

Read the attached order carefully. It applies to you and you will be required to comply with this order.

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**AMENDED ORDER IMPLEMENTING A STANDING TEMPORARY ORDER FOR
DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE ACTIONS WITH OR WITHOUT MINOR
CHILDREN, ORANGE & OSCEOLA COUNTIES**

WHEREAS, to promote the stability of families going through a divorce; and

WHEREAS, to provide guidance to parties in dissolution of marriage actions to help parties pattern their behavior in ways that will reduce conflict and make the divorce work for the family; and

WHEREAS, to reduce the negative impact that dissolution of marriage actions have on children and the parties involved; and

WHEREAS, to reduce the number of “emergency” hearings during the beginning stages of dissolution of marriage actions thereby promoting stability and preserving resources of the parties and the Court; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the parties and children, or child as the case may be, that parents in a divorce case learn about the problems, duties, and responsibilities of litigation and parenting after separation and divorce, and that the parties preserve their assets and comply with Court rules; and

WHEREAS, the Judges assigned to the Domestic Relations Division have developed, with the assistance of the Family Law bar, a standing temporary order to be utilized in dissolution of marriage cases in an effort to achieve the above stated goals;

NOW THEREFORE, I, Donald A. Myers, Jr., in order to facilitate the efficient administration of justice, and pursuant to the authority vested in me as Chief Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit of Florida under Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215, hereby order the following, **effective immediately**, and to continue until further order:

1. SERVICE, APPLICATION, AND TERM OF THIS ORDER.

- a. This Standing Temporary Order for Dissolution of Marriage Action With or Without Minor Children shall be utilized and complied with immediately upon the filing of contested dissolution of marriage actions in Orange and Osceola Counties, except in cases where there is a written agreement by the parties to the contrary before or after this order takes effect.

- b. The Clerk of Court shall docket and provide a copy of this Standing Temporary Order to the Petitioner or to the Petitioner's counsel at the time the Petitioner files the Petition for Dissolution of Marriage.
- c. In addition, the Petitioner shall deliver a copy of this Standing Temporary Order to the process server to be served on the Respondent with the Petition for Dissolution of Marriage.
- d. **This Order is binding on the Petitioner upon the filing of this action and on the Respondent upon service of this Order.**
- e. This Order shall not supersede or modify any existing domestic violence injunction or other order by a court having jurisdiction over the parties or minor children concerning these matters.
- f. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further order of the court such as the entry of a final judgment, a dismissal of this cause, or until the entry of a subsequent temporary order, whichever shall occur first. This Order is without prejudice and does not preclude a Judge from modifying or amending this Order in individual cases as the Judge sees fit. Any part of this Order not changed by a subsequent order shall remain in effect.

2. CONTACT WITH BOTH PARENTS; SHARED PARENTING.

- a. It is the law that, unless the Court makes a specific ruling that it would be detrimental to the child(ren), the Court shall order shared parental responsibility, contact with both parents is in the child(ren)'s best interests, and children are entitled to frequent and continuing contact with both parents when the parents separate or divorce. In establishing the parenting plan and timesharing schedule, the Court will analyze the factors set forth in section 61.13(3), Florida Statutes. However, until a court order is entered each party is entitled to timesharing with the child(ren).
- b. Further, a parent who wants to have the majority of the time-sharing with the child(ren) has an affirmative obligation to encourage and nurture a relationship between the child(ren) and the other parent. A parent who unreasonably restricts access of the child(ren) to the other parent and does not encourage a relationship between the child(ren) and the other parent, for no valid reason, can be a basis to limit that parent's timesharing with the child(ren). Such a parent is not acting in the child(ren)'s best interests and is not following the law.

- c. The Court hereby orders “shared parenting” of the child(ren) by the parents. This means that wherever the child(ren) is (are) living from time to time, the parents must confer with each other and agree upon all MAJOR parenting decisions. Therefore, both parents must participate in all major parenting decisions and shall immediately work out their own timesharing schedules, with each party having substantial overnight timesharing on a regular basis. If the parents cannot agree on any issue, then the Court will decide.
- d. The attached shared parenting guidelines and the parents’ respect for and compliance with them shall be considered by the Court in future child-related matters, such as the determination of the parenting plan and timesharing schedule with the children.

3. PARENTING CLASS REQUIRED.

Pursuant to section 61.21, Florida Statutes, and Amended Administrative Order No. 07-98-37-01 (as may be amended), all parties to a dissolution of marriage proceeding with minor children must attend and complete The Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course prior to entry by the Court of a final judgment. Completion of the course is mandatory in all cases, contested or uncontested, where the parents have minor children. Therefore, even if the parties have settled, they must both attend the course.

All parties required to complete a parenting course under this section shall begin the course as expeditiously as possible. **Unless excused by the court for good cause, the Petitioner must complete the Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course within 45 days after the filing of the petition, and all other parties must complete the course within 45 days after service of the petition.** Each party to a dissolution action shall file a certificate of completion of the course with the court prior to the entry of the final judgment. Failure to comply with this Order may result in the Court’s dismissal of the action, striking of pleadings, and/or other appropriate sanctions.

4. CHILD(REN)’S RESIDENCE AND FOREIGN TRAVEL; MAINTAIN CHILD(REN)’S SCHOOL.

Neither party shall change the residence of the child(ren) from the public school zone in which the child(ren)’s home is currently located without the written agreement of both parties or an order of this Court. Neither party may change a child’s school nor change the day care arrangement without the written agreement of both parties or an order of this Court. A child shall remain in the school (or in the middle or high school that is the natural feeder for the child’s current elementary or middle school) where he or she was enrolled at the time of filing the dissolution action, unless the parties agree to a change or unless it is ordered by the Court. Neither party shall allow the child(ren) to travel outside the country without written agreement of the parties or Court order.

5. CHILD SUPPORT.

In general, the law requires child support to be paid from the date the parties separated, which is nearly always a date before the petition was filed. Therefore, to avoid building up an arrearage in child support, the parent with a support obligation according to the guidelines must make voluntary payments of child support to the other parent prior to the entry of an order requiring payment of support. Waiting for an order can be very expensive because child support can be ordered from the date of separation. If child support is paid in excess of that required by the statute, the paying parent may ask for a credit. Child support will be determined by the child support guidelines, pursuant section 61.30, Florida Statutes. Therefore, it is in both parties' best interests to determine the correct amount of child support quickly and begin paying promptly.

6. SELF-REPRESENTED PARTIES.

Dissolution cases are complicated and technical. The Court strongly urges you to hire a competent lawyer to help you navigate your dissolution case. If a spouse cannot afford a lawyer, under Florida law marital funds may be used for both parties to be represented by counsel. However, if a party entitled to represent himself or herself chooses not to hire a lawyer, he or she is advised of the following:

- a. Neither the Judge nor the Judge's Judicial Assistant, nor any employees of the Clerk of Court's office, will give self-represented parties legal advice;
- b. The self-represented party will be governed by the same rules of law, procedure, and evidence that lawyers are required to follow. Self-represented parties must become familiar with the rules of law, procedure, and evidence that are used in court;
- c. No party may communicate privately with the Judge either by letter, telephone, email, in person, or otherwise. Copies of legal papers or other written materials should not be sent to the Judge unless specifically requested by the Judge or unless required by law or administrative procedures. Any unrequested or non-required papers or materials sent to a Judge will not be read by the Judge and may be returned to the sender or placed unread into the court file;
- d. A self-represented party must file his or her pleadings with the Clerk of Court and send copies simultaneously to other lawyers or self-represented parties. Self-represented parties may obtain forms of pleadings that have been approved by the Florida Supreme Court by accessing <https://help.flcourts.org>. Once at that website, click on the icon for "Find Forms," and then click on the icon for "Family Forms." The forms are available without charge;

- e. Self-represented parties must immediately notify the Clerk of Court and all other lawyers or parties in writing of any change in mailing address, telephone number, or email address. Failure to promptly notify of a change of address could result in a dismissal or default entered against the party;
- f. The Court expects all self-represented parties to act with dignity and courtesy in court hearings and to refrain from name calling or other disrespectful language in court hearings or in court pleadings.
- g. In addition to rules, law, and procedure, each Judge may have procedures that you need to follow. You can find these specific procedures at <https://www.ninthcircuit.org/>. Click on “About the Court” on the top left column, then click on the “Judges” tab. The Judges are listed alphabetically, click on the Judge’s picture, and you will find a link to each Judge’s procedures at the bottom of the page.

7. CONDUCT OF THE PARTIES DURING THE CASE; SANCTIONS.

Any unwanted physical contact between parties to a marriage is a crime and is vigorously prosecuted. Food, shelter, utilities, transportation and necessary medical expenses shall continue to be paid as they were during the intact marriage until further order of the Court or written agreement of the parties. Failure to obey this provision and/or any other part of this Order may result in injunction orders and/or contempt proceedings. Contempt of Court may be punishable by a sentence in the county jail or by other means.

8. FINANCIAL AFFIDAVITS; MANDATORY DISCLOSURE.

Family Law Rule 12.285 requires all parties to exchange certain financial information if either party requests permanent financial relief, such as child support, alimony, equitable distribution of assets or debts, or attorneys’ fees. **Each party must file an accurate and complete Financial Affidavit within 45 days of service of the initial pleading on the Respondent.** The time requirement for filing the financial affidavit may be accelerated if a party seeks temporary financial relief before the 45 days expires. The form for the Financial Affidavit can be found in the Family Law Rules of Procedure at Form 12.902.

In addition to the Financial Affidavit, Family Law Rule 12.285 requires each party to provide extensive financial documents to the other party within 45 days from the date of service of the Petition on the Respondent. Parties are advised to read Rule 12.285 and to strictly comply with its requirements. Failure to comply with the rule can result in documents being excluded from consideration by the Court or other sanctions.

Certain cases are exempt from the requirements for financial disclosure under the Rule. Be sure to read the rule carefully if you believe that your case may be exempt from financial disclosure.

9. DISPOSITION OF ASSETS; ACCOUNTING.

Neither party may conceal, damage, or dispose of any asset, whether marital or non-marital, and neither party may dissipate the value of an asset, for example, by adding a mortgage to real estate or by failing to take care of any asset. Vehicles shall remain in the possession of the person who usually and regularly used the vehicle immediately prior to the filing of the dissolution action. Neither party may dispose of any asset other than in the customary conduct of business and personal affairs. The parties may spend their incomes in the ordinary course of their personal and family affairs. Neither party may conceal, hoard or waste jointly-owned funds, whether in the form of cash, bank accounts or other liquid assets, except funds may be spent for the necessities of life. The use of funds or income after separation must be accounted for and justified as reasonable and necessary for the necessities of the party or to preserve marital assets or pay marital debts. Both parties are accountable for all money or property in their possession during the marriage and after separation. Attorney's fees and costs are necessities and must be accounted for. Nothing herein prohibits the Court from allocating attorney's fees and costs paid out of marital funds to either party in equitable distribution as allowed by law.

10. PERSONAL AND BUSINESS RECORDS; INSURANCE.

Neither party may, directly or indirectly conceal from the other or destroy any family records, business records, or any records of income, debt, or other obligations. Any insurance policies in effect at the time the petition for dissolution was filed may not be terminated, allowed to lapse, concealed, modified, borrowed against, pledged or otherwise encumbered by either of the parties or at the direction of either party. All insurance policies of any kind may not be changed, except by written agreement signed by the parties or order of the Court. The parties shall continue to pay all premiums on a timely basis unless there is a written consent by both parties or an order of the Court.

11. ADDITIONAL DEBT.

Neither party will incur additional debt which would bind the other party, pledge, encumber and/or mortgage any assets, except by written consent of the parties, order of this Court or as provided herein. The parties are urged to temporarily stop using joint credit cards. This does not prohibit use of joint credit for absolute necessities but only as a last resort. No joint credit cards may be cancelled or modified absent agreement of the parties or court order. Any party using a joint credit card after separation must be prepared to justify all charges as reasonable and necessary for necessities.

12. SANCTIONS FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH COURT RULES AND THIS ORDER.

If a party fails to comply with the rules requiring the production of financial records and other documents, or fails to answer interrogatories or attend a deposition, or otherwise fails to comply with the rules requiring disclosure or discovery, or if a party fails to comply with the terms of this Order, that party will be sanctioned by an order the Court which may include a monetary payment to the other party.

13. MEDIATION.

Mediation is encouraged early in the proceedings and required **prior** to scheduling a hearing on temporary relief and **prior** to noticing the case for trial. Several mediation conferences should be held in all cases when required and in order to accomplish a result that both parties fully understand and with which they are both comfortable.

14. COMMUNICATION WITH OPPOSING PARTY, COURT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

The Court expects all parties to cooperate in the scheduling of hearings, depositions, trials and other court proceedings. The Court has a meet-and-confer rule that requires parties to discuss any motion **before** a party sets the motion for a hearing to see if the parties can reach agreement. This meet-and-confer requirement cannot be fulfilled by the exchange of emails or texts; the parties or their attorneys must have a conversation over the telephone or in person. All Notices for Hearing must contain a meet-and-confer certification in the form required by Administrative Order 2014-19 (as may be amended).

The attorneys and parties shall communicate with each other in a civil and courteous manner. The attorneys, appointed experts, and the parties shall be courteous and respectful of everyone in the process. Both parties and attorneys shall share documentary information in such a manner as to avoid duplication of work. When setting hearings, conferences, and depositions, an attorney may not schedule any matter without first making a good faith effort to coordinate the date and time with opposing counsel's office and certifying on the notice of hearing that a good faith effort has been made with opposing counsel to resolve the issues of the motion.

The parties and their attorneys shall comply with Ninth Judicial Circuit Court Administrative Order No. 2014-19 (as may be amended), Establishing Domestic Court Guidelines and Administrative Order No. 2003-07-02 (as may be amended), Establishing the Ninth Judicial Circuit Courtroom Decorum Policy. Additionally, parties and attorneys shall comply with the Uniform Policies and Procedures for the Domestic Division of the Circuit Court, Orange County. These Administrative Orders can be found on the Court's website at <https://www.ninthcircuit.org/resources/admin-orders>.

15. FORMS.

Self-represented parties may obtain forms that have been approved by the Florida Supreme Court by accessing <https://help.flcourts.org>. Once at that website, click on the icon for “Find Forms,” and then click on the icon for “Family Forms.” The forms are available without charge.

Administrative Order No. 2004-05-04 is vacated and set aside except to the extent that it has been incorporated and/or amended herein. Vacating an Administrative Order that vacates a prior Order does not revive the prior Order.

DONE AND ORDERED on this 18th day of December, 2019.

_____/s/_____
Donald A. Myers, Jr.
Chief Judge

Copies to:

Clerk of Courts, Orange County
Clerk of Courts, Osceola County
General E-Mail Distribution List
<http://www.ninthcircuit.org>

SHARED PARENTING GUIDELINES

The safety, financial security and well-being of the child(ren) involved in this case are the Court's primary concern. Parents should follow these guidelines:

It is the law, except in certain rare circumstances, that both parents will share parental responsibility for all minor children involved in this case. The law requires parents to share the child(ren)'s time and to participate together in making all important decisions concerning the child(ren). The law expects parents to put aside their feelings and cooperate on all decisions involving the child(ren). Under Section 61.13, Florida Statutes, a parent who is unable to abide by these guidelines, absent a showing of good cause, is not acting in the child(ren)'s best interest, and can be a basis to limit that parent's timesharing with the child(ren). Parents should familiarize themselves with the expectations of Florida law regarding co-parenting at the beginning of the case.

Therefore, parents must recognize the following:

Children have a right to a loving, open and continuing relationship with **both parents**. They have the right to express love, affection and respect for one parent in the presence of the other parent.

Neither parent may alienate a child's affection for the other parent.

Parents must separate any bad feelings for one another from their duties as parents. Their duty is to share the child(ren)'s time and share in making parenting decisions. Children must be free to draw their own conclusions about each parent, without the prejudicial influences of the other parent.

Children have the right to **never** hear a parent, or a relative or friend of a parent, run down or degrade the other parent.

Children have the right to be free from guilt because the parents have decided to separate. They are entitled to honest answers to questions about changes taking place in family makeup.

Parents should **never** be so preoccupied with their own problems that they fail to meet the child(ren)'s needs. Separation of the parents usually has a worse impact on the child(ren) than on the parents, a fact both parents should never forget.

Each parent should openly, honestly, respectfully and regularly communicate with the other parent to avoid misunderstandings. They should never argue about the children in front of them.

Parents should discuss **all** differences regarding their separation and financial issues between them and parenting decisions out of the presence of the child. Both parents should always try to present a united front in handling any problems with the child(ren).

Generally, children have the right to regular and continuing contact with both parents. Parents should arrange all time-sharing and exchanges together and not through the child. The child should never be the messenger between the parents.

Time-sharing plans should be kept and **never cancelled** unless absolutely necessary. If plans change, children should be given an explanation, preferably in advance and by the parent causing the cancellation.

Common courtesies (politeness, promptness, readiness, calling to notify if one is going to be late) should always be observed when picking up and dropping off children. These times can be very stressful on children, so it is imperative that parents always behave as responsible adults.

Between visits, children should be encouraged to contact the absent parent by letter and phone, frequently and continuously.

Parent/child access and child support, while they may be emotionally connected, are **separate and distinct** under the law. Accordingly, a child's right of access to his or her parent is not contingent upon the payment of child support.

A child should **never** be the delivery person for support payments.

Both parents are entitled to participate in and attend **all** special activities in which their child(ren) is (are) engaged, such as religious activities, school programs, sports events and other extra-curricular activities and programs.