

HON. HELEN M. BLACKWOOD, A.J.S.C.

Contact Information:

Address: Westchester Supreme and County Courts
Westchester County Courthouse
111 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard
White Plains, New York 10601

Courtroom: Courtroom 304 (Annex)

Chambers Phone: (914) 824-5417
Chambers Fax: (212) 618-7962
Part Clerk Phone: (914) 824-5665
Part Clerk Fax: (212) 618-7962

Judge Blackwood's Staff:

Principal Law Clerk: Amy S. Puerto, Esq.
Email: apuerto@nycourts.gov

Secretary: Theresa Euvino
Email: teuvino@nycourts.gov

Part Clerk: Carolyn Gomez
Email: cgomez@nycourts.gov

Motion Day: Wednesday
Motions are on submission, unless the Court directs otherwise.

*****THESE RULES HAVE GENERAL APPLICABILITY TO THE PART.
FOR MATRIMONIAL ACTIONS, COUNSEL MUST REFER TO THE WESTCHESTER
SUPREME COURT MATRIMONIAL PART OPERATIONS RULES *****

Part Rules:

The following Part Rules are effective as of January 1, 2019, in all proceedings assigned to the Hon. Helen M. Blackwood, A.J.S.C.:

I. General Rules

A. Conferences: In accordance with the Westchester Supreme Court Differentiated Case Management Protocol Part Rules, this Part does not conduct Preliminary Conferences, Compliance Conferences, or Pre-Trial Settlement Conferences. All questions, requests for adjournments, or other inquiries regarding these conferences should be addressed to the appropriate Part as follows:

Preliminary Conference Part
Contact: Preliminary Conference Part Clerk
Room 811
(914) 824-5342
PreliminaryConferencyWestchester@nycourts.gov

Compliance Conference Part
Contact: Compliance Part Clerk or the assigned Court Attorney Referee
Room 800
(914) 824-5344
ComplianceWestchester@nycourts.gov

Settlement Conference Part (Hon. Joan Lefkowitz, J.S.C.)
Contact: Settlement Conference Clerk
Room 1600
fschiel@nycourts.gov

B. Appearances by Counsel with Knowledge and Authority: All counsel who appear before the Court must be familiar with the case and be fully authorized to enter into agreements as to both substantive and procedural matters on behalf of their clients. Attorneys appearing “of counsel” to the attorneys of record and self-represented parties shall be held to the same requirements. Failure to comply with this rule may be regarded as a default and dealt with accordingly. All counsel and self-represented parties must be on time for all scheduled appearances.

C. Settlements and Discontinuances: If an action is settled, discontinued, or otherwise disposed of in any manner by the parties, counsel and self-represented parties shall immediately inform the Court by letter and by filing a Stipulation of Discontinuance with the Part Clerk, or through NYSCEF in an e-filed case. The Court will not mark any matter settled unless it has received a copy of a Stipulation of Discontinuance, the

original of which has been filed with the County Clerk.

D. Papers by Fax: The Court does not accept papers of any kind by fax transmission without prior Court approval. However, copies of letters confirming an adjournment of a motion or a conference, which must have prior court approval and be accompanied by a written stipulation signed by all parties, should be faxed to the Court's chambers at (212) 618-7962 or e-mailed to the Part Clerk at cgomez@nycourts.gov. The original of all correspondence must be mailed to the Part Clerk or filed through NYSCEF in an e-filed case.

E. Scheduling: Counsel and any self-represented party should address questions about scheduling appearances or adjourning appearances to Part Clerk Carolyn Gomez at (914) 824-5665.

F. Duty Part: Subpoena records requests should be dropped off at the Civil Calendar Office window on the ninth floor and picked up at the same window 48 hours later.

II. E-Filing Rules and Protocol

A. E-Filing Rules and Protocol: Counsel for all parties shall familiarize themselves with the statewide E-Filing Rules (see §§ 202.5-b and 202.5bb of the Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts, available at www.nycourts.gov/efile) and the Westchester County *E-Filing Protocol available at: <https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/courts/9jd/efile/WestchesterCountyJointProtocols.pdf>* General questions about e-filing should be addressed to the E-Filing Resource Center at (646) 386-3033 or efile@nycourts.gov. Specific questions about local procedures should be addressed to the Westchester County Supreme Court Civil Calendar Office at (914) 824-5300. All documents filed in mandatory e-filed cases, except those documents subject to the "opt out" provision of § 202.5-bb of the Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts, or documents subject to e-filing in which consent is being withheld, are to be filed through the New York State Courts E-Filing System (NYSCEF). All submissions to the Court, including proposed orders, judgments and letters must be electronically filed.

B. Working Copies: Working copies of all motions, pleadings, exhibits, etc., are required in this part. All working copies submitted MUST include a copy of the NYSCEF Confirmation Notice firmly fastened to the front cover page of the working copy submission and must comply with all of the other requirements set forth in the Westchester County Protocol (see Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts § 202.5-b [d] [3] [ii] and [4]). The Confirmation Notice is generated when the case is e-filed and is available in the specific case file at www.nycourts.gov/efile. Working copies that do not include a NYSCEF Confirmation Notice may be rejected. Working copies shall be mailed or hand-delivered so as to be received by chambers within 72 hours of submission by e-filing. Working copies should be delivered to the basket on the ninth floor of the courthouse. Working copies are required as follows:

1. Motions - This Part requires one working copy of each motion, exhibit, letter,

transcript, stipulation, and proposed order, which shall be delivered to the Part Clerk (see § 202.5-b [d] [4] of the Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts).

2. Foreclosure matters - This Part requires one working copy of the proposed order, in cases where a party is seeking an order of reference or a judgment of foreclosure and sale.

3. Ex parte applications - This Part requires one working copy of the proposed order, in cases where a party is seeking ex parte relief.

III. Motion Practice Rules

A. Motion Calendar and Appearances for Cases Assigned to this Part: All motions made by notice of motion or proceedings commenced by notice of petition assigned to this Part shall be made returnable before the Court on any Wednesday the Court is in session at 9:30 a.m. and shall include a proposed order of relief.

There is no oral argument at the submission calendar call, unless the Court directs otherwise. If the Court requests appearances or oral argument in connection with a motion, the parties will be notified in advance of the date and time for their appearance

All papers in connection with a motion shall be received by the Court prior to, or on the return date of the motion. If opposition, cross-moving, or reply papers are not submitted by the return date, the opportunity to do so will be lost, unless an adjournment is arranged prior to the return date or Court permission is obtained. The submission of papers shall constitute a party's appearance on a motion, and the failure of any party to appear at the submission calendar call shall not constitute a default unless appearances are directed by the Court.

The Court does not permit litigation by way of letter or any other correspondence, be it by way of e-mail, fax, personal delivery, etc., from counsel or any party acting *pro se*. Correspondence addressing anything other than procedural issues, such as, but not limited to, adjournments, will not be considered by the Court absent prior Court approval.

Any unauthorized communications will be disregarded, will not be acted upon, and will not be considered. Counsel receiving an unauthorized communication need not, and shall not, reply. Violations are subject to the imposition of sanctions, particularly in the case of repeat offenders.

The Court encourages, and is available to facilitate, the settlement of all matters. Accordingly, in any case assigned to this Part, where all parties consent, they may contact chambers to request a conference for the purpose of resolving motions pending before this Court or settling the entire matter. If the parties agree to attend a Court conference,

this shall not serve to delay the submission date of any motion, nor as a stay of the proceedings.

B. Applications, Adjournments, Submission of Late Papers for Cases Assigned to this Part: To protect movants against any potential prejudice resulting from the submission of late opposition papers or cross-motions, the Court may sua sponte adjourn for one-week cases in which appropriate time has not been given to opposing parties. Parties seeking an adjournment must follow the direction delineated below in order to adjourn a motion.

C. Adjournments by Stipulation for Cases Assigned to this Part: A party seeking an adjournment must contact all other parties in an effort to obtain consent and demonstrate such efforts to the Court. No more than three adjournments for a total of 60 days are allowed except with the Court's permission (see § 202.8 [e] [1] of the Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts), which shall be given by means of a so-ordered stipulation signed by all parties in the action or proceeding.

D. Adjournments by Affidavit/Affirmation of Consent for Cases Assigned to this Part: If all parties consent to an adjournment as allowed by these rules, but a written stipulation cannot be obtained in time for submission, the applicant for the adjournment on consent may submit an affidavit or affirmation reciting that such consent was obtained. The affidavit/affirmation of consent must state the reason for the adjournment request, how consent was obtained from all parties, when it was obtained, and the name of each attorney or self-represented party who gave oral consent. The affidavit/affirmation must be received by the Court on or before the scheduled submission date.

E. Adjournments Without Consent for Cases Assigned to this Part: If consent for an adjournment cannot be obtained from all parties prior to the return date, a party may: (1) make a letter application to chambers for an adjournment (by fax or through NYSCEF), on notice to all other parties having appeared in the action or proceeding, or (2) appear on the return date of a motion at 9:30 a.m. and state on the record before the Court the reason for the requested adjournment and a description of the efforts made to obtain such consent, including the date when contact was initiated or attempted, the means used, and the person contacted (if consent was refused) or for whom a message was left (if no contact was made). Furthermore, an applicant must, by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail transmitted with adequate lead time, advise all parties who have not consented that an application will be made at the Motion Calendar call. No motion shall be considered adjourned unless the Part Clerk or Principal Law Clerk has conveyed the Court's approval of an adjournment.

F. Orders to Show Cause for Cases Assigned to this Part: Orders to show cause submitted for signature shall be presented to the office of the Calendar Clerk, after payment of any required fee at the County Clerk's Office. If the order to show cause is signed by the Court, a copy of it shall be sent by fax or through NYSCEF to counsel for the moving party or self-represented party. If appearances are required on the return date

of the motion, the Court shall so indicate in the order to show cause. Otherwise, no appearances shall be required, and no oral argument shall be heard on the return date of the motion.

G. Requests for Temporary Injunctive Relief for Cases Assigned to this Part: When an order to show cause is to be presented to the Court which seeks temporary injunctive relief, including but not limited to a stay or a temporary restraining order, counsel for the moving party or any self-represented party shall demonstrate compliance with §202.7 (f) of the Uniform Rules for the New York State Trial Courts, regarding notice to affected parties.

H. Communications Regarding Motions for Cases Assigned to this Part: All communications regarding motions, including requests for adjournments and questions concerning the status of motions, shall be directed to the Part Clerk, or in her absence, the Principal Law Clerk.

I. Form of Papers: All motion papers submitted to the Court, including orders to show cause, must be legible, and should be typewritten, with all exhibits labeled with tab markings. Motion papers and all correspondence must indicate the index number assigned to the action. Courtesy copies of papers shall be submitted to chambers.

J. Settled Motions: In the event the parties settle a motion or part of a motion before the motion return date or a decision has been rendered, they shall immediately inform the Court in writing by contacting our Part Clerk, Carolyn Gomez, at (914) 824-5665 and by e-mail at cgomez@nycourts.gov

K. Motion Decisions and Orders:

1. Written Decisions: In most instances, a written decision and order will be issued by the Court following submission of the motion. The decision and order, with supporting papers, will be e-filed through NYSCEF. If a party opts-out from participation in e-filing, a copy of the order shall be faxed or mailed to that party.

2. Bench Decisions: In certain instances, the Court will render a decision from the bench. Any party seeking a written order shall submit to the Court a proposed order supported by a copy of the transcript of the proceedings at which the bench decision was rendered. The signed order will be e-filed by the Court through NYSCEF, and fax or mailed to any party that opts-out from participating in e-filing.

III. Trial Practice Rules

A. Trial Preparation: Prior to the commencement of the trial or hearing, counsel shall ascertain the availability of all witnesses and subpoenaed documents. Counsel for any party or any self-represented party who has issued subpoenas for the production of records shall request that the Part Clerk requisition all subpoenaed documents from the file room.

B. Interpreters and Special Services: Attorneys are required at the time of scheduling trial/hearing/inquest to request an interpreter by completing the Interpreter Request for Civil Trials and Appearances. It is incumbent upon the requesting party to keep the Court informed of any changes to this request. Upon reporting to the Court for a trial or a hearing, counsel and any self-represented party shall immediately advise the Part Clerk if the services of a foreign language interpreter are required for any party or witness, or if any special services are required for any party or witness who is hearing-impaired or who suffers from any other disability.

C. Trial Aids: Attorneys and self-represented parties must supply all audio, visual or other trial aids, such as screens/monitors, easels, blackboards, shadow boxes, etc.

D. Pleadings and Submissions Due Immediately Upon Appearance: Immediately upon being assigned to this Part for a trial or hearing, counsel for each party and any self-represented party shall report to the Part Clerk and submit to the Court a trial notebook containing the following:

1. A statement of the estimated length of trial.
2. Marked pleadings and bills of particulars.
3. A list of all witnesses who may be called at trial, including any potential rebuttal witnesses, as well as all expert witnesses and their expert reports, if any exist.
4. A copy of each exhibit the party expects to use at trial, with an index thereto indicating which exhibits are stipulated for admission into evidence or are marked only for identification.
5. A written stipulation governing all facts that are not in dispute.
6. A statement of the relief requested.
7. Trial memorandum on special points of law or disputed legal issues, together with all cases cited in a minimum of a 12-point font.

E. Pleadings and Submissions Due Immediately Upon Appearance in a Matrimonial Action: Immediately upon being assigned to this Part for a trial or hearing, counsel for

each party and any self-represented party shall report to the Part Clerk and submit to the Court a trial notebook containing the above information, as well as:

1. An updated Statement of Net Worth.
2. A proposed division of property.
3. Any inventory and appraisal reports in existence.
4. Any business valuation in existence.
5. A proposal of parenting time.
6. A proposed spousal maintenance calculation, which must document the source of all numbers from sources such as W-2's, Investment Statements, etc.
7. A proposed child support calculation, which must document the source of all numbers from sources such as W-2's, Investment Statements, etc.

F. Marking of Exhibits: After filing the above listed submissions with the Court, counsel and any self-represented party shall meet with the assigned Official Stenographer to pre-mark all exhibits for identification. Any exhibits whose admission is agreed upon by the parties shall be pre-marked for admission.

F. Conference: Immediately prior to the commencement of the trial, the Court shall conduct a brief conference with all counsel and self-represented parties to discuss preliminary matters. At this conference, all counsel and self-represented parties shall be prepared to:

1. Advise the Court as to all anticipated disputed issues of law and fact, and provide the Court with citations to all statutory and common-law authority upon which they will rely.
2. Stipulate to undisputed facts and the admission of documents, records and other exhibits, for which no evidentiary objection will be made.
3. Alert the Court to any anticipated in limine motions or evidentiary or legal issues they believe will arise during the trial.
4. Provide the Court with a copy of all prior decisions and orders in the case that may be relevant to any in limine applications or evidentiary or legal issues.
5. Discuss scheduling, as well as the number of witnesses to be called at trial, any anticipated issues regarding the attendance at trial of any party, attorney or witnesses, and any other practical problems the Court should consider in

scheduling.

6. Alert the Court as to any anticipated requests for a jury instruction relating to missing witnesses or evidence.

7. Alert the Court as to any anticipated request pursuant to CPLR Article 16 for apportionment of liability as to an allegedly culpable non-party.

8. Provide a proposed verdict sheet and requests to charge.

G. Copies of Transcripts: If any part of a transcript of an examination before trial or other recorded proceeding will be read as evidence-in-chief, the proponent of the transcript shall provide a complete copy of it to the Court, with citations to the page and line numbers for all portions to be read.

H. Addressing the Court: If it is believed that argument on an objection is necessary, to avoid any inappropriate influence on the jury, any counsel or self-represented party shall ask permission to approach the bench for a sidebar conference to discuss the matter. If requested, any counsel or self-represented party will be given the opportunity to make a full record of his or her position.

I. Summation Exhibits: Any counsel or self-represented party who intends during summation to use any type of demonstrative exhibit not marked into evidence must advise the Court and all other counsel and self-represented parties of that intention at the pre-charge conference and provide a copy of such exhibit to the court, all counsel and to the self-represented parties. Failure to comply with this rule may result in an order precluding use of the exhibit during summation.

J. Jury Charges: In all jury trials, a complete list of requests to charge shall be submitted to the Court immediately preceding the commencement of trial, with copies to be provided to all other counsel and self-represented parties. If a requested charge is drawn from the current Pattern Jury Instructions (PJI), only the PJI number need be submitted. Where deviations from, or additions to, the PJI are requested, the full text of such requests must be submitted in writing, together with any supporting legal precedents. In addition, such proposals shall be prepared and emailed to the Principal Law Clerk, Amy Puerto, apuerto@nycourts.gov or faxed to 212-618-7962. At the final charge conference, if marshaling of the evidence is required as to a particular jury charge, counsel and all self-represented parties shall provide the Court with the proposed facts that they seek to be presented to the jury.

K. Verdict Sheet: At the commencement of the trial, counsel for the parties and any self-represented parties shall jointly prepare a verdict sheet. If agreement cannot be reached, each party shall present a proposed verdict sheet which shall be served upon all other parties. The verdict sheet shall be in a final, typewritten form, which may be given to the jury. In addition, the proposed verdict sheet(s) shall be submitted by email to the Principal Law Clerk, Amy S. Puerto, apuerto@nycourts.gov. At the final charge

conference, if marshaling of the evidence is required as to a particular jury charge, counsel and all self-represented parties shall provide the Court with the proposed facts that they seek to be presented to the jury.

L. Check-in: At the start of each day of trial, all counsel and self-represented parties shall check in with the Part Clerk so that she will be aware of your presence.

M. Food and Drinks: Absent the Court's permission obtained in advance, no counsel or party shall bring any beverage or food into the courtroom, except bottled water.

N. Post-Trial Submissions: After trial, each party must submit a trial brief with copies of all cases cited in at least 12-point font, a copy of the transcript, and appropriate citations to the transcript. In all **matrimonial matters**, the parties must submit with their trial brief a proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, as well as a proposed judgment and order of divorce.