

Florida Rules of Civil Procedure

Rule 1.720. Mediation Procedures

(a) **Interim or Emergency Relief.** A party may apply to the court for interim or emergency relief at any time. Mediation shall continue while such a motion is pending absent a contrary order of the court or a decision of the mediator to adjourn pending disposition of the motion. Time for completing mediation shall be tolled during any periods where mediation is interrupted pending resolution of such a motion.

(b) **Sanctions for Failure to Appear.** If a party fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court upon motion shall impose sanctions, including an award of mediator and attorneys' fees and other costs, against the party failing to appear. If a party to mediation is a public entity required to conduct its business pursuant to chapter 286, Florida Statutes, that party shall be deemed to appear at a mediation conference by the physical presence of a representative with full authority to negotiate on behalf of the entity and to recommend settlement to the appropriate decision-making body of the entity. Otherwise, unless stipulated by the parties or changed by order of the court, a party is deemed to appear at a mediation conference if the following persons are physically present:

- (1) The party or its representative having full authority to settle without further consultation.
- (2) The party's counsel of record, if any.
- (3) A representative of the insurance carrier for any insured party who is not such carrier's outside counsel and who has full authority to settle up to the amount of the plaintiff's last demand or policy limits, whichever is less, without further consultation.

(c) **Adjournments.** The mediator may adjourn the mediation conference at any time and may set times for reconvening the adjourned conference notwithstanding rule 1.710(a). No further notification is required for parties present at the adjourned conference.

(d) **Counsel.** The mediator shall at all times be in control of the mediation and the procedures to be followed in the mediation. Counsel shall be permitted to communicate privately with their clients. In the discretion of the mediator and with the agreement of the parties, mediation may proceed in the absence of counsel unless otherwise ordered by the court.

(e) **Communication with Parties.** The mediator may meet and consult privately with any party or parties or their counsel.

(f) **Appointment of the Mediator.**

(1) Within 10 days of the order of referral, the parties may agree upon a stipulation with the court designating:

(A) a certified mediator; or

(B) a mediator, other than a senior judge, who does not meet the certification requirements of these rules—is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.

(2) If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator within 10 days of the order of referral, the plaintiff or petitioner shall so notify the court within 10 days of the expiration of the period to agree on a mediator, and the court shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending.

(3) If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

(g) Compensation of the Mediator. The mediator may be compensated or uncompensated. When the mediator is compensated in whole or part by the parties, the presiding judge may determine the reasonableness of the fees charged by the mediator. In the absence of a written agreement providing for the mediator's compensation, the mediator shall be compensated at the hourly rate set by the presiding judge in the referral order. Where appropriate, each party shall pay a proportionate share of the total charges of the mediator. Parties may object to the rate of the mediator's compensation within 15 days of the order of referral by serving an objection on all other parties and the mediator.

Florida Rules of Judicial Administration

Rule 2.030 The Supreme Court

(a) Internal Government.

(1) *Exercise of Powers and Jurisdiction.* The supreme court shall exercise its powers and jurisdiction en banc. Five justices shall constitute a quorum and the concurrence of 4 shall be necessary to a decision. In cases requiring only a panel of 5, if 4 of the 5 justices who consider the case do not concur, it shall be submitted to the other 2 justices.

(2) *Chief Justice.*

(A) The chief justice shall be chosen by majority vote of the justices for a term commencing on July 1 of even numbered years. If a vacancy occurs, a successor shall be chosen promptly to serve the balance of the unexpired term.

(B) The chief justice shall have the following administrative powers and duties. The chief justice shall:

(i) be the administrative officer of the court and shall be responsible for the dispatch of its business;

(ii) have the power to act on requests for stays during the pendency of proceedings, to order the consolidation of cases, to determine all procedural motions and petitions relating to the time for filing and size of briefs and other papers provided for under the rules of this court, to advance or continue cases, and to rule on other procedural matters relating to any proceeding or process in the court;

(iii) have the power to assign active or retired county, circuit, or appellate judges or justices to judicial service in this state, in accordance with subdivisions (a)(3) and (a)(4) of this rule;

(iv) have the power, upon request of the chief judge of any circuit or district, or sua sponte, in the event of natural disaster, civil disobedience, or other emergency situation requiring the closure of courts or other circumstances inhibiting the ability of litigants to comply with deadlines imposed by rules of procedure applicable in the courts of this state, to enter such order or orders as may be appropriate to suspend, toll, or otherwise grant relief from time deadlines imposed by otherwise applicable statutes and rules of procedure for such period as may be appropriate, including,

without limitation, those affecting speedy trial procedures in criminal and juvenile proceedings, all civil process and proceedings, and all appellate time limitations; and

(v) perform such other administrative duties as may be required and which are not otherwise provided for by law or rule.

(C) The chief justice shall be notified by all justices of any contemplated absences from the court and the reasons therefor.

(D) If the chief justice dies, retires, or is unable to perform the duties of the office, the justice longest in continuous service shall perform the duties during the period of incapacity or until a successor chief justice is elected.

(3) *Administration.*

(A) The chief justice may, either upon request or when otherwise necessary for the prompt dispatch of business in the courts of this state, temporarily assign justices of the supreme court, judges of the district courts of appeal, circuit judges, and judges of county courts to any court for which they are qualified to serve. Any consenting retired justice or judge may be assigned to judicial service and receive compensation as provided by law.

(B) For the purpose of judicial administration, a “retired judge” is defined as a judge not engaged in the practice of law who has been a judicial officer of this state. A retired judge shall comply with all requirements that the supreme court deems necessary relating to the recall of retired judges.

(C) When a judge who is eligible to draw retirement compensation has entered the private practice of law, the judge may be eligible for recall to judicial service upon cessation of the private practice of law and approval of the judge’s application to the court. The application shall state the period of time the judge has not engaged in the practice of law, and must be approved by the court before the judge shall be eligible for recall to judicial service.

(D) A “senior judge” is a retired judge certified by the Supreme Court as eligible to serve ~~servi~~ng on assignment to temporary judicial duty ~~may be referred to as a “senior judge.”~~ This designation is honorary and has no effect on the ~~responsibilities or conduct of the retired judge.~~

(4) *Assignments of Justices and Judges.*

(A) When a justice of the supreme court is unable to perform the duties of office, or when necessary for the prompt dispatch of the business of the court, the chief justice may assign to the court any judge who is qualified to serve, for such time as the chief justice may direct.

(B) When a judge of any district court of appeal is unable to perform the duties of office, or when necessary for the prompt dispatch of the business of the court, the chief judge shall advise the chief justice and the chief justice may assign to the court any judge who is qualified to serve, for such time or such proceedings as the chief justice may direct.

(C) When any circuit or county judge is unable to perform the duties of office, or when necessary for the prompt dispatch of the business of the court, the chief judge of the circuit may assign any judge in the circuit to temporary service for which the judge is qualified, in accordance with rule 2.050. If the chief judge deems it necessary, the chief judge may request the chief justice to assign a judge to the court for such time or such proceedings as the chief justice may direct.

(b) Clerk.

(1) *Appointment.* The supreme court shall appoint a clerk who shall hold office at the pleasure of the court and perform such duties as the court directs. The clerk's compensation shall be fixed by law. The clerk's office shall be in the supreme court building. The clerk shall devote full time to the duties of the office and shall not engage in the practice of law while in office.

(2) *Custody of Records, Files, and Seal.* All court records and the seal of the court shall be kept in the office and the custody of the clerk. The clerk shall not allow any court record to be taken from the clerk's office or the courtroom, except by a justice of the court or upon the order of the court.

(3) *Records of Proceedings.* The clerk shall keep such records as the court may from time to time order or direct. The clerk shall keep a docket or equivalent electronic record of all cases that are brought for review to, or that originate in, the court. Each case shall be numbered in the order that the notice, petition, or other initial pleading originating the cause is filed in the court.

(4) *Filing Fee.* In all cases filed in the court, the clerk shall require the payment of a fee as provided by law when the notice, petition, or other initial pleading is filed. The payment shall not be exacted in advance in appeals in which a party has been adjudicated insolvent for the purpose of an appeal or in appeals in which the state is the real party in interest as the moving party. The payment of the fee shall not be required in habeas corpus proceedings, or appeals therefrom, arising out of or in connection with criminal actions.

(5) *Issuance of Mandate; Recordation and Notification.* The clerk shall issue such mandates or process as may be directed by the court. Upon the issuance of any mandate, the clerk shall record the issuance in a book or equivalent electronic

record kept for that purpose, in which the date of issuance and the manner of transmittal of the process shall be noted. In proceedings in which no mandate is issued, upon final adjudication of the pending cause the clerk shall transmit to the party affected thereby a copy of the court's order or judgment. The clerk shall notify the attorneys of record of the issuance of any mandate or the rendition of any final judgment. The clerk shall furnish without charge to all attorneys of record in any cause a copy of any order or written opinion rendered in such action.

(6) *Return of Original Papers.* Upon the conclusion of any proceeding in the supreme court, the clerk shall return to the clerk of the lower court the original papers or files transmitted to the court for use in the cause.

(c) Librarian.

(1) *Appointment.* The supreme court shall appoint a librarian of the supreme court and such assistants as may be necessary. The supreme court library shall be in the custody of the librarian, but under the exclusive control of the court. The library shall be open to members of the bar of the supreme court, to members of the legislature, to law officers of the executive or other departments of the state, and to such other persons as may be allowed to use the library by special permission of the court.

(2) *Library Hours.* The library shall be open during such times as the reasonable needs of the bar require and shall be governed by regulations made by the librarian with the approval of the court.

(3) *Books.* Books shall not be removed from the library except for use by, or upon order of, any justice.

(d) Marshal.

(1) *Appointment.* The supreme court shall appoint a marshal who shall hold office at the pleasure of the court and perform such duties as the court directs. The marshal's compensation shall be fixed by law.

(2) *Duties.* The marshal shall have power to execute process of the court throughout the state and such other powers as may be conferred by law. The marshal may deputize the sheriff or a deputy sheriff in any county to execute process of the court and shall perform such clerical or ministerial duties as the court may direct or as required by law. Subject to the direction of the court, the marshal shall be custodian of the supreme court building and grounds.

(e) State Courts Administrator.

(1) *Appointment.* The supreme court shall appoint a state courts administrator who shall serve at the pleasure of the court and perform such duties as the court directs. The state courts administrator's compensation shall be fixed by law.

(2) *Duties.* The state courts administrator shall supervise the administrative office of the Florida courts, which shall be maintained at such place as directed by the supreme court; shall employ such other personnel as the court deems necessary to aid in the administration of the state courts system; shall represent the state courts system before the legislature and other bodies with respect to matters affecting the state courts system and functions related to and serving the system; shall supervise the preparation and submission to the supreme court, for review and approval, of a tentative budget request for the state courts system and shall appear before the legislature in accordance with the court's directions in support of the final budget request on behalf of the system; shall assist in the preparation of educational and training materials for the state courts system and related personnel, and shall coordinate or assist in the conduct of educational and training sessions for such personnel; shall assist all courts in the development of improvements in the system, and submit to the chief justice and the court appropriate recommendations to improve the state courts system; and shall collect and compile uniform financial and other statistical data or information reflective of the cost, workloads, business, and other functions related to the state courts system. The state courts administrator is the custodian of all records in the administrator's office.

(f) Open Sessions. All sessions of the court shall be open to the public, except proceedings designated as confidential by the court and conference sessions held for the discussion and consideration of pending cases, for the formulation of opinions by the court, and for the discussion or resolution of other matters related to the administration of the state courts system.

(g) Designation of Assigned Judges. When any judge of another court is assigned for temporary service on the supreme court, that judge shall be designated, as author or participant, by name and initials followed by the words "Associate Justice."

Rule 2.150 Continuing Judicial Education

(a) Purpose and Effective Date. This rule sets forth the continuing education requirement for all judges in the state judicial system.

(b) Education Requirements.

(1) *Applicability.* All Florida county, circuit, and appellate judges and Florida supreme court justices shall comply with these judicial education requirements. Retired judges who have been approved by the supreme court to be assigned to temporary active duty as authorized by section 25.073, Florida Statutes (1991), shall also comply with the judicial education requirement.

(2) *Minimum Requirements.* Each judge and justice shall complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of approved judicial education programs every 3 years. Two must be in the area of judicial ethics. In addition to the 30-hour requirement, every judge new to a level of trial court must complete the Florida Judicial College program in that judge's first year of judicial service following selection to that level of court; every new appellate court judge or justice must, within 2 years following selection to that level of court, complete an approved appellate-judge program. Credit for teaching a course for which mandatory judicial education credit is available will be allowed on the basis of 2 ½ hours' credit for each instructional hour taught, up to a maximum of 5 hours per year.

(3) *Mediation Training.* Prior to conducting any mediation, a senior judge shall have completed a minimum of one judicial education course offered by the Florida Court Education Council. The course shall specifically focus on the areas where the Code of Judicial Conduct or the Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators could be violated.

Note: Revision to rule 2.105(3) should have an effective date 2 years from the adoption of the rule.

(c) Course Approval. The Florida Court Education Council, in consultation with the judicial conferences, shall develop approved courses for each state court jurisdiction. Courses offered by other judicial and legal education entities must be approved by the council before they may be submitted for credit.

(d) Waiver. The Florida Court Education Council is responsible for establishing a procedure for considering and acting upon waiver and extension requests on an individual basis.

(e) Reporting Requirements and Sanctions. The Florida Court Education Council shall establish a procedure for reporting annually to the chief justice on compliance with this rule. Each judge shall submit to the Legal Affairs and Education Division of the Office of the State Courts Administrator an annual report showing the judge's attendance at approved courses. Failure to comply with the requirements of this rule will be reported to the chief justice of the Florida supreme court for such administrative action as deemed necessary. The chief justice may consider a judge's or justice's failure to comply as neglect of duty and report the matter to the Judicial Qualifications Commission.

Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure

Rule 8.290. Dependency Mediation

(a) **Definitions.** The following definitions apply to this rule:

(1) “Dependency matters” means proceedings arising under Part III (Dependency Cases), Part V (Children in Foster Care), and Part VI (Termination of Parental Rights), of Chapter 39, Florida Statutes.

(2) “Dependency mediation” means mediation of dependency matters.

(3) “Mediation” means a process whereby a neutral third person called a mediator acts to encourage and facilitate the resolution of a dispute between two or more parties. It is an informal and non-adversarial process with the objective of helping the disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable and voluntary agreement. In mediation, decision-making authority rests with the parties. The role of the mediator includes, but is not limited to, assisting the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem-solving, and exploring settlement alternatives.

(b) **Applicability.** This rule applies only to mediation of dependency matters.

(c) **Compliance with Statutory Time Requirements.** Dependency mediation shall be conducted in compliance with the statutory time requirements for dependency matters unless waived by all parties and approved by the court.

(d) **Referral.** Except as provided by this rule, all matters and issues described in subsection (a)(1) may be referred to mediation. All referrals to mediation shall be in written form, shall advise the parties of their right to counsel, and shall set a date for hearing before the court to review the progress of the mediation. The mediator or mediation program shall be appointed by the court or stipulated to by

the parties. In the event the court refers the matter to mediation, the mediation order shall address all applicable provisions of this rule. The mediation order shall be served on all parties and on counsel pursuant to the provisions of the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure.

(e) Appointment of the Mediator.

(1) *Court Appointment.* The court, in the order of referral to mediation, shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending.

(2) *Party Stipulation.* Within 10 days of the filing of the order of referral to mediation, the parties may agree upon a stipulation with the court designating:

(A) another certified mediator of dependency matters to replace the one selected by the judge; or

(B) a mediator, other than a senior judge, who ~~does not meet the certification requirements of these rules~~ is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.

(f) Fees. Dependency mediation referrals may be made to a mediator or mediation program which charges a fee. Any order of referral to a mediator or mediation program charging a fee shall advise the parties that they may timely object to mediation on grounds of financial hardship. Upon the objection of a party or the court's own motion, the court may, after considering the objecting party's ability to pay and any other pertinent information, reduce or eliminate the fee.

(g) Objection to Mediation. Within 10 days of the filing of the order of referral to mediation, any party or participant ordered to mediation may make a written objection to the court about the order of referral if good cause for such objection exists. If a party objects, mediation shall not be conducted until the court rules on the objection.

(h) Scheduling. The mediation conference may be held at any stage of the proceedings. Unless otherwise scheduled by the court, the mediator or the mediation program shall schedule the mediation conference.

(i) Disqualification of the Mediator. Any party may move to enter an order disqualifying a mediator for good cause. If the court rules that a mediator is disqualified from mediating a case, an order shall be entered setting forth the name of a qualified replacement. Nothing in this provision shall preclude mediators from disqualifying themselves or refusing any assignment.

(j) Substitute Mediator. If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

(k) Discovery. Unless stipulated by the parties or ordered by the court, the mediation process shall not suspend discovery.

(l) Appearances.

(1) *Order naming or prohibiting attendance of parties.* The court shall enter an order naming the parties and the participants who must appear at the

mediation and any parties or participants who are prohibited from attending the mediation. Additional participants may be included by court order or by mutual agreement of all parties.

(2) *Physical presence of adult parties and participants.* Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties or ordered by the court, any party or participant ordered to mediation shall be physically present at the mediation conference. Persons representing an agency, department, or program must have full authority to enter into an agreement which shall be binding on that agency, department, or program. In the discretion of the mediator, and with the agreement of the attending parties, dependency mediation may proceed in the absence of any party or participant ordered to mediation.

(3) *Appearance of counsel.* In the discretion of the mediator, and with the agreement of the attending parties, dependency mediation may proceed in the absence of counsel, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

(4) *Appearance of child.* The court may prohibit the child from appearing at mediation upon determining that such appearance is not in the best interest of the child. No minor child shall be required to appear at mediation unless the court has previously determined by written order that it is in the child's best interest to be physically present. The court shall specify in the written order of referral to mediation any special protections necessary for the child's appearance.

(5) *Sanctions for failure to appear.* If a party or participant ordered to mediation fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court, upon motion of any party or on its own motion, may impose sanctions. Sanctions against the party or participant failing to appear may include one or more of the following: contempt of court, an award of mediator fees, an award of attorney fees, an award of costs, or other remedies as deemed appropriate by the court.

(m) Caucus with Parties and Participants. During the mediation session, the mediator may meet and consult privately with any party, participant, or counsel.

(n) Continuances. The mediator may end the mediation session at any time and may set new times for reconvening the mediation. No further notification shall be required for parties or participants present at the mediation session.

(o) Report on Mediation.

(1) If agreement is reached as to all or part of any matter or issue, including legal or factual issues to be determined by the court, such agreement shall be immediately reduced to writing, signed by the attending parties, and promptly submitted to the court by the mediator with copies to all parties and counsel.

(2) If the parties do not reach an agreement as to any matter as a result of mediation, the mediator shall report the lack of an agreement to the court without comment or recommendation.

(p) Court Hearing and Order Upon Mediated Agreement. Upon receipt of a full or partial mediation agreement, the court shall hold a hearing and enter an order accepting or rejecting the agreement consistent with the best interest of the child. The court may modify the terms of the agreement with the consent of all parties to the agreement.

(q) Imposition of Sanctions Upon Breach of Agreement. In the event of any breach or failure to perform under the court-approved agreement, the court, upon a motion of any party or upon its own motion, may impose sanctions. The sanctions may include contempt of court, vacating the agreement, imposition of costs and attorney fees, or any other remedy deemed appropriate by the court.

Committee Notes

1997 Adoption. In considering the provision regarding the appearance of the child found in subdivision (1)(4), the Committee considered issues concerning the child's right to participate and be heard in mediation and the need to protect the child from participating in proceedings when such participation would not be in the best interest of the child. The Committee has addressed only the issue of mandating participation of the child in mediation. In circumstances where the court has not mandated that the child appear in mediation, the Committee believes that, in the absence of an order prohibiting the child from mediation, the participation of the child in mediation will be determined by the parties.

Whenever the court, pursuant to subdivision (p) determines whether to accept, reject, or modify the mediation agreement, the Committee believes that the court shall act in accordance with the confidentiality requirements of chapter 44, Florida Statutes.

Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators

Rule 10.100 General Qualifications

(a) **County Court Mediators.** For certification a mediator of county court matters must be certified as a circuit court or family mediator or:

- (1) complete a minimum of 20 hours in a training program certified by the supreme court;
- (2) observe a minimum of 4 county court mediation conferences conducted by a court-certified mediator and conduct 4 county court mediation conferences under the supervision and observation of a court-certified mediator; and
- (3) be of good moral character.

(b) **Family Mediators.** For certification a mediator of family and dissolution of marriage issues must:

- (1) complete a minimum of 40 hours in a family mediation training program certified by the supreme court;
- (2) have a master's degree or doctorate in social work, mental health, or behavioral or social sciences; be a physician certified to practice adult or child psychiatry; or be an attorney or a certified public accountant licensed to practice in any United States jurisdiction; and have at least 4 years practical experience in one of the aforementioned fields or have 8 years family mediation experience with a minimum of 10 mediations per year;
- (3) observe 2 family mediations conducted by a certified family mediator and conduct 2 family mediations under the supervision and observation of a certified family mediator; and
- (4) be of good moral character.

(c) **Circuit Court Mediators.** For certification a mediator of circuit court

matters, other than family matters, must:

- (1) complete a minimum of 40 hours in a circuit court mediation training program certified by the supreme court;
- (2) be a member in good standing of The Florida Bar with at least 5 years of Florida practice and be an active member of The Florida Bar within 1 year of application for certification; or be a retired trial judge from any United States jurisdiction who was a member in good standing of the bar in the state in which the judge presided for at least 5 years immediately preceding the year certification is sought;
- (3) observe 2 circuit court mediations conducted by a certified circuit mediator and conduct 2 circuit mediations under the supervision and observation of a certified circuit court mediator; and
- (4) be of good moral character.

(d) Dependency Mediators. For certification a mediator of dependency matters, as defined in Florida Rules for Juvenile Procedure 8.290(a) must:

- (1) complete a supreme court certified dependency mediation training program as follows:
 - (A) 40 hours if the applicant is not a certified family mediator or is a certified family mediator who has not mediated at least 4 dependency cases; or
 - (B) 20 hours if the applicant is a certified family mediator who has mediated at least 4 dependency cases; and
- (2) have a master's degree or doctorate in social work, mental health, behavioral sciences or social sciences; or be a physician licensed to practice adult or child psychiatry or pediatrics; or be an attorney licensed to practice in any United States jurisdiction; and
- (3) have 4 years experience in family and/or dependency issues or be a licensed mental health professional with at least 4 years practical experience

or be a supreme court certified family or circuit mediator with a minimum of 20 mediations; and

(4) observe 4 dependency mediations conducted by a certified dependency mediator and conduct 2 dependency mediations under the supervision and observation of a certified dependency mediator; and

(5) be of good moral character.

(e) Senior Judges Serving as Mediators. A senior judge may serve as a mediator in a court-ordered mediation only if certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a mediator for that type of mediation.

(e)(f) Referral for Discipline. If the certification or licensure necessary for any person to be certified as a family or circuit mediator is suspended or revoked, or if the mediator holding such certification or licensure is in any other manner disciplined, such matter shall be referred to the Mediator Qualifications Board for appropriate action pursuant to rule 10.800.

(f)(g) Special Conditions. Mediators who have been duly certified as circuit court or family mediators before July 1, 1990, shall be deemed qualified as circuit court or family mediators pursuant to these rules. Certified family mediators who have mediated a minimum of 4 dependency cases prior to July 1, 1997, shall be granted temporary certification and may continue to mediate dependency matters for no more than 1 year from the time that a training program pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(B) is certified by the supreme court. Such mediators shall be deemed qualified to apply for certification as dependency mediators upon successful completion of the requirements of subdivision (d)(1)(B) and (d)(5) of this rule.

Rule 10.340 Conflicts of Interest

(a) **Generally.** A mediator shall not mediate a matter that presents a clear or undisclosed conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when any relationship between the mediator and the mediation participants or the subject matter of the dispute compromises or appears to compromise the mediator's impartiality.

(b) **Burden of Disclosure.** The burden of disclosure of any potential conflict of interest rests on the mediator. Disclosure shall be made as soon as practical after the mediator becomes aware of the interest or relationship giving rise to the potential conflict of interest.

(c) **Effect of Disclosure.** After appropriate disclosure, the mediator may serve if all parties agree. However, if a conflict of interest clearly impairs a mediator's impartiality, the mediator shall withdraw regardless of the express agreement of the parties.

(d) **Conflict During Mediation.** A mediator shall not create a conflict of interest during the mediation. During a mediation, a mediator shall not provide any services that are not directly related to the mediation process.

(e) **Senior Judge.** If a mediator who is a senior judge has presided over a case involving any party, attorney, or law firm in the mediation, the mediator shall disclose such fact prior to mediation. A mediator shall not serve as a mediator in any case in which s/he is currently presiding as a senior judge. Absent express consent of the parties, a mediator shall not serve as a senior judge over any case involving any party, attorney, or law firm that is utilizing or has utilized the judge as a mediator within the previous three years.

Family Law Rules of Procedure

Rule 12.741(b)

(a) **Discovery.** Unless stipulated by the parties or ordered by the court, the mediation process shall not suspend discovery.

(b) **General Procedures.**

(1) *Interim or Emergency Relief.* A party may apply to the court for interim or emergency relief at any time. Mediation shall continue while such a motion is pending absent a contrary order of the court, or a decision of the mediator to adjourn pending disposition of the motion. Time for completing mediation shall be tolled during any periods when mediation is interrupted pending resolution of such a motion.

(2) *Sanctions for Failure to Appear.* If a party fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court shall impose sanctions, including an award of mediator and attorneys' fees and other costs, against the party failing to appear.

(3) *Adjournments.* The mediator may adjourn the mediation conference at any time and may set times for reconvening the adjourned conference. No further notification is required for parties present at the adjourned conference.

(4) *Counsel.* Counsel shall be permitted to communicate privately with their clients. The mediator shall at all times be in control of the mediation and the procedures to be followed in the mediation.

(5) *Communication with Parties.* The mediator may meet and consult privately with any party or parties or their counsel.

(6) *Appointment of the Mediator.*

(A) Within 10 days of the order of referral, the parties may agree upon a stipulation with the court designating:

(i) a certified mediator; or

(ii) a mediator, other than a senior judge, who ~~does not meet the certification requirements of these rules~~ is not certified as a mediator but who, in the opinion of the parties and upon review by the presiding judge, is otherwise qualified by training or experience to mediate all or some of the issues in the particular case.

(B) If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator within 10 days of the order of referral, the plaintiff or petitioner shall so notify the court within 10 days of the expiration of the period to agree on a mediator, and the court shall appoint a certified mediator selected by rotation or by such other procedures as may be adopted by administrative order of the chief judge in the circuit in which the action is pending.

(C) If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by a court cannot serve, a substitute mediator can be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator. A mediator shall not mediate a case assigned to another mediator without the agreement of the parties or approval of the court. A substitute mediator shall have the same qualifications as the original mediator.

Commentary

1995 Adoption. This rule combines and replaces Florida Rules of Civil Procedure 1.710, 1.720, and 1.730. The rule, as combined, is substantially similar to those three previous rules, with the following exceptions. This rule deletes subdivisions (a) and (b) of rule 1.710 and subdivisions (b) and (c) of rule 1.730. This rule compliments Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.740 by providing direction regarding various procedures to be followed in family law mediation proceedings.

Code of Judicial Conduct

Canon 5

A Judge Shall Regulate Extrajudicial Activities to Minimize the Risk of Conflict With Judicial Duties

A. Extrajudicial Activities in General. A judge shall conduct all of the judge's extra-judicial activities so that they do not:

- (1) cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge;
- (2) demean the judicial office; or
- (3) interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.

B. Avocational Activities. A judge may speak, write, lecture, teach and participate in other extrajudicial activities concerning non-legal subjects, subject to the requirements of this Code.

C. Governmental, Civic or Charitable Activities.

(1) A judge shall not appear at a public hearing before, or otherwise consult with, an executive or legislative body or official except on matters concerning the law, the legal system or the administration of justice or except when acting pro se in a matter involving the judge or the judge's interests.

(2) A judge shall not accept appointment to a governmental committee or commission or other governmental position that is concerned with issues of fact or policy on matters other than the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice. A judge may, however, represent a country, state or locality on ceremonial occasions or in connection with historical, educational or cultural activities.

(3) A judge may serve as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor of an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organization not conducted for profit, subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code.

- (a) A judge shall not serve as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor if it is likely that the organization

- (i) will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge, or
 - (ii) will be engaged frequently in adversary proceedings in the court of which the judge is a member or in any court subject to the appellate jurisdiction of the court of which the judge is a member.
- (b) A judge as an officer, director, trustee or non-legal advisor, or as a member or otherwise:
- (i) may assist such an organization in planning fund-raising and may participate in the management and investment of the organization's funds, but shall not personally participate in the solicitation of funds or other fund-raising activities, except that a judge may solicit funds from other judges over whom the judge does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority;
 - (ii) shall not personally participate in membership solicitation if the solicitation might reasonably be perceived as coercive or, except as permitted in Section 5C(3)(b)(i), if the membership solicitation is essentially a fund-raising mechanism;
 - (iii) shall not use or permit the use of the prestige of judicial office for fund-raising or membership solicitation.

D. Financial Activities.

- (1) A judge shall not engage in financial and business dealings that
- (a) may reasonably be perceived to exploit the judge's judicial position, or
 - (b) involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with those lawyers or other persons likely to come before the court on which the judge serves.
- (2) A judge may, subject to the requirements of this Code, hold and manage investments of the judge and members of the judge's family, including real estate, and engage in other remunerative activity.
- (3) A judge shall not serve as an officer, director, manager, general partner, advisor or employee of any business entity except that a judge may, subject to the requirements of this Code, manage and participate in:
- (a) a business closely held by the judge or members of the judge's family, or
 - (b) a business entity primarily engaged in investment of the financial

resources of the judge or members of the judge's family.

(4) A judge shall manage the judge's investments and other financial interests to minimize the number of cases in which the judge is disqualified. As soon as the judge can do so without serious financial detriment, the judge shall divest himself or herself of investments and other financial interests that might require frequent disqualification.

(5) A judge shall not accept, and shall urge members of the judge's family residing in the judge's household not to accept, a gift, bequest, favor or loan from anyone except for:

(a) a gift incident to a public testimonial, books, tapes and other resource materials supplied by publishers on a complimentary basis for official use, or an invitation to the judge and the judge's spouse or guest to attend a bar-related function or an activity devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice;

(b) a gift, award or benefit incident to the business, profession or other separate activity of a spouse or other family member of a judge residing in the judge's household, including gifts, awards and benefits for the use of both the spouse or other family member and the judge (as spouse or family member), provided the gift, award or benefit could not reasonably be perceived as intended to influence the judge in the performance of judicial duties;

(c) ordinary social hospitality;

(d) a gift from a relative or friend, for a special occasion, such as a wedding, anniversary or birthday, if the gift is fairly commensurate with the occasion and the relationship;

(e) a gift, bequest, favor or loan from a relative or close personal friend whose appearance or interest in a case would in any event require disqualification under Canon 3E;

(f) a loan from a lending institution in its regular course of business on the same terms generally available to persons who are not judges;

(g) a scholarship or fellowship awarded on the same terms and based on the same criteria applied to other applicants; or

(h) any other gift, bequest, favor or loan, only if: the donor is not a party or other person who has come or is likely to come or whose interests have come or are likely to come before the judge; and, if its value, or the

aggregate value in a calendar year of such gifts, bequests, favors, or loans from a single source, exceeds \$100.00, the judge reports it in the same manner as the judge reports gifts under Section 6B(2).

E. Fiduciary Activities.

(1) A judge shall not serve as executor, administrator or other personal representative, trustee, guardian, attorney in fact or other fiduciary, except for the estate, trust or person of a member of the judge's family, and then only if such service will not interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties.

(2) A judge shall not serve as a fiduciary if it is likely that the judge as a fiduciary will be engaged in proceedings that would ordinarily come before the judge, or if the estate, trust or ward becomes involved in adversary proceedings in the court on which the judge serves or one under its appellate jurisdiction.

(3) The same restrictions on financial activities that apply to a judge personally also apply to the judge while acting in a fiduciary capacity.

F. Service as Arbitrator or Mediator.

(1) A judge shall not act as an arbitrator or mediator or otherwise perform judicial functions in a private capacity unless expressly authorized by law or Court rule. A judge may, however, take the necessary educational and training courses required to be a qualified and certified arbitrator or mediator, and may fulfill the requirements of observing and conducting actual arbitration or mediation proceedings as part of the certification process, provided such program does not, in any way, interfere with the performance of the judge's judicial duties.

(2) A senior judge may serve as a mediator in any case in which the senior judge is not presiding, only if the senior judge is certified pursuant to rule 10.100, Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators. Such senior judge may be associated with entities that are solely engaged in offering mediation or other alternative dispute resolution services but that are not otherwise engaged in the practice of law. However, such senior judge may in no other way advertise, solicit business, associate with a law firm, or participate in any other activity that directly or indirectly promotes his or her mediation services. A senior judge shall disclose if the judge is being utilized or has been utilized as a mediator by any party, attorney, or law firm involved in the case pending before the senior judge. Absent

express consent of all parties, a senior judge is prohibited from presiding over any case involving any party, attorney, or law firm that is utilizing or has utilized the judge as a mediator within the previous three years. A senior judge shall not serve as a mediator in any case in which the judge is currently presiding. A senior judge shall disclose any negotiations or agreements for the provision of mediation services between the senior judge and any of the parties or counsel to the case.

G. Practice of Law. A judge shall not practice law. Notwithstanding this prohibition, a judge may act pro se and may, without compensation, give legal advice to and draft or review documents for a member of the judge's family.

COMMENTARY

Canon 5A. Complete separation of a judge from extra-judicial activities is neither possible nor wise; a judge should not become isolated from the community in which the judge lives.

Expressions of bias or prejudice by a judge, even outside the judge's judicial activities, may cast reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge. Expressions which may do so include jokes or other remarks demeaning individuals on the basis of their race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. See Section 2C and accompanying Commentary.

Canon 5B. In this and other Sections of Canon 5, the phrase "subject to the requirements of this Code" is used, notably in connection with a judge's governmental, civic or charitable activities. This phrase is included to remind judges that the use of permissive language in various Sections of the Code does not relieve a judge from the other requirements of the Code that apply to the specific conduct.

Canon 5C(1). See Section 2B regarding the obligation to avoid improper influence.

Canon 5C(2). Section 5C(2) prohibits a judge from accepting any governmental position except one relating to the law, legal system or administration of justice as authorized by Section 4D. The appropriateness of accepting extra-judicial assignments must be assessed in light of the demands on judicial resources created by crowded dockets and the need to protect the courts from involvement in extra-judicial matters that may prove to be controversial. Judges should not accept

governmental appointments that are likely to interfere with the effectiveness and independence of the judiciary.

Section 5C(2) does not govern a judge's service in a nongovernmental position. See Section 5C(3) permitting service by a judge with educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organizations not conducted for profit. For example, service on the board of a public educational institution, unless it were a law school, would be prohibited under Section 5C(2), but service on the board of a public law school or any private educational institution would generally be permitted under Section 5C(3).

Canon 5C(3). Section 5C(3) does not apply to a judge's service in a governmental position unconnected with the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice; see Section 5C(2).

See Commentary to Section 5B regarding use of the phrase "subject to the following limitations and the other requirements of this Code." As an example of the meaning of the phrase, a judge permitted by Section 5C(3) to serve on the board of a fraternal institution may be prohibited from such service by Sections 2C or 5A if the institution practices invidious discrimination or if service on the board otherwise casts reasonable doubt on the judge's capacity to act impartially as a judge.

Service by a judge on behalf of a civic or charitable organization may be governed by other provisions of Canon 5 in addition to Section 5C. For example, a judge is prohibited by Section 5G from serving as a legal advisor to a civic or charitable organization.

Canon 5C(3)(a). The changing nature of some organizations and of their relationship to the law makes it necessary for a judge regularly to reexamine the activities of each organization with which the judge is affiliated to determine if it is proper for the judge to continue the affiliation. For example, in many jurisdictions charitable hospitals are now more frequently in court than in the past.

Canon 5C(3)(b). A judge may solicit membership or endorse or encourage membership efforts for a nonprofit educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, sororal or civic organization as long as the solicitation cannot reasonably be perceived as coercive and is not essentially a fund-raising mechanism. Solicitation of funds for an organization and solicitation of memberships similarly involve the danger that the person solicited will feel obligated to respond favorably to the solicitor if the solicitor is in a position of influence or control. A judge must not engage in direct, individual solicitation of funds or memberships in person, in

writing or by telephone except in the following cases: 1) a judge may solicit for funds or memberships other judges over whom the judge does not exercise supervisory or appellate authority, 2) a judge may solicit other persons for membership in the organizations described above if neither those persons nor persons with whom they are affiliated are likely ever to appear before the court on which the judge serves and 3) a judge who is an officer of such an organization may send a general membership solicitation mailing over the judge's signature.

Use of an organization letterhead for fund-raising or membership solicitation does not violate Section 5C(3)(b) provided the letterhead lists only the judge's name and office or other position in the organization, and, if comparable designations are listed for other persons, the judge's judicial designation. In addition, a judge must also make reasonable efforts to ensure that the judge's staff, court officials and others subject to the judge's direction and control do not solicit funds on the judge's behalf for any purpose, charitable or otherwise.

A judge must not be a speaker or guest of honor at an organization's fund-raising event, but mere attendance at such an event is permissible if otherwise consistent with this Code.

Canon 5D(1). When a judge acquires in a judicial capacity information, such as material contained in filings with the court, that is not yet generally known, the judge must not use the information for private gain. See Section 2B; see also Section 3B(11).

A judge must avoid financial and business dealings that involve the judge in frequent transactions or continuing business relationships with persons likely to come either before the judge personally or before other judges on the judge's court. In addition, a judge should discourage members of the judge's family from engaging in dealings that would reasonably appear to exploit the judge's judicial position. This rule is necessary to avoid creating an appearance of exploitation of office or favoritism and to minimize the potential for disqualification. With respect to affiliation of relatives of the judge with law firms appearing before the judge, see Commentary to Section 3E(1) relating to disqualification.

Participation by a judge in financial and business dealings is subject to the general prohibitions in Section 5A against activities that tend to reflect adversely on impartiality, demean the judicial office, or interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties. Such participation is also subject to the general prohibition in Canon 2 against activities involving impropriety or the appearance of impropriety and the prohibition in Section 2B against the misuse of the prestige of judicial office. In addition, a judge must maintain high standards of conduct in all of the

judge's activities, as set forth in Canon 1. See Commentary for Section 5B regarding use of the phrase "subject to the requirements of this Code."

Canon 5D(2). This Section provides that, subject to the requirements of this Code, a judge may hold and manage investments owned solely by the judge, investments owned solely by a member or members of the judge's family, and investments owned jointly by the judge and members of the judge's family.

Canon 5D(3). Subject to the requirements of this Code, a judge may participate in a business that is closely held either by the judge alone, by members of the judge's family, or by the judge and members of the judge's family.

Although participation by a judge in a closely-held family business might otherwise be permitted by Section 5D(3), a judge may be prohibited from participation by other provisions of this Code when, for example, the business entity frequently appears before the judge's court or the participation requires significant time away from judicial duties. Similarly, a judge must avoid participating in a closely-held family business if the judge's participation would involve misuse of the prestige of judicial office.

Canon 5D(5). Section 5D(5) does not apply to contributions to a judge's campaign for judicial office, a matter governed by Canon 7.

Because a gift, bequest, favor or loan to a member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household might be viewed as intended to influence the judge, a judge must inform those family members of the relevant ethical constraints upon the judge in this regard and discourage those family members from violating them. A judge cannot, however, reasonably be expected to know or control all of the financial or business activities of all family members residing in the judge's household.

Canon 5D(5)(a). Acceptance of an invitation to a law-related function is governed by Section 5D(5)(a); acceptance of an invitation paid for by an individual lawyer or group of lawyers is governed by Section 5D(5)(h).

A judge may accept a public testimonial or a gift incident thereto only if the donor organization is not an organization whose members comprise or frequently represent the same side in litigation, and the testimonial and gift are otherwise in compliance with other provisions of this Code. See Sections 5A(1) and 2B.

Canon 5D(5)(d). A gift to a judge, or to a member of the judge's family living in the judge's household, that is excessive in value raises questions about the judge's impartiality and the integrity of the judicial office and might require disqualification of the judge where disqualification would not otherwise be

required. See, however, Section 5D(5)(e).

Canon 5D(5)(h). Section 5D(5)(h) prohibits judges from accepting gifts, favors, bequests or loans from lawyers or their firms if they have come or are likely to come before the judge; it also prohibits gifts, favors, bequests or loans from clients of lawyers or their firms when the clients' interests have come or are likely to come before the judge.

Canon 5E(3). The restrictions imposed by this Canon may conflict with the judge's obligation as a fiduciary. For example, a judge should resign as trustee if detriment to the trust would result from divestiture of holdings the retention of which would place the judge in violation of Section 5D(4).

Canon 5F(1). Section 5F(1) does not prohibit a judge from participating in arbitration, mediation or settlement conferences performed as part of judicial duties. An active judge may take the necessary education and training programs to be certified or qualified as a mediator or arbitrator, but this shall not be a part of the judge's judicial duties. While such a course will allow a judge to have a better understanding of the arbitration and mediation process, the certification and qualification of a judge as a mediator or arbitrator is primarily for the judge's personal benefit. While actually participating in the mediation and arbitration training activities, care must be taken in the selection of both cases and locations so as to guarantee that there is no interference or conflict between the training and the judge's judicial responsibilities. Indeed, the training should be conducted in such a manner as to avoid the involvement of persons likely to appear before the judge in legal proceedings.

Canon 5F(2). The purpose of these admonitions is to ensure that the senior judge's impartiality is not subject to question. Although a senior judge may act as a mediator or arbitrator, attention must be given to relationships with lawyers and law firms which may require disclosure or disqualification. These provisions are intended to prohibit a senior judge from soliciting lawyers to use his or her mediation services when those lawyers are or may be before the judge in proceedings where the senior judge is acting in a judicial capacity.

Canon 5G. This prohibition refers to the practice of law in a representative capacity and not in a pro se capacity. A judge may act for himself or herself in all legal matters, including matters involving litigation and matters involving appearances before or other dealings with legislative and other governmental

bodies. However, in so doing, a judge must not abuse the prestige of office to advance the interests of the judge or the judge's family. See Section 2B.

The Code allows a judge to give legal advice to and draft legal documents for members of the judge's family, so long as the judge receives no compensation. A judge must not, however, act as an advocate or negotiator for a member of the judge's family in a legal matter.

Application Section

This Code applies to justices of the Supreme Court and judges of the District Courts of Appeal, Circuit Courts, and County Courts.

Anyone, whether or not a lawyer, who performs judicial functions, including but not limited to a magistrate, court commissioner, special master, general master, domestic relations commissioner, child support hearing officer, or judge of compensation claims, shall, while performing judicial functions, conform with Canons 1, 2A, and 3, and such other provisions of this Code that might reasonably be applicable depending on the nature of the judicial function performed.

Any judge responsible for a person who performs a judicial function should require compliance with the applicable provisions of this Code.

If the hiring or appointing authority for persons who perform a judicial function is not a judge then that authority should adopt the applicable provisions of this Code.

A. Traffic Magistrate

A traffic magistrate:

(1) is not required to comply with Sections 5C(2), 5D(2) and (3), 5E, 5F, and 5G, and Sections 6B and 6C.

(2) should not practice law in the civil or criminal traffic court in any county in which the magistrate presides.

B. Retired/Senior Judge

(1) A retired judge certified by the Supreme Court of Florida as eligible to serve on assignment to temporary judicial duty, hereinafter referred to as “senior judge,” shall ~~who has retired from judicial service and who has complied with the procedures established by the Supreme Court of Florida so as to be eligible for recall to judicial service, should~~ comply with all the provisions of this Code except Sections 5C(2), 5E, 5F(1), and 6A. A senior judge ~~retired judge who is subject to recall~~ shall not practice law and shall refrain from accepting any assignment in any cause in which the judge's present financial business dealings, investments, or other extra-judicial activities might be directly or indirectly affected. ~~A retired judge who is subject to recall may serve as a mediator, may place his or her name~~

~~on the mediator master list maintained by the chief judge, and may be associated with entities that are solely engaged in offering mediation or other alternative dispute resolution services but that are not otherwise engaged in the practice of law. However, such judge may in no other way advertise, solicit business, associate with a law firm, or participate in any other activity that directly or indirectly promotes his or her mediation services. A retired judge assigned to adjudicate a case shall disclose any negotiations or agreements for the provision of mediation services between the judge and any of the parties or counsel to the case. The purpose of these admonitions is to ensure that the senior judge's impartiality is not subject to question.~~

(2) If a retired justice or judge does not desire to be assigned to judicial service, such justice or judge who is a member of The Florida Bar may engage in the practice of law and still be entitled to receive retirement compensation. The justice or judge shall then be entitled to all the rights of an attorney-at-law and no longer be subject to this Code.

Commentary

Section A. Please see *In re Florida Rules of Practice and Procedure for Traffic Courts – Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer Pilot Program*, 559 So2d. 1101 (Fla. 1990), regarding traffic magistrates.

Section B. ~~Although a retired judge subject to recall may act as a mediator or arbitrator, attention must be given to relationships with lawyers and law firms which may require disclosure or disqualification. See Canon 5D(1). This provision is intended to prohibit a senior judge from soliciting lawyers to use his or her mediation services when those lawyers are or may be before the judge in proceedings where the senior judge is acting in a judicial capacity. If a senior judge is rendering mediation services for compensation in civil personal injury matters, he or she should not accept a judicial assignment for that type of case in the same court where the senior judge is mediating those cases. On the other hand, the senior judge could be assigned judicial duties in other jurisdictions of that same court, e.g., criminal, family law, or probate matters, or be assigned as a senior judge in other geographic areas in which the judge does not conduct mediation proceedings.~~