

JUDGE SUSAN L. BARBER

GUARDIANSHIP DIVISION 17 PROCEDURES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Physical Address: 255 North Broadway Avenue, Bartow, FL 33830

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9000, Drawer J-166 Bartow, FL 33831-9000

Judge's Chambers: 8D (eighth floor, blue elevators)

Hearing Room: 8D-1(eighth floor, blue elevators)

SCHEDULING HEARINGS

1. You may email me at kwitt@jud10.flcourts.org with all parties included, to obtain hearing times for a hearing. You will need to provide the following information:
 - matter(s) being heard
 - amount of time needed and the
 - case number
 - party names
2. Hearings may only be scheduled once the subject motion, petition, or other matter has been filed with the Court. **Please note there is a delay of 7-10 days between efilng and when the image is visible to the Court on the docket.**
3. DO NOT set hearings for 15 minutes if the matter will, in all likelihood, take greater than 15 minutes.
4. The party scheduling a hearing is responsible for contacting all other parties to determine how much time each party will require. After obtaining available hearing times, do not include the court in any electronic communications with other parties relating to the coordination of hearing time. After all parties have agreed upon a hearing date and time, email the judicial assistant with the agreed upon date and time.
5. The parties, or counsel for the parties, will receive electronic confirmation from the Court of the hearing date and time.
6. **If an interpreter is needed**, you MUST contact the Court's Interpreters Office at 863-534-7700 and coordinate for an interpreter to be present as soon as the hearing is scheduled.

HEARINGS AND VIRTUAL APPEARANCES

1. All hearings will be conducted in person in hearing room 8D-1. Any requests to appear virtually must be made by submitting a motion and proposed order through the e-portal.
2. The motion to appear virtually **MUST** state that all attorneys of record have been consulted and have no objection. Failure to provide this information will result in the motion being denied.
3. Only non-evidentiary pretrial hearings scheduled for less than 30 minutes may request to appear virtually. Any hearings scheduled for 30 minutes or more must be in person hearings. **PLEASE NOTE: Incapacity hearings are evidentiary hearings which typically are scheduled for 30 minutes or more and are conducted in person.**

4. Any evidentiary hearing where testimony will be provided **MUST** be in person, unless the Court has granted a special request for a participant to provide testimony virtually.
5. Any requests to appear virtually that have been granted by the Court will be held using Microsoft Teams. The link can be found below or on Judge Barber's webpage at www.jud10.flcourts.org/gallery/susan-l-barber. If you do not have the Microsoft Teams application installed, the link will open in your internet browser.

To appear via video, click the link below
[Click here to join the F8 Specialty Courts and Sec 17 Guardianship](#)

6. Parties appearing virtually must use an active camera and microphone. Telephone only appearances are not permitted.
7. **The virtual link will not always be active.** ANY virtual appearances must be cleared with the Judge's office to ensure the link is activated.

GUARDIANSHIP CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES

1. All Guardianship Case Management hearings are held before the General Magistrate.
2. Any requests to appear virtually that have been granted by the Court will be held using Microsoft Teams. The link can be found below:

To appear via video, click the link below
[Guardianship Case Management Conference \(CMC\) Magistrate](#)

3. Any questions regarding your Case Management Conference should be directed to the Guardianship Case Manager, Mandi Clanton at 863-534-5843 or mclanton@jud10.flcourts.org.

NOTICING HEARINGS

1. Hearings on non-emergency matters must be scheduled at least 10 calendar days in advance in order to ensure all interested parties receive adequate notice.
2. A party calling a case up for hearing shall provide the Court and all other parties a Notice of Hearing.
3. All Notices for hearings should include instructions for appearing in person. Once a virtual appearance has been granted, the Court will insert the virtual link into the order granting the virtual appearance.
4. All parties capable of receiving email should be provided with the Notice of Hearing by email.
5. Parties unable to receive email may be served by first class, U.S. Mail.
6. A courtesy copy of the Notice of Hearing must be provided to the Court after receiving the confirmation email for the hearing date/time.

HEARING CANCELLATIONS

1. Please call/email as soon as you learn that the hearing is to be cancelled. Only the party who set the hearing may cancel it, and it is that party's responsibility to notify all parties of the cancellation.
2. If the length of a hearing changes in any way (either more or less time will be required than what was reserved), please let the Judge's office know as soon as possible as the remainder of that time may be needed for other hearings.

SUBMITTING PROPOSED ORDERS

1. All proposed orders must be submitted through the Florida Courts e-filing portal, to Division 17. Please include "Division 17" in the style of case in the order.
2. Please do not submit proposed orders without submitting a courtesy of the supporting motion and a cover letter explaining whether a hearing was held or whether the entry of the proposed order is requested without the necessity of a hearing. Do not submit a cover letter that only says, "Enclosed please find a proposed order", without the required explanation referenced above. Such cover letters are not helpful. **PLEASE NOTE: The Court is unable to view efiled motions until 7-10 days after they are efiled.** If you do not submit a courtesy copy of your motion through the efilng portal with your proposed order, there will be a delay in the Court entertaining your request.
3. With prior approval from the judicial assistant, parties who are unable to submit orders through the e-filing portal may submit the orders in Word (.docx) format to kwitt@jud10.flcourts.org.
4. Hard copies of proposed orders will no longer be accepted. Do not mail proposed orders and conforming copies to our office.
5. Please submit each proposed order only one time. Multiple submissions of orders will delay processing. If you have not received any communication from the Court and your order has not been entered within one week of submission, you may contact the judicial assistant regarding the status of your order(s). Except as provided below, please only resubmit orders if requested by the Court.
6. Once the order has been properly signed and e-filed, the attorneys and parties of record who are registered with the e-filing portal will receive a copy of the signed order via email from the portal. Attorneys submitting proposed orders in cases in which there are pro se parties are responsible for mailing copies of orders to the pro se parties.
7. If you receive notice that your proposed order is not being entered for any reason, you will need to resubmit your order once the matter which precluded entry of the order has been corrected or addressed at a hearing.
8. **Amended orders without explanation in either the body of the proposed amended order or via cover letter will almost always be rejected.**

9. **PRO SE PETITIONERS: IF YOUR SUBMISSIONS ARE NOT LEGIBLE, THEY WILL BE REJECTED.**

FORMATTING ORDERS

1. Orders must have the correct format for the Judge's signature to apply. Any orders that have been submitted that do not contain the correct format will be rejected. The Tenth Circuit has an Administrative Order regarding the correct formatting.
2. All proposed orders must include a section at the bottom showing copies to all parties. Please do not use the code "CCCC" on proposed orders.
3. Below is the exact formatting that can be copied and pasted into the signature part of the order:

DONE AND ORDERED in Bartow, Polk County, Florida on DDDD.

JJJJ

REJECTED ORDERS

4. Rejected orders are done so by the Judge. Usually, rejections occur when documents are missing from the court file, or when an adequate explanation has not been provided via cover letter accompanying the proposed order.
5. The Judicial Assistant is not the one directing that a hearing is to be set or otherwise rejecting proposed orders. The Judicial Assistant rarely, if ever, knows why a proposed order is rejected, other than the explanation given with the rejection.

ATTENDANCE OF OBSERVERS

1. Unless otherwise ordered, family members and interested parties are permitted to attend and observe. However, observers will not be permitted to speak except upon request of a party with permission of the Court. Observers who speak without permission or engage in unruly, disruptive, or disrespectful conduct will be removed from the hearing and not allowed to rejoin.
2. It is the parties' obligation to provide the hyperlink and teleconference information to persons wanting to observe virtual court proceedings and to notify the Court in advance so the virtual link can be activated. Other persons not affiliated with a party may contact Tenth Circuit Court Technology for access to the virtual hearing space.

VIRTUAL COURTROOM ETIQUETTE

1. Virtual hearings are formal court proceedings and must be treated as if they were taking place in person in a hearing room or courtroom.

2. Dress appropriately for court.
3. Eliminate distractions as much as possible. Appearances should be made from an interior location free from excessive background noise.
4. To minimize distractions, log in or call a few minutes before the scheduled hearing begins. Identify yourself when in the virtual meeting with your real name. You are reminded that appearances via telephone only (without a camera) are generally not permitted.
5. **Mute your microphone before entering the virtual courtroom.** Keep your mic muted when not speaking and do not speak out of turn.
6. When appearing by video, do not deactivate your camera unless authorized by the Court.
7. Court-provided remote technology includes a “chat” feature. The chat feature shall not be utilized without express authorization from the Court.
8. If asked to unmute your microphone, activate your camera, or otherwise identify yourself, do so. Participants who refuse to comply with instructions will be removed from the virtual hearing space and not allowed to rejoin.
9. Participants or observers who engage in unruly or disrespectful conduct will be removed from the virtual hearing space and not allowed to rejoin.
10. In general, show the same courtesy and respect you would in an in person setting.

Please be advised that Judge Barber is assigned to other divisions in addition to Guardianship Division 17. All inquiries will be responded to as soon as possible; however, there may be a delay.

Administrative Orders: Copies of all Administrative Orders for the Circuit are available on our website at WWW.JUD10.FLCOURTS.ORG

Revised 08/25/2025