

# FAMILY LAW DIVISION (SELF-HELP PROGRAM)

## “TWELVE RULES OF COURTROOM CIVILITY”

The Judges, General Magistrates, and Hearing Officers assigned to the Family Law Division in Polk, Highlands, and Hardee counties, expect that all litigants, whether or not they are represented by attorneys, will conduct themselves in an appropriate fashion so that all parties will be afforded a fair opportunity to present their case.

The following **guidelines** are meant to assist you in meeting appropriate standards of conduct when you appear in court.

(1) Be truthful in all statements that you make to the court. False statements under oath constitute perjury which is a criminal offense;

(2) Do not call or write the judge. Judges are prohibiting from reading or responding to ex parte communication. As a general rule, documents and testimony can be read or heard by the judge only in the presence of both parties. (Petitions or motions filed by pro se litigants should be notarized, filed with the Clerk of Court, and a copy provided to the opposing party).

(3) Be courteous. Other than to make appropriate objections, do not interrupt anyone who is speaking. If you are self-represented, and you have an objection to something a witness says, merely say, “Objection” and the court will allow you to state the nature of your objection.

(4) Treat all court personnel with respect, including bailiffs, judicial assistants, clerks, court investigators, judges, general masters, and hearing officers.

(5) Do not make faces or gestures at the opposing party, his or her attorney, witnesses, or the judge while in the courtroom. Speak directly to the judge or your attorney, not the opposing party or witness. You will be given an opportunity to be heard by the court.

(6) Show respect for the court by dressing appropriately and wearing clean clothing, Coats, ties, suits, and dresses are welcome, but are not required. Shorts, tank tops, flip-flops, hats, sunglasses are not permitted.

(7) Do not bring any food or drink into the courtroom; chewing gum and eating candy are prohibited.

(8) Please turn cells phones “OFF” prior to entering the courtroom.

(9) Do not bring small children to the courtroom (except in adoption cases), unless the court has so ordered.

(10) The judge will inform you of the appropriate time to bring witnesses. Witnesses are not needed at all proceedings. Be aware that witnesses you bring to court are not usually permitted to remain in the courtroom while you, your spouse, former spouse, or other witnesses testify.

(11) At your final hearing, please bring at least three (3) copies of any documents that you intend to offer. Documents must be legible and appropriately labeled.

(12) Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to allow for parking, elevator use, and finding the correct location for your hearing.