dress.

SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COURT RECORDS

- A. You must file your original pleadings and document submissions with the Department of Court Records/Family Division (DCR). The Index of Exhibits, original pleadings, and submissions should be filed electronically. It is the responsibility of the attorney to file the exhibits as stated in the Method of Filing section.
1. Per filing rules, exhibits must be filed electronically utilizing the eFiling and Retrieval System at the Department of Court Records. Pro se litigants are encouraged to file electronically as well but the Department of Court Records accepts filing of court documents in person or by other means which may be posted on the Department of Court Records website.
 2. Be aware that once a pleading is filed, all of it, including any attachments and exhibits, will be published on the DCR website and is available for public viewing. Therefore, counsel and unrepresented parties should be careful about attaching documents containing sensitive information. Motions to seal the record will be denied absent atypical circumstances.
- B. If you have information to file that you don't wish to be public, you should submit this information separately to opposing counsel or unrepresented parties before a hearing and to the Court at the time of the hearing.

CONTENTS OF DOCUMENTS

- A. In all documents submitted to the Court, the parties shall be described through use of such terms as "husband" and "wife" or "father" and "mother" as opposed to "plaintiff", "defendant", and "respondent".
- B. If in a document you reference or refer to another document, a copy of that other document shall be attached.
- C. If you rely on any authority not readily available through electronic legal databases, a copy of it shall be attached to your brief or motion.
- D. The Court may request briefing of any complex legal issue that may arise during a proceeding. Counsel is encouraged to bring such matters to the Court's attention as soon as possible.
- E. Exhibits submitted to the Court shall be retained for 40 days after a final is entered and no appeal is taken. After that time, if counsel or parties do not request return, the documents shall be destroyed.

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION & TESTIMONY

- A. The Court will take special care when taking testimony from a child to shield the child from harassment or embarrassment. The Court will intervene to ensure that questioning is not misleading, age-inappropriate, or repetitive.
- B. Lawyers shall form their questions in a manner appropriate for the child witness' age or cognitive level, including the use of appropriate language, grammar, and sentence structure.