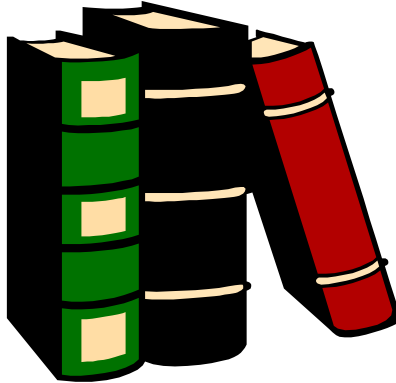


**EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SEMINOLE COUNTY
CRIMINAL DIVISION**



**ADMINISTRATIVE
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
GUIDELINES**

JUDGE MELISSA D. SOUTO

SEMINOLE COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER

101 ESLINGER WAY

SANFORD, FLORIDA 32773

(407) 665-4926

JUDICIAL ASSISTANT: NICOLE DANIELS

NICOLE.DANIELS@FLCOURTS18.ORG

October 2025

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COURTROOM DECORUM

ALL PARTIES AND COUNSEL SHALL EXERCISE PROPER COURTROOM DECORUM WHILE IN COURT

- The Judge may remove anyone from the courtroom who hinders the orderly conduct of business.
- The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited.
- Address all remarks to the Court, and not to opposing counsel or opposing party.
- All parties and counsel should read and familiarize themselves with Administrative Order 09-06, Supersedes 92-116 regarding Courtroom Decorum and Procedure: <http://www.brevardclerk.us/cache/files/0/3/0309ec7d-4b2b-4771-be51-42c5a69505e9/17CAA9D25C7C325506910EF3B8DE8F1C.09-06-click-here-.pdf>

HEARINGS

1. SCHEDULING: All parties are required to give a good faith assessment of the time needed for a hearing. Please contact the JA to obtain available dates and times for hearing. (Nicole.Daniels@flcourts18.org). Once the hearing has been coordinated with all appropriate parties, email the JA to confirm the date, time and courtroom. If your case goes over the time limit, your hearing may be terminated, and rescheduled for another date.

Coordinating: Reasonable attempts need to be made to clear a date with opposing counsel before scheduling a hearing. Several attempts made on the same day is not sufficient. Do not contact the JA to determine what a reasonable attempt is, or how much time is reasonable. This must be determined by the attorney.

Pro Se Parties Only: If the opposing party is pro se and a telephone number or email address is listed on any of their pleadings, you must make at least two attempts on two different days to coordinate your hearing. A message must be left on both days requesting them to call your office by the end of that business day to coordinate the hearing. If, at the end of the second business day, you do not receive a call back, then you may set a hearing unilaterally at least thirty (30) days from the current date. If no phone number is listed in the Court file, then a hearing cannot be scheduled sooner than one month out to allow sufficient time for notice. The notice must be mailed with sufficient time for the opposing party to be present to make objections.

Courtroom: For most hearings and trials, the Courtroom will be 5C. Please confirm the courtroom with the Judicial Assistant.

2. CANCELLING: Only the party who scheduled a hearing may cancel a hearing. If a hearing is continued or cancelled, it is the responsibility of the scheduling attorney to file a Notice of Cancellation, and advise the judicial assistant that the scheduled hearing is continued or

cancelled, so that it is removed from the Court's docket. **The Court does not get notifications when you file documents, notices, or motions in the court file.**

3. NOTICE OF HEARING: A Notice of Hearing must specifically state the matter(s) to be heard, the date, time and place of the hearing, and shall be e-filed with the Clerk with a courtesy copy of the Notice of Hearing emailed to the JA. Any party scheduling a hearing shall provide notice to all other parties.

4. TELEPHONIC APPEARANCE: Telephonic appearances at hearings are permitted in some cases. You must e-file a Motion to Appear telephonically, as well as, a proposed Order. The proposed Order must state the date and time of the hearing, the name of the party appearing by phone and a telephone number for the Court to call at the time of hearing. (See below for formatting and filing proposed Orders.) If multiple parties wish to appear by phone, the proposed Order must provide **ONE** telephone number (conference line) for the Court to call at the time of hearing. If a party appearing by telephone will be giving testimony, they must have a notary public present with them at the time of hearing so that he/she may be sworn in. Any party appearing by phone will be called last on the docket, so the call may not be right at the hearing time.

5. MATTERS NOT REQUIRING A HEARING: Several matters do not require a hearing and a proposed Order may be submitted through the e-portal in Word format as an "Agreed Order," along with a separately filed cover letter indicating no objection to the proposed Order; and/or with a properly filed Stipulation. Examples of matters not requiring hearing:

- Stipulated Modifications and Orders (with a stipulation signed by both parties)
 - Motion for Substitution of Counsel (Signed by Attorney **and** Party)
 - Motions to Withdraw (WITH SIGNED CONSENT FROM CLIENT – see below)
- These types of matters may be submitted without a hearing, but depending on the nature of those matters after review of the filings by the Court, a hearing may still be necessary.

6. HEARING MATERIALS: Should you wish for the judge to review materials or case law prior to a hearing, please submit at least ten (10) days prior to your hearing.

7. MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION: Once you have filed your Motion for Rehearing/Reconsideration, please email a copy to the Judicial Assistant so that the Judge can review and determine whether a hearing is necessary. If the Court requires a hearing, the Judicial Assistant will contact you to coordinate one.

8. MOTION TO WITHDRAW AS COUNSEL: If the attorney is able to obtain a signed consent from their client, then the proposed Order may be submitted through the e-portal in Word format. If the attorney is unable to obtain a signed consent from their client, the motion must be set for hearing with at least 5 days notice to the parties. Please make sure the Motion and Notice of Hearing has a Certificate of Service that indicates that the motion and order were served on the client. The proposed Order allowing withdrawal of counsel must reflect the following:

- The client's name, last known address, telephone number, and, if possible, e-mail address;
- A statement that all pleadings are to be furnished to the client;
- A statement that the client is responsible for notifying the Clerk of Court, in writing, within 5 days of any change of address.

9. MOTIONS IN LIMINE / PRE TRIAL MOTIONS: All Motions in Limine and Pre Trial Motions must be scheduled for hearing prior to the trial date.

10. ARRAIGNMENTS: Arraignments are scheduled one Tuesday a month at 9:00 a.m. in this division in courtroom 5C. There is NOT a 1:30 pm docket. If your client is in custody, and there will be a plea at arraignment, you must contact the Judicial Assistant no later than the day before at 3:30 pm to have the Defendant transported to the courtroom.

11. DOCKET SOUNDING: All docket soundings are set for 8:30 am in courtroom 5C in this division. There is NOT a 1:30pm docket. If your client is in custody, and there will be a plea at docket sounding, you must contact the Judicial Assistant no later than the day before at 3:30 pm to have the Defendant transported to the courtroom. Otherwise, the Defendant will appear for docket sounding virtually. You may also waive the Defendant's presence at Docket Sounding whether the Defendant is in custody or out of custody, but you must file a waiver signed by the client, that waives their appearance and speedy trial.

12. TRIAL SCHEDULING CONFERENCES: Appearances at Trial Scheduling Conference may NOT be waived. Counsel shall be prepared to discuss: witness availability, length of trial, any pretrial motions, and any jury instructions that will be requested that are not standard jury instructions.

13. PLEAS: All plea agreements must be in writing, in the form approved by the Court. The approved plea forms are included on the 18th Judicial Circuit Website.

ORDERS

14. PROPOSED ORDERS: Do not submit a proposed order until your Motion or Petition has been accepted and docketed by the Clerk of Court. Any Orders submitted without the corresponding motion or petition in the court file will be rejected.

All proposed Orders should be submitted through the e-portal main page in Word format as a "Proposed Order" (NOT "Pleading on Existing Case"), and should be accompanied by a separately filed cover letter (if necessary, stating that opposing parties have reviewed the proposed Order and they have no objection to the form or content of the Order.) If the parties cannot agree, please schedule a hearing. Do not ask opposing parties to contact the Judge's office with objections to a proposed Order. If opposing parties have been forwarded a copy of the proposed Order, but have

not responded within a reasonable time frame, you may state so in your cover letter if the motion was already heard before the Court. If the matter has not been heard by the Court, and you have not received a response from opposing parties, then it must be set for a hearing. Please do not submit proposed Orders until AFTER your hearing.

ALL PROPOSED ORDERS SHOULD BE FORMATTED AS FOLLOWS:

DONE and ORDERED on DDDD in Chambers in Sanford, Seminole County, Florida.

JJJJ

Copies provided via e-service only. Moving party is responsible for service of all non-registered parties.

*****Please make sure there are no spaces before or after the JJJJ or the signature block will not populate, and there will be no judicial signature on your order. If you do not have the proper codes on the proposed orders, the order will be rejected for improper format.

You should have at least 5 lines below the JJJJ to make certain the signature block appears on that page. Please do not have the signature block appear by itself on a page. When submitting an order, please do not use tables or blocks, as it is not necessary and delays processing. In order to expedite the processing of your orders, please only place the DDDD and JJJJ codes in the order. Additional codes will delay the processing times.

It is not necessary to follow up with an email to the Judicial Assistant with “courtesy copies” of a proposed order, or to notify the JA that a proposed order was E-filed.

MISC.

- **LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS:** To request and schedule a language interpreter please contact Court Administration at 407-665-4965, or use the link: [SEMINOLE INTERPRETER REQUEST \(SOLICITUD DE INTÉRPRETE PARA SEMINOLE\) \(office.com\)](https://seminoleinterpreterrequest.com)
- Please give at least 48 hours notice. If you don’t request an interpreter in advance we cannot guarantee that one will be available

SAMPLE ORDER:

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

CASE NO.: 2023-CF-00XX

STATE OF FLORIDA

v.

NAME

Defendant

_____/

ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO CONTINUE

DONE and ORDERED in Chambers in Sanford, Seminole County,
Florida this DDDD.

JJJJ

***Copies provided via e-service only. Moving party is responsible for service of
all non-registered parties.***