

Judge Mahl's Procedures

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue our efforts to lessen the spread of the virus by allowing hearings to be held in person, by phone and by video via Microsoft Teams. Some cases will need to be heard in person; however, most can be heard by phone or by Teams.

Until further notice, to minimize contact during this time the appearance is waived for all defendants who are represented by counsel for all docket soundings, calendar calls and arraignments. All pro se defendants will appear in person or by Microsoft Teams.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPEARING BY VIDEO VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

****If you are requesting to appear at your court event by Teams meeting, you MUST notify Judge Mahl's judicial assistant, Theresa Novak, NO LESS THAN 2 DAYS before your scheduled court appearance. You may contact her by phone at 321-617-7260 or by email at Theresa.Novak@FLCourts18.org. You will need to provide her with an email address, so she can send you the link to appear via Teams.**** If you have not received the email with the link by at least the day before your scheduled court appearance, please first check your "junk" email folder and if the email is not there, please contact her again to let her know you did not receive it. Failure to appear by video because you did not receive an email with the link is not an excuse for your absence at the hearing. You are responsible for providing the correct information to the judicial assistant and confirming receipt of the email prior to your scheduled date.

When attending a court event by Teams for larger dockets (docket soundings, calendar calls, arraignments), please be aware that you will be online with other attorneys and/or defendants who also wish to appear remotely. Please make sure you have your camera turned on and your microphone is muted until your case is called. When the Judge calls your case, please make sure you turn on your microphone to be heard. Larger dockets may take a little while, just as they would in the courtroom, so your patience is greatly appreciated.





Prior to the court event being held by video, be sure you have:

- Access to a computer, tablet, or phone, that has a microphone and camera;
- Internet access during the entire hearing;
- An email address;
- Microsoft Teams© (app) available to download free on your Windows© computer, the iOS App Store© and Google Play Store©; and,
- Your driver's license or other government-issued ID.

To attend the court event:

- You will receive, by email, a link from the Judicial Assistant inviting you to “Join Microsoft Teams Meeting;”
- Please click on the link;
- When the app asks you to “Open this page in Teams,” press/click “Open.”
- On the next screen, press/click “Join as guest;” and,
- On the next screen, enter your name and press/click “Join meeting.”

Once the court event starts:

- Make sure that you have your camera turned on and your microphone muted until your case is called by the Judge;
- Click the icons –   – turning the microphone and camera on; if the icons look like this –   – then they are off;
- The Judge will conduct a test to ensure participation and will arrange for recording of the proceedings; and,
- Remember, the “Rules of Evidence” apply during the videoconference.

If the videoconference connection is interrupted:

- The screen may freeze or the sound may become muted;
- The participants should stop talking, except to advise the Judge of the interruption;
- Counsel should call or email the judicial assistant to advise the Judge of the interruption; and,
- Please stand by and follow instructions to reestablish the connection.

Please login on time and follow the instructions provided for video appearance. Please dress appropriately for video court, sweatshirts, gym clothes, Hawaiian shirts, concert t-shirts, sports team jerseys and pajamas are never appropriate.

Please try to locate a quiet area and minimize interruptions and distractions by others in the home. While we agree that your children and pets are adorable, their presence in the virtual courtroom distracts you, the Court, and other participants from the subject matter of the hearing.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPEARING IN PERSON

Defendants who are represented by counsel will NOT need to appear for docket soundings, calendar calls and arraignments unless otherwise instructed by your counsel or the Court, as the Court will waive your appearances.

All individuals required to appear in person shall be screened when entering the courthouse. Individuals will have their temperature taken in a non-intrusive manner, and those with temperatures over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit will be denied entry into the courthouse. Each person entering the courthouse shall be screened using a series of questions. The virus is thought to spread between persons who are in close contact with one another, therefore, all persons must keep at least six feet between themselves and others, even when wearing a face covering, inclusive of elevators, hallways, and restrooms. **All persons entering courthouses MUST wear a face covering/mask.** All such persons are strongly encouraged to bring their own face covering; otherwise, a disposable mask will be provided. Hand sanitization stations will be implemented at several locations throughout all courthouses. To the maximum extent possible, physical handling of documents is to be avoided if possible.

All defendants appearing in person shall be required to bring a valid photo ID such as a driver's license. Defendants may also contact court administration at 321-351-6255 to receive any additional relevant information regarding entering a courthouse.

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCE

If any party is seeking a continuance, a proper motion must be filed (at least 48 hours prior) and an email sent to the Judicial Assistant, Theresa Novak, via email at Theresa.Novak@FLCourts18.org with a copy of the motion along with the proposed Order in Word format. Please note in your email if there are any objections to the continuance or if there is a stipulation.

We will all work on moving cases along as efficiently as we can but will need the continued help from attorneys by making offers on cases, talking to your clients about the offers, and discussing all possible stipulations, making sure defendants and witnesses are available for their scheduled court appearances and have been contacted prior to the court event to confirm their appearance.

We will provide updates to these instructions if any procedures change by further administrative orders or Judge Mahl. Any questions or concerns regarding these procedures can be directed to Judge Mahl's judicial assistant, Theresa Novak, by phone at 321-617-7260 or by email at Theresa.Novak@FLCourts18.org.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation during this time. Stay safe.

Updated: 7/14/2020