



Eighth Judicial Circuit of Florida

Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union Counties

Alachua County Courthouse

Chambers of
Monica J. Brasington
Circuit Judge

Family & Civil Justice Center
201 E. University Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601
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Ruby Dunaway
Judicial Assistant
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Circuit Civil Practitioners and Parties

DATE: June 28, 2021 (Changes Effective July 1, 2021)

RE: Update on Status of Civil Jury Trials

Historically, the Eighth Judicial Circuit has been fortunate enough to be able to specially set civil jury trials. Given the backlog created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not currently able to specially set jury trials at this time.¹ In civil cases specifically, all courthouses, throughout the circuit, were closed to in-person jury trials for eleven (11) months, from April 2020 through February 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Trials scheduled during those months were continued and will need to be tried; these trials will be in addition to the cases that normally would have been scheduled for trial in 2021/2022.

Our circuit resumed “in person” circuit civil jury trials in March 2021², with one civil jury trial, per division, per trial term so that we could follow social distancing and other safety health protocols. **As of July 1, 2021**, we will increase the number of civil

¹ We are, however, able to offer specially set non-jury trials, upon the parties’ request.

² The continuation of “in-person” civil jury trials is subject to modification by the Chief Judge, in order to ensure that our circuit is in compliance with all state and local administrative orders relating to COVID-19 and to ensure the safety of our jurors, attorneys, parties, witnesses, court staff, and the general public.

jury trials per trial term, in Alachua County³, to a minimum of four (4) in-person civil jury trials. This increase will be possible through the use of back-up judges and Senior judges.⁴ Jury selection and trials will occur at the Alachua County Family & Civil Justice Center.

As was announced in October, 2020, for the foreseeable future, all civil cases scheduled in any given month, in each county in our circuit, will be assigned a “priority” number, to be determined by the assigned trial judge, in conjunction with the Civil Administrative Judge. All individuals involved in a civil trial, scheduled in any given month, should be prepared and ready to try that case in the scheduled month. The monthly trial list will be published on the presiding judge’s webpage (under the “Divisional Instructions” tab, in a link titled, for example, “Trial List Alachua County Circuit Civil-February 2021), approximately one (1) month before the scheduled trial. Every civil judge that has a circuit civil jury trial scheduled within a given month will be responsible for posting a “Trial List” link on that judge’s webpage.

This “Trial List” will be updated regularly as cases settle, etc. and is likely to change often. A case that is scheduled as #4 for trial when the list is first published may quickly move up to case #1. Therefore, attorneys with scheduled jury trials are expected to regularly review this Trial List. Attorneys with scheduled jury trials shall notify the assigned judge AND the attorneys in the case number immediately below them on the priority list if their case settles (ex. if Case #1 settles, Case #1 attorneys will immediately notify the court, via email to the judicial assistant, and will also email the attorneys associated with Case #2 on the trial list).

Please note: A judge who does not have any trials scheduled in any given month will not have a Trial List posted on their webpage. If you believe that you have a case scheduled for trial and 1) there is no Trial List published on your assigned judge’s webpage or 2) there is a Trial List published but your case is not included on the Trial List, then you should immediately notify the assigned trial judge.

For the past four months, we selected a jury in Alachua County on the Monday and Tuesday of each trial term. **Effective July 1, 2021**, jury selection and trials in any given case, in each county, will begin on the first day (only) of the trial term. **All cases listed #1, #2, #3, and #4 in priority on the trial list will be required to appear at the courthouse on the morning of trial, unless excused by the presiding judge.** Multiple cases are required to appear for jury selection/trial to ensure that if the highest ranked case settles, up to the moment of trial, we will still have cases that can be resolved with the jurors that have been summoned. In the event, that we cannot try all cases that appear

³ Civil cases in Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union counties are not currently experiencing the same level of increased volume as Alachua County. At this time, our estimates are that we will be able to accommodate one (1) to two (2) civil jury trials per trial term, as needed, in each of these counties and that this will be sufficient to address any backlog in those counties. However, we will continue to actively monitor the situation and make changes, if needed, to provide timely resolution of civil disputes to all cases throughout our circuit.

⁴ In addition, effective September 1, 2021, a third civil division will be created in Alachua County with a judge assigned to 20% of the civil cases in that county.

for trial, we will work with the attorneys and parties to re-schedule your trial as soon as possible, in coordination with your trial calendars.

We hope that these measures are temporary and that we will be able to resume specially set civil jury trials in our circuit as soon as the backlog of cases have been addressed and as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we appreciate your flexibility and patience as we work in new ways to meet our circuit's changing needs.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about these new procedures, please feel free to contact me or our Court Administrator, Paul Silverman.

Sincerely,

Monica J. Brasington

Monica J. Brasington,
Administrative Civil Judge