

Standard Operating Procedures for Judge Jessel A. Costa III
(Effective 9/1/2026)

**As of 9/1/2026, all cases with the 002 suffix will
be transferred to Judge Green-Hawkins.**

Chambers Information

Family Law Center
Room 534, Courtroom 200
440 Ross Street,
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Judicial Administrative Assistant:
Tabatha Cramer
tcramer@alleghenycourts.us
(412) 350-1663

Judicial Tipstaff:
Lisa Giorgetti
lgiorgetti@alleghenycourts.us
(412) 350-1662

Judicial Law Clerk:
Aaron Klavon
aklavon@alleghenycourts.us
(412) 350-1661

For general correspondence with Chambers, please email
CostaChambers@alleghenycourts.us.

Advanced Communication Technology

All attorneys must be present in-person. All parties will be expected to appear **in-person** unless authorized by the Court to participate remotely, unless otherwise specified below. The following types of hearings shall remain fully remote (via TEAMS) unless an in-person hearing is requested:

- Termination of Parental Rights hearings **only** when they are scheduled without an associated permanency review hearing.
- Bypass hearings, as scheduled by court administration.
- Adoption hearings, unless the adoptive family requests an in-person hearing.
- Any dependency or delinquency proceeding where all parties have agreed to a continuance request. If there is an unrepresented litigant on the case, the unrepresented litigant must be able to participate via advanced communication technology (via TEAMS or Zoom, if in the Allegheny County Jail) in the continuance request. All other requests for continuances should be made by Motion.
- Custody Conciliations with counsel and/or self-represented litigants, unless requested by a party to be in-person.

Other proceedings or hearings as determined by this Court.

All attorneys and persons appearing before Judge Costa should comply with the following:

1. Please use the case name and docket number in the subject line of any email sent to judicial staff.
2. Download and be familiar with Microsoft TEAMS technology and please practice using the TEAMS application prior to any scheduled matters.

3. Counsel should be aware that if they intend to have witnesses or any non-parties participate remotely in the proceedings, that it is their responsibility to forward the Microsoft TEAMS invite. **All parties are expected to appear in-person unless a request has been made to attend remotely, with permission explicitly granted by the Court.**
4. Any/all motions related to Judge Costa's delinquency, dependency, and/or termination of parental rights proceedings must be emailed to his judicial chamber's staff. Motions will be heard thirty minutes before the first scheduled case on the Judge's regularly scheduled day for each type of hearing. (Example: Judge Costa presides over dependency cases each Wednesday. If the first case is scheduled at 9:30 am, motions will be heard at 9:00 am.) In the event parties have a consent motion, which must include consent of all self-represented parties, the consent motion and proposed order may be sent directly to his judicial chamber's staff for signature without presentation. Consent motions must be clearly labeled as such in the subject line of the email. **MOTIONS should be sent to motionscosta@alleghenycourts.us**
5. Communication with judicial chambers' staff on any other matter, related to scheduling or procedural requests, must include all three email addresses in the communication:
tcramer@alleghenycourts.us
lgiorgetti@alleghenycourts.us
aklavon@alleghenycourts.us
6. It is imperative that Counsel officially enter a praecipe of appearance in each case before they appear in Court. In Juvenile Court matters, this must be done electronically through PACFile. In Termination of Parental Rights proceedings, counsel for the child shall not use the term "child advocate" in the praecipe.

Custody of Exhibits in Court Proceedings

Please review Rule 5101.4 Family Division Custody of Exhibits at the following link: [New-Local-Rule-on-Exhibits-Family-Divison.pdf \(alleghenycourts.us\)](#)

This rule applies to all proceedings before Judge Costa and the party proponent of the evidence is the court designated custodian of the evidence. The only exception to this is when the proponent of the evidence is a self-represented litigant, in which case judicial staff will serve as the custodian of the evidence.

Any party seeking to admit evidence must have each exhibit clearly labeled PRIOR to the proceeding. The party proponent of the evidence must be prepared to provide a copy of the exhibit to the court at the time of the proceeding. The party proponent may email the labeled exhibit to exhibitscosta@alleghenycourts.us. **Exhibits shall not be emailed or provided to the court in advance of any proceeding.** The party proponent of the evidence may choose to provide a binder of labeled exhibits or e-mail all labeled exhibits at once in a Sharepoint file via email at the start of the proceeding.

The party proponent of the evidence must also keep an index/exhibit list. This index/exhibit list, and all of the party proponent's exhibits, must be filed with the Department of Court Records (DCR) within five (5) business days upon the conclusion of the hearing. This index/exhibit list must indicate whether the exhibit was admitted or rejected into evidence and provided a description or identification of the exhibit. Please email the court staff at exhibitscosta@alleghenycourts.us once this has been completed, as required by rule.

It is the responsibility of the proponent/custodian of the evidence to maintain a copy of their exhibits, maintain a copy of the index/exhibit list, and to comply with this rule for all proceedings before Judge Costa. Please pay special attention to Rule 5103.4 as it relates to Special Provisions for certain exhibits.

Custody, Support, and other Domestic Relations Matters

Judge Costa will preside over family division motions on his monthly scheduled date. All motions must be sent in advance of the presentation to the following email: motionscosta@alleghenycourts.us. Please be sure the email includes the date of intended in-person presentation, case name, and docket number.

For any consent motions, counsel must clearly indicate in the subject line of the email that this is a CONSENT MOTION, attach the motion and a proposed court order in WORD. The opposing party (or his/her/their counsel) must be included in the email to motionscosta@alleghenycourts.us. If all conditions are met, the Court will enter the order, email copies of the order to counsel and/or the parties, and email the order to the Department of Court Records (DCR) for docketing.

Self-Represented Litigants

There are ample resources available online at the Allegheny County for self-represented litigants at the link below:

<https://www.alleghenycourts.us/family/departments/pro-se-motions-department/>

Any self-represented litigant that has an existing case in the Family Division and wants to file a Motion before Judge Costa should appear at the Information Desk on the first floor of the Family Law Center, 440 Ross St., to receive additional information as to the correct procedure. Additionally, a party may also contact the Information Desk at call 412-350-5600. Self-represented litigants that have questions about child support can email 1stFOP@PACSES.com with questions about court procedures. Legal advice cannot be provided by judicial staff or employees of the Family Law Center.

Custody Conciliations and PLC Modifications

The Court will be conducting all conciliations and PLC Modification Requests via TEAMS unless otherwise specified by the Judge by way of court order. Parties participating on TEAMS must be able to turn on the camera feature during the proceeding.

Exceptions

The Court will decide all exceptions on the filed exceptions and briefs unless the court determines that an argument is necessary, in which case the court will notify litigants/counsel, and schedule a time and date either on TEAMS or in-person.

Should you have any questions about these Standard Operating Procedures or questions about scheduling, please contact judicial staff at the email addresses below:

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Tabatha Cramer

tcramer@alleghenycourts.us

(412) 350-1663

Judicial Tipstaff:

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Please check the Fifth Judicial District's website regularly for updates to these procedures and those of the Allegheny County Family Division.

Additional information and frequently asked questions can be located at the following links:

Frequently Asked Questions [Frequently Asked Questions - Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania \(alleghenycourts.us\)](https://www.alleghenycourts.us/frequently-asked-questions)

Family Division Forms [Forms - Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania \(alleghenycourts.us\)](https://www.alleghenycourts.us/family-division-forms)