

## Policies and Procedures for CPS Matters in the 315<sup>th</sup> District Court

CPS Docket: Monday and Wednesday at 9:00 AM

Trials and Contested hearing with estimated time **over 2 hours**:

- Must go to Mediation
- After mediation- contested matter to be scheduled by the Court – Tuesdays at 1:30 PM or Fridays at 9:00 AM

Uncontested matters may be heard 8:30 AM on appropriate docket date by appointment

1. Please see Standing Order for Discovery posted on the 315<sup>th</sup> District Court's Justex.net webpage.
2. ***Trial Exhibits***- Please see Procedures regarding exhibits for all trials and hearing available on the 315<sup>th</sup> District Court's Justex.net webpage.
3. ***Mediation is required*** before the final trial of a case; exceptions may be made in certain cases. Parties seeking such an exception should file a motion seeking such relief and set a hearing on the issue at least 10 days before trial.
4. A ***pre-trial conference is required*** for all jury trials and will generally be scheduled two weeks before trial.
5. ***Adoption packets must be submitted to the court two weeks prior to docket setting.*** This provides an opportunity to confirm that necessary documents have been filed.
6. An attorney ad litem will be appointed to represent a party served by publication. Parties seeking such an exception should approach the presiding judge or associate judge.
7. An ad litem will not be waived in cases involving children. In each such case, ***the ad litem's affidavit of due diligence must be on file prior to finalization of the case.***
8. An attorney ad litem in a DFPS matter should submit a voucher for out-of-court work by the next hearing date in the matter.
9. Attorneys submitting vouchers with out-of-court hours must file an attestation. Vouchers must accurately reflect activities and time for tasks performed by the appointed attorney.
10. The court may appoint an amicus attorney in a case in which conservatorship or possession of or access to a child is in dispute. The amicus attorney shall charge the parties an amount not to exceed \$150.00 per hour. Total hours worked shall not exceed 10 hours, unless prior approval by the court.

11. Late calls/emails: attorneys who will be late for docket call should call or email the coordinator at least 10 minutes prior to docket call and state their expected time of arrival, reason for delay, and any other court(s) where they are appearing. Consistent tardiness may be grounds for removal from the case.
12. Parties making a non-ex parte off-docket approach may please notify the coordinator in advance of approach or sign up on the uncontested docket and will be heard at the end of the uncontested docket.
13. Children who are subject of a suit *may not* be in the courtroom without prior notice to the court.
14. Upon approval of the court and notification to relevant parties, the court will interview a child in chambers. Please bring the child to the courthouse at the interview time or court setting and check-in with the coordinator. Please DO NOT enter the courtroom in the event a protective order is in place.
15. All electronic devices should be in silent mode or turned off in the courtroom. No food or gum chewing is allowed in the courtroom.
16. No photos or videos are allowed, except in adoption cases.
17. While in trial, parties and attorneys may have water or beverages at the counsel table.
18. Attorney ad litem is responsible for contacting his/her client prior to each setting.
19. Time reflected in voucher should be in .1 (6 min) increments.
20. Please revise your voucher to reflect payment for attorney hours. If you wish to submit additional hours for work completed by a paralegal or employee - please submit their qualifications, duties and hourly wage. The Court will contact you to set up an appointment to discuss any payment beyond those of the attorneys appointed to the case.
21. Exceptions to these rules may be made on a case-by-case basis. Suggested changes to these rules are welcome. If there is something you think we should do differently, please let us know.

These policies and procedures do not supplant the Harris County Local Rules