



**Standard Operating Procedures  
For Civil Division  
Judge Nicola Henry-Taylor**

*(Effective January 2, 2026)*

**City-County Building  
414 Grant Street, Room 712  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
(412) 350-1670**

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## PART I. INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY

These Standard Operating Procedures (“SOPs”) govern all civil matters assigned to the Honorable Nicola Henry-Taylor of the Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Civil Division. They are issued pursuant to the Court’s inherent authority to regulate proceedings before it and to ensure the fair, efficient, and orderly administration of justice.

These SOPs supplement, but do not supersede:

- The Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure
- The Pennsylvania Rules of Evidence
- The Pennsylvania Rules of Judicial Administration
- The Allegheny County Local Rules
- All Administrative Orders
- Applicable statutory authority, including provisions governing Special Immigrant Juvenile (“SIJ”) findings

Where a conflict exists, statewide rules and statutes control. All attorneys and self-represented litigants are expected to be familiar with these SOPs and to fully comply with them.

## PART II. COURT STAFF AND CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Chambers Address</b> City-County Building, Room 712 414 Grant Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Phone: (412) 350-1670	<b>Judicial Assistant</b> Taylor Bowman <a href="mailto:tbowman@alleghenycourts.us">tbowman@alleghenycourts.us</a> (412) 350-1670
<b>Law Clerk</b> Samantha Dorn, Esquire <a href="mailto:sdorn@alleghenycourts.us">sdorn@alleghenycourts.us</a> (412) 350-1672	<b>Tipstaff</b> Madasen Dowling <a href="mailto:mdowling@alleghenycourts.us">mdowling@alleghenycourts.us</a> (412) 350-1673
<b>General Chambers Email</b> – <a href="mailto:henry-taylorchambers@alleghenycourts.us">henry-taylorchambers@alleghenycourts.us</a>	
<b>Motions Email</b> – <a href="mailto:henry-taylormotions@alleghenycourts.us">henry-taylormotions@alleghenycourts.us</a>	

**Communications sent to individual staff emails outside the designated inboxes may not be answered.**

## PART III. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND COURT POLICIES

- A. All filings must comply with:
  - 1. The Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure;
  - 2. Allegheny County Local Rules;
  - 3. Case Records Public Access Policy; and
  - 4. Requirements for confidential information and documents.
- B. Forms, cover sheets, Praecipes, and local procedural resources are available at <https://www.allegenycourts.us/civil/forms/>.
- C. **Professionalism, civility, and respect are expected from all participants at all times. Failure to adhere to courtroom decorum or procedural rules may result in sanctions.**

## PART IV. COMMUNICATION WITH THE COURT

### I. GENERAL RULE

- A. The Court Cannot act on any request unless it is properly filed with the Department of Court Records (DCR). The Court does not accept or act on requests submitted by email, voicemail, letter, or informally.

### II. PROHIBITION ON EX PARTE COMMUNICATION

- A. The Judge and Court staff may not receive or review any communication regarding the substance of a pending case unless all parties are included.
- B. Permissible communication includes only:
  - 1. Scheduling inquiries;
  - 2. Administrative questions;
  - 3. Procedural questions; and
  - 4. Communications expressly authorized by rule or Order of Court.

### III. EMAIL PROCEDURES

#### A. All emails must:

1. Be sent to the correct inbox;
2. Copy all counsel and self-represented parties; and
3. Never use blind-copying (“BCC”).

#### B. Substantive issues must be raised by motion, not email.

### IV. COURTESY COPIES

#### A. Courtesy copies are required only when specifically requested. If requested, they must be delivered within three (3) business days and labeled “Courtesy Copy — Chambers.”

### V. MANDATORY CONTACT INFORMATION

#### A. All filings must include counsel’s or party’s:

1. Name;
2. Physical/Mailing Address;
3. Email Address; and
4. Phone Number.

## PART V. PROHIBITION ON RECORDING

**No person may photograph, record, stream, capture, or retransmit any proceeding—whether in-person or remote—with express permission of the Court.**

This includes:

- Audio recordings
- Video recordings
- Screenshots
- Screen recordings
- Broadcasts on any platform

**Violations may result in contempt proceedings and referral for criminal prosecution.**

## PART VI. RESOURCES FOR SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

**THESE RESOURCES ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL ADVICE**

General Courtroom Rules and Behavior



Carnegie Library Legal Resource Guide:



Provides basic information on civil matters

Neighborhood Legal Services:



Can apply for free legal representation, must meet income requirements

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network:



Apply for free legal aid or private attorney

Pennsylvania Utility Law Project:



Can provide free legal assistance for those with utility issues

Duquesne Law Clinic:

Call: 412-396-4704

Lawclinic@duq.edu

Assist with landlord/tenant disputes:

eviction, security deposit disputes, and Section 8 housing matters

## PART VII. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) apply to:

- All civil actions;
- Housing Court matters;
- Mortgage foreclosure cases returning from the Save Your Home (SYH) Program;
- Matters requiring SIJ findings; and
- All motions, hearings, conferences, and trials before Judge Henry-Taylor.

These SOPs ensure fairness, efficiency, clarity, and trauma-informed practice where required.

## PART VIII. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL PROCEEDINGS

### I. REMOTE PARTICIPATION

- A. It should be presumed that all proceedings will be in-person, unless otherwise permitted or ordered by the Court.
- B. Requests for remote appearance require the following:
  1. A written request to chambers;
  2. A statement of good cause for remote appearance;
  3. Confirmation regarding whether the request is opposed by the other side; and
  4. A proposed order in Word format.
- C. Participants must appear on camera in a professional environment.
- D. The following are prohibited:
  1. Driving;
  2. Use of public spaces;
  3. Private, off-camera communication; and
  4. Recording.

## II. COURTROOM AND REMOTE DECORUM

- A. All participants must maintain decorum consistent with the dignity of judicial proceedings.
- B. Civility and professional conduct are required **at all times**. See Pennsylvania Code of Civility (204 Pa. Code § 99.1-99.3).
  1. Parties and counsel shall be dressed appropriately for court, whether in person or remote.
  2. Parties and counsel shall not eat, drink, smoke, or drive a car during remote proceedings. Water is permitted within the courtroom.
  3. Counsel shall not engage in colloquy with each other.
  4. All arguments and comments shall be directed to the Court.

## III. INTERPRETERS AND ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

- A. Requests must be emailed at least three (3) business days before the proceeding to the following:
  1. [courtaccess@alleghenycourts.us](mailto:courtaccess@alleghenycourts.us); and
  2. [Henry-taylorchambers@alleghenycourts.us](mailto:Henry-taylorchambers@alleghenycourts.us).
- B. Requests for a less commonly spoken language may need to be made as early as thirty (30) days in advance of a proceeding to ensure interpreter availability.

## IV. CONTINUANCES

- A. Requests for continuance (postponement of proceeding) require a written motion stating the following:
  1. The reason for the continuance;
  2. Confirmation regarding whether the request is opposed by the other side; and
  3. A proposed order in Word format.

## PART IX. GENERAL MOTIONS PRACTICE

All Motions must comply with the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure, the Allegheny County Local Rules, and these SOPs. The Court expects all filings to be complete, timely, and properly served.

### I. FILING AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- A. All motions must be filed with the Department of Court Records (DCR) before presentation.
- B. A Notice of Presentation must accompany any motion scheduled for argument.
- C. The motion must be served on all parties contemporaneously with filing.
- D. Proof of service must be included.
- E. Motions submitted directly to chambers without DCR filing will not be considered.

### II. IN-PERSON PRESENTATION

- A. Unless otherwise permitted, motions must be presented in person in Motions Court or during the scheduled presentation time.
- B. Remote presentation is allowed only with prior approval. **See General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section I – Remote Participation.**

### III. WITHDRAWAL OF COUNSEL

- A. Motions to Withdraw as Counsel must:
  1. State whether the client consents;
  2. Provide the client's last known address, phone number, and email address;
  3. Identify all upcoming deadlines and proceedings;
  4. Certify compliance with Pa.R.C.P. 1012; and
  5. Be personally served on the client when required.
- B. The Court will not grant withdrawal motions that jeopardize trial readiness or prejudice the parties.

### IV. ATTORNEY'S FEES

- A. Motions seeking attorney fees must include:

1. The statutory or contractual basis for the request;
2. Time records;
3. Hourly rates for attorneys and support staff;
4. Certification of reasonableness; and
5. Supporting affidavits or billing statements.

B. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in denial.

## V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

A. All factual assertions must be supported by:

1. Exhibits;
2. Affidavits;
3. Declarations; and/or
4. Records.

B. Unsupported allegations will not be considered.

## VI. MEET-AND-CONFER REQUIREMENT

A. All contested motions must include a certification that counsel conferred or attempted to confer in good faith.

B. The certification must:

1. Identify the date(s) of the conference;
2. Summarize efforts made, such as through letters, emails, or phone calls; and
3. State whether an agreement was reached.

## VII. RESPONSES TO MOTIONS

A. Responses must be filed in accordance with Local Rules and must:

1. Admit or deny factual allegations;
2. Clearly identify contested issues; and
3. Include supporting documentation.

B. Failure to respond may result in the motion being granted as uncontested.

## VIII. NEW MATTER

A. New issues raised for the first time in a response may be disregarded.

B. Any additional relief sought must be raised by cross-motion.

## IX. CONTESTED MOTIONS

A. Contested motions will be scheduled for argument unless the Court determines that hearing is unnecessary.

B. The Court may require:

1. Supplemental briefs;
2. Joint statements of issues; and
3. Proposed orders.

## X. UNCONTESTED MOTIONS

A. Uncontested motions must include certification stating:

1. All parties have been notified; and
2. No party objects.

## XI. EMERGENCY MOTIONS

A. Emergency motions must:

1. Be clearly labeled “EMERGENCY”;
2. State the specific nature of the emergency;
3. Explain why immediate relief is necessary;
4. Certify efforts to notify all parties; and
5. Include a proposed order.

B. Emergency classification is reserved for matters requiring same-day action to avoid immediate and irreparable harm.

## PART X. HOUSING COURT PROCEDURES

Housing Court matters require strict compliance with the Allegheny County Local Rules, and these SOPs.

If you have questions about your case, Housing Court forms, or Housing Court Motions, you may email the Housing Court Help Desk at [HCHelpdesk@alleghenycourts.us](mailto:HCHelpdesk@alleghenycourts.us) or call 412-350-4462. Please include your full name, phone number, and case number (if applicable) in your messages with the Help Desk. Failure to include this information may result in the Help Desk being unable to respond to your message.

### I. FILING AND SERVICE

A. All filings must:

1. Comply with landlord-tenant procedural rules;
2. Include complete lease copies where applicable; and
3. Attach payment ledgers or account histories.

### II.. IN-PERSON REQUIREMENTS

A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section I – Remote Participation.**

### III. REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

A. Parties must bring with them:

1. Ledgers;
2. Receipts;
3. Photographs;
4. Inspection reports; and
5. Communications relevant to the dispute.

### IV. MEET-AND-CONFER REQUIREMENT

- A. Landlords and tenants must attempt resolution before court.
- B. Certification of good-faith efforts is required.

V. COURTROOM CONDUCT

A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section II – Courtroom & Remote Decorum.**

VI. INTERPRETERS & ACCOMODATIONS

A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section III – Interpreters and ADA Accommodations.**

VII. CONTINUANCES

A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section IV – Continuances.**

VIII. SETTLEMENTS

A. Any settlement must be:

1. Written;
2. Signed by all parties; and
3. Presented to the Court for approval.

VIII. FAILURE TO APPEAR

A. Failure to appear may result in:

1. Dismissal with prejudice;
2. Entry of judgment; and
3. Issuance of warrants in contempt proceedings where applicable.

**PART XI. SAVE YOUR HOME (SYH) PROGRAM**

The SYH program provides mediation opportunities for litigants in mortgage foreclosure cases.

I. ASSIGNMENT AND SCHEDULING

- A. Cases may be assigned to SYH upon filing for foreclosure.
- B. A Conciliation Conference will be scheduled by the Court.
- C. All inquiries regarding SYH scheduling must be directed to SYH staff, not the Judge's chambers.
- D. All parties must attend and engage in good-faith participation.

## II. REPRESENTATION AND CONTACT UPDATES

- A. Counsel must ensure contact information is accurate and updated.

## III. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- A. Lenders must provide:
  - 1. Updated reinstatement quotes;
  - 2. Loss mitigation records; and
  - 3. Payment histories.
- B. Homeowners must provide:
  - 1. Income statements;
  - 2. Tax returns;
  - 3. Proof of hardship;
  - 4. Loss mitigation application materials.

## IV. RETURN TO CIVIL DIVISION DOCKET

- A. Cases returning from SYH will be scheduled for status conferences and pretrial procedures.

## V. PRETRIAL AND TRIAL AFTER SYH

- A. **See Part XII – Pretrial Procedures.**
- B. **See Part XIII – Trial Procedures.**
- C. **See Part XIV – Exhibits.**

## VI. CONTINUANCES

- A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section IV – Continuances.**

## VII. POST-SYH SETTLEMENT PROCEDURE

- A. If the parties reach a resolution, they must prepare a settlement agreement and submit it to the Court.
- B. Any settlement must be:
  - 1. Written;
  - 2. Signed by all parties;
  - 3. Presented to the Court for approval (if required); and
  - 4. Filed with the Department of Court Records.

# PART XII. PRETRIAL PROCEDURES

## I. PRETRIAL SCHEDULING ORDERS

- A. The Court will issue a scheduling order setting deadlines for:
  - 1. Discovery;
  - 2. Dispositive motions;
  - 3. Pretrial statements;
  - 4. Expert reports;
  - 5. ADR; and
  - 6. Trial dates.

## II. SETTLEMENT AND ADR EXPECTATIONS

- A. Where ordered, parties must engage in settlement discussions and participate in:
  - 1. Mediation;
  - 2. Neutral evaluation; and
  - 3. Settlement conferences.

## III. DISPOSITIVE MOTIONS

- A. All briefing must comply with Pa.R.C.P. 1035.2.
- B. Summary judgment motions must include concise statements of material facts.

## IV. PRETRIAL STATEMENTS

- A. Each party must file a comprehensive pretrial statement including:
  - 1. Proposed exhibits;
  - 2. Witness lists;
  - 3. Expert reports;
  - 4. Damages calculations; and
  - 5. Stipulations.

## V. MOTIONS IN LIMINE

- A. Motions in Limine must be:
  - 1. Filed before the deadline;
  - 2. Served on all opposing parties; and
  - 3. Presented at the pretrial conference unless otherwise directed.

## VI. PRETRIAL CONFERENCES

- A. Counsel must attend Pretrial Conferences with an individual who has settlement authority.
- B. All parties should be fully prepared to discuss:
  - 1. Issues for trial;
  - 2. Evidentiary concerns; and
  - 3. Remaining discovery disputes.

## VII. WITNESS LISTS

- A. Witness lists must include:
  - 1. Full names;
  - 2. Contact information; and
  - 3. Summaries (proffers) of anticipated testimony.

## VIII. EXPERT DISCLOSURES

- A. Expert reports must comply with Pa.R.C.P. 4003.5.

## IX. EXHIBIT EXCHANGE

- A. Exhibits must be exchanged before trial.

**B. See Part XIV – Exhibits.**

**X. TRIAL BRIEFS**

A. Trial briefs may be ordered at the Court's discretion.

**XI. SANCTIONS**

A. Failure to comply with pretrial requirements may result in:

1. Exclusion of evidence;
2. Witness preclusion;
3. Monetary sanctions; and
4. Adverse inferences being raised against the non-compliant party.

**PART XIII. TRIAL PROCEDURES**

**I. ARRIVAL AND SCHEDULING**

A. Trials begin promptly at the time scheduled.  
B. Parties must appear at least fifteen (15) minutes early.

**II. PRETRIAL CONFERENCE ON TRIAL DAY**

A. The Court will conduct a brief conference to:

1. Address last-minute issues;
2. Resolve motions;
3. Confirm witnesses; and
4. Finalize exhibit procedures.

**III. SEQUESTRATION**

A. Witness sequestration may be ordered under Pa.R.E. 615.

**IV. OPENING STATEMENTS**

A. Opening statements must be confined to what counsel expects the evidence to prove.

V. PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE

- A. Evidence must comply with the Pennsylvania Rules of Evidence.
- B. The Court may impose limits to avoid cumulative testimony.

VI. REMOTE WITNESSES

- A. Remote testimony requires prior approval and must comply with evidentiary rules.
- B. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section I – Remote Participation.**
- C. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section II – Courtroom & Remote Decorum.**

VII. DEPOSITIONS

- A. Depositions may be used as permitted under Pa.R.C.P. 4020.

VIII. EXHIBITS AT TRIAL

- A. **See Part XIV – Exhibits.**

IX. OBJECTIONS

- A. Objections must be concise (e.g., “Objection, hearsay.” Or “Objection, relevance.”)
- B. Speaking objections are not permitted.

X. SIDEBARS

- A. Sidebar requests are granted sparingly.

XI. TECHNOLOGY AND DEMONSTRATIVES

- A. **See Part XVII – Technology, Remote Proceedings, and Electronic Materials.**

XII. WITNESS SCHEDULING

A. Counsel must coordinate witness availability to avoid delays.

**XIII. WITNESSES IDENTIFIED LATE**

A. Late-disclosed witnesses may be excluded absent good cause.

**XIV. CONDUCT DURING TRIAL**

A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section II – Courtroom & Remote Decorum.**

**XV. JURY TRIALS**

A. All jury instructions, voir dire questions, and proposed verdict slips must be submitted as ordered.

**XVI. CLOSING ARGUMENTS**

A. Closing arguments must be based on admitted evidence.

**XVII. VERDICT AND POST-TRIAL PROCESS**

A. **See Part XV – Post-Trial Motions and Appeals.**

**XVIII. SANCTIONS**

A. Misconduct during trial may result in sanctions.

**PART XIV. EXHIBITS**

All exhibits must be organized, pre-marked, exchanged, and presented in compliance with these procedures. The purpose of these rules is to ensure fairness, clarity, and efficiency during hearings and trials.

**Please refer to Allegheny County Rules of Judicial Administration, Rule 5101.1, et. seq. regarding custody of exhibits and filing requirements.**

## I. PRE-MARKING OF EXHIBITS

- A. All exhibits must be pre-marked before trial or evidentiary hearings.
- B. Plaintiffs shall use "P-1," "P-2," "P-3," etc.
- C. Defendants shall use "D-1," "D-2," "D-3," etc.
- D. Joint exhibits, when permitted, shall be marked "J-1," "J-2," "J-3."
- E. Large or physical exhibits must also be labeled with the exhibit number.

## II. EXCHANGE OF EXHIBITS

- A. Exhibits must be exchanged:
  - 1. By the deadline set forth in the pretrial order, or
  - 2. If no deadline is set, no later than five (5) business days before trial.
- B. Failure to exchange exhibits may result in exclusion.

## III. EXHIBIT BINDERS

- A. For trials exceeding one (1) day, each party must prepare:
  - 1. One (1) binder for the Court,
  - 2. One (1) binder for witnesses, and
  - 3. One (1) binder for opposing counsel
- B. Binders must:
  - 1. Be tabbed;
  - 2. Match the numbering in the exhibit list; and
  - 3. Contain only pre-marked exhibits.

## IV. ELECTRONIC EXHIBITS

- A. Electronic exhibits must:
  - 1. Be submitted as PDF files, unless the exhibits are audio or video;
  - 2. Be clearly labeled by exhibit number and/or letter(s); and
  - 3. Match the numbering in the Pretrial Statement.
- B. Audio and video files must be playable on standard Windows-based courtroom systems.
- C. Counsel must test the files in advance of trial.

## V. ADMISSION OF EXHIBITS AT TRIAL

- A. Pre-marked exhibits are not automatically admitted.
- B. Exhibits must be moved into evidence through a sponsoring witness.
- C. Opposing counsel will have an opportunity to object.
- D. The Court will rule on admissibility consistent with the Rules of Evidence.

## VI. OBJECTIONS

- A. All objections to exhibits must be:
  1. Concise;
  2. Based on the Rules of Evidence; and
  3. Raised prior to admission.
- B. Speaking objections are prohibited.

## VII. OVERSIZED OR PHYSICAL EXHIBITS

- A. Oversized or three-dimensional exhibits:
  1. Must be disclosed in advance;
  2. Must be delivered to the courtroom by 8:30 a.m. on the first day of trial;
  3. May require special handling or storage.
- B. The Court may decline to store exhibits that pose a safety or logistical issue

## VIII. CUSTODY AND RETURN OF EXHIBITS

- A. Exhibits admitted into evidence become part of the court record.
- B. Counsel must retrieve physical exhibits at the conclusion of trial unless otherwise ordered.

## IX. DEMONSTRATIVE AIDS

- A. Demonstrative exhibits must be:
  1. Shared with opposing counsel in advance;
  2. Not misleading; and
  3. Clearly marked “Demonstrative Only – Not Admitted.”
- B. Counsel must request permission before displaying demonstratives to the jury or the Court.

## X. ADVANCE ISSUES

- A. Any disputes regarding exhibits must be raised at the Pretrial Conference or by written motion filed before trial.

## XI. SANCTIONS

- A. Failure to comply with exhibit requirements may result in:
  1. Exclusion of exhibits;
  2. Adverse inferences being raised against the non-compliant party;
  3. Monetary sanctions; or
  4. Other sanctions permitted by law.

# PART XV. POST-TRIAL MOTIONS AND APPEALS

This section governs the procedures for post-trial relief, preservation of issues, and appeals.

## I. VERDICT AND JUDGMENT

- A. Following a bench or jury trial, the Court will enter a verdict or order.
- B. Judgment shall be entered as required under Pa.R.C.P. 227.4.

## II. FILING POST-TRIAL MOTIONS

- A. Post-trial motions under Pa.R.C.P. 227.1 must:

1. Be filed within ten (10) days of the verdict or decision;
2. Identify specific issues raised at trial;
3. Cite legal authority;
4. Include a proposed order; and
5. Not include new issues not preserved at trial.

## III. TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS

- A. If transcripts are needed, a request must be filed promptly with the Court Reporter's Office.
- B. Counsel must serve all parties.

C. Any delays attributable to counsel may not extend briefing deadlines.

**IV. RESPONSES**

A. Responses to post-trial motions must be filed within the timeframe set by local rule or Court order.

**V. ORAL ARGUMENT**

A. The Court may schedule oral argument or decide the motion on the pleadings.

**VI. DISPOSITION OF MOTIONS**

A. The Court will issue an opinion or order addressing each issue raised.

**VII. ENTRY OF JUDGMENT**

A. After post-trial motions are resolved, any party may praecipe for entry of judgment as required.

**VIII. PRESERVATION FOR APPEAL**

A. Issues not raised at trial and in post-trial motions are generally waived on appeal.

**IX. APPEALS**

A. Appeals to the Superior Court must comply with:

1. The Pennsylvania Rules of Appellate Procedure;
2. Requirements for Rule 1925(b) Statements; and
3. Timely ordering of transcripts.

**X. RULE 1925(b) STATEMENTS**

- A. If the Court orders a party to complete and file a Rule 1925(b) statement, the party must comply strictly with the order.
- B. Failure to file a timely, concise statement may result in waiver.

XI. SIJ-SPECIFIC APPELLATE CONCERNS

- A. For matters involving Special Immigrant Juvenile findings, the Court will issue a Rule 1925(a) Opinion, if needed.
- B. Federal immigration deadlines do not toll state appellate deadlines.

XII. SANCTIONS

- A. Failure to comply with post-trial procedure may result in:
  - 1. Waiver of issues;
  - 2. Dismissal of motions;
  - 3. Monetary sanctions; or
  - 4. Other consequences permitted by law.

## PART XVI. SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE (SIJ) PROCEDURES

SIJ matters require attention to legal standards under both state and federal law. The Court's role is limited to making factual findings necessary under 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J). The Court does not adjudicate immigration status or federal eligibility.

I. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF SIJ PROCEEDINGS

- A. In SIJ Proceedings, the Court determines:

- 1. Whether the minor is dependent or placed under custody;
- 2. Whether reunification with one or both parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or similar basis under Pennsylvania law; and
- 3. Whether it is not in the minor's best interest to return to their country of nationality or last habitual residence.

II. FILING REQUIREMENTS

- A. All Petitions for SIJ Findings must:

- 1. Identify clearly that SIJ findings are sought;
- 2. Include factual allegations supporting dependency or custody;
- 3. Attach relevant supporting documentation; and
- 4. Be verified by the Petitioner.

### III. SERVICE OF PROCESS

- A. Service must comply with the Rules of Civil Procedure.
- B. Alternative service requires a motion supported by affidavit.
- C. If, after reasonable efforts, counsel cannot locate the opposing party(ies), counsel shall submit and file an Affidavit of Due Diligence explaining their efforts to locate and effectuate service on the opposing party(ies).

### IV. LANGUAGE ACCESS

- A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section III – Interpreters and ADA Accommodations.**

### V. TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

- A. Because SIJ cases often involve vulnerable minors, the Court may:
  - 1. Limit repetitive questioning;
  - 2. Adjust courtroom practices; and/or
  - 3. Allow alternative means of presenting sensitive information.

### VI. EVIDENCE REQUIRED

- A. Evidence may include:
  - 1. Testimony of the minor;
  - 2. Records from schools, medical providers, or social services;
  - 3. Expert testimony;
  - 4. Affidavits; and/or
  - 5. Evidence of country conditions.

### VII. HEARINGS

- A. The Court will schedule SIJ hearings promptly.
- B. Remote testimony may be allowed with prior approval, or ordered by the Court.

### VIII. ORDERS AND FINDINGS

- A. SIJ orders must:
  - 1. Contain specific factual findings;

2. Reflect the evidence; and
3. Be submitted in Word format for editing.

B. The Court will not sign boilerplate or conclusory SIJ orders.

IX. CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. All filings and proceedings must comply with the Case Records Public Access Policy and confidentiality requirements for minors.
- B. The Court will seal orders when appropriate.

X. POST-HEARING PROCEDURES

- A. **See Part XV – Post-Trial Motions and Appeals.**
- B. Counsel is responsible for all federal filings.

XI. SANCTIONS

- A. Misuse of SIJ proceedings may result in sanctions.

**PART XVII. TECHNOLOGY, REMOTE PROCEEDINGS, AND ELECTRONIC MATERIALS**

I. REMOTE APPEARANCES

- A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section I – Remote Participation.**

II. CONDUCT DURING REMOTE PROCEEDINGS

- A. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section I – Remote Participation.**
- B. **See Part VII – General Considerations for All Proceedings, Section II – Courtroom & Remote Decorum.**

III. USE OF COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

- A. Parties must notify chambers three (3) business days in advance if they intend to use:
  - 1. Screens;
  - 2. Projectors;
  - 3. Audio/video playback; and/or
  - 4. Demonstratives.
- B. All equipment must be tested in advance.

#### IV. ELECTRONIC EXHIBITS

- A. **See Part XIV – Exhibits.**

#### V. SCREEN SHARING

- A. Screen sharing is permitted only with court approval.
- B. Documents must have been exchanged previously with opposing counsel.

#### VI. ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES AND FILING

- A. Electronic signatures are acceptable where permitted.
- B. All documents must be filed with the Department of Court Records.

#### VII. CYBERSECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. Counsel must protect all links, exhibits, confidential information, and minors' information.

#### VIII. TECHNOLOGY FAILURES

- A. Participants must notify chambers immediately of any technology issues.

#### IX. SANCTIONS

- A. Non-compliance may result in:
  - 1. Termination of remote appearance;
  - 2. Exclusion of evidence;
  - 3. Adverse rulings; and/or
  - 4. Finding of contempt.