

FLORIDA APPELLATE RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 9.700. Mediation Rules

(a) Applicability. Rules 9.700-9.740 apply to all appellate courts, including circuit courts exercising jurisdiction under rule 9.030(c), district courts of appeal, and the supreme court.

(b) Referral. The court, upon its own motion or upon motion of a party, may refer a case to mediation at any time. Such motion from a party shall contain a certificate that the movant has consulted opposing counsel or unrepresented party and that the movant is authorized to represent that opposing counsel or unrepresented party:

(1) has no objection;

(2) objects and cites the specific reasons for objection; or

(3) will promptly file an objection.

(c) Time Frames for Mediation. The first mediation conference shall be commenced within 45 days of referral by the court, unless the parties agree to postpone mediation until after the period for filing briefs has expired. The mediation shall be completed within 30 days of the first mediation conference. These times may be modified by order of the court.

(d) Tolling of Times. Unless otherwise ordered, or upon agreement of the parties to postpone mediation until after the expiration of time for filing the appellate briefs, all times under these rules for the processing of cases shall be tolled for the period of time from the referral of a case to mediation until mediation ends pursuant to section 44.404, Florida

Statutes. The court, by administrative order, may provide for additional tolling of deadlines. A motion for mediation filed by a party within 30 days of the notice of appeal shall toll all deadlines under these rules until the motion is ruled upon by the court.

(e) Motion to Dispense with Mediation. A motion to dispense with mediation may be served not later than 10 days after the discovery of the facts that constitute the grounds for the motion, if:

- (1) the order violates rule 9.710; or
- (2) other good cause is shown.

Credits

Added July 1, 2010 (41 So.3d 161). Amended Oct. 25, 2018, effective Jan. 1, 2019 (256 So.3d 1218).

Rule 9.710. Eligibility for Mediation

Any case filed may be referred to mediation at the discretion of the court, but under no circumstances may the following categories of actions be referred:

- (a)** criminal and postconviction cases;
- (b)** habeas corpus and extraordinary writs;
- (c)** civil or criminal contempt;
- (d)** involuntary civil commitments of sexually violent predators;
- (e)** collateral criminal cases; and

(f) other matters as may be specified by administrative order.

Credits

Added effective July 1, 2010 (41 So.3d 161). Amended Oct. 25, 2018, effective

Rule 9.720. Mediation Procedures

(a) Appearance. 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 changed by order of the court, a party is deemed to appear at a mediation conference if the following persons are physically present or appear electronically upon agreement of the parties:

(1) the party or its representative having full authority to settle without further consultation;

(2) the party's trial or appellate counsel of record, if any. If a party has more than 1 counsel, the appearance of only 1 counsel is required; and

(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 without further consultation.

(b) Sanctions. If a party fails to appear at a duly noticed mediation conference without good cause, the court, upon motion of a party or upon its own motion, may impose sanctions, including, but not limited to, any or all of the following, against the party failing to appear:

(1) an award of mediator and attorneys' fees and other costs or monetary sanctions;

(2) the striking of briefs;

(3) elimination of oral argument; or

(4) dismissal or summary affirmance.

(c) Scheduling and Adjournments. Consistent with the time frames established in rule 9.700(c) and after consulting with the parties, the mediator shall set the initial conference date. The mediator may adjourn the mediation conference at any time and may set times for reconvening the adjourned conference. The mediator shall notify the parties in writing of the date, time, and place of any mediation conference, except no further notification is required for parties present at an adjourned mediation conference.

(d) Control of Procedures. The mediator shall at all times be in control of the procedures to be followed in the mediation.

(e) Communication with Parties. The mediator may meet and consult privately with any party or parties or their counsel. Counsel shall be permitted to communicate privately with their clients.

(f) Party Representative Having Full Authority to Settle. Except as provided in subdivision (a) as to public entities, a "party or its representative having full authority to settle" shall mean the final decision maker with respect to all issues presented by the case who has the legal capacity to execute a binding settlement agreement on behalf of the party.

Nothing herein shall be deemed to require any party or party representative who appears at a mediation conference in compliance with this rule to enter into a settlement agreement.

(g) Certificate of Authority. Unless otherwise stipulated by the parties, each party, 10 days prior to appearing at a mediation conference, shall file with the court and serve upon all parties a written notice identifying the person or persons who will be attending the mediation conference as a party representative or as an insurance carrier representative, and confirming that those persons have the authority required by this rule.

Credits

Added effective July 1, 2010 (41 So.3d 161). Amended Nov. 6, 2014, effective Jan. 1, 2015 (183 So.3d 245); Oct. 25, 2018, effective Jan. 1, 2019 (256 So.3d 1218).

Editors' Notes

COMMITTEE NOTE

2014 Amendment. The amendment adding subdivisions (f) and (g) is intended to make this rule consistent with the November 2011 amendments to Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.720.

Rule 9.730. Appointment and Compensation of the Mediator

(a) Appointment by Agreement. Within 10 days of the court order of referral, the parties may file a stipulation with the court designating a mediator certified as an appellate mediator pursuant to rule 10.100(f), Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators. Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, the mediator shall be licensed to

practice law in any United States jurisdiction.

(b) Appointment by Court. If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator within 10 days of the order of referral, the appellant shall notify the court immediately and the court shall appoint a certified appellate mediator selected by such procedure as is designated by administrative order. The court shall appoint a certified appellate mediator who is licensed to practice law in any United States jurisdiction, unless otherwise requested upon agreement of the parties.

(c) Disqualification of Mediator. Any party may move to enter an order disqualifying a mediator for good cause. Such a motion to disqualify shall be filed within a reasonable time, not to exceed 10 days after discovery of the facts constituting the grounds for the motion, and shall be promptly presented to the court for an immediate ruling. If the court rules that a mediator is disqualified from a case, an order shall be entered setting forth the name of a qualified replacement. The time for mediation shall be tolled during any periods in which a motion to disqualify is pending.

(d) Substitute Mediator. If a mediator agreed upon by the parties or appointed by the court cannot serve, a substitute mediator may be agreed upon or appointed in the same manner as the original mediator.

(e) Compensation of a Court-Selected Mediator. If the court selects the mediator pursuant to subdivision (b), the mediator shall be compensated at the hourly rate set by the court in the referral order or applicable administrative order. Unless otherwise agreed, the compensation of the mediator should be prorated among the named parties.

Credits

Added effective July 1, 2010 (41 So.3d 161).

COMMITTEE NOTES

This rule is not intended to limit the parties from exercising self-determination in the selection of any appropriate form of alternative dispute resolution or to deny the right of the parties to select a neutral. The rule does not prohibit parties from selecting an otherwise qualified non-certified appellate mediator prior to the court's order of referral. Parties may pursue settlement with a non-certified appellate mediator even within the ten-day period following the referral. However, once parties agree on a certified appellate mediator, or notify the court of their inability to do so, the parties can satisfy the court's referral to mediation pursuant to these rules only by appearing at a mediation conducted by a supreme court certified appellate mediator.

Rule 9.740. Completion of Mediation

(a) No Agreement. If the parties do not reach an agreement as a result of mediation, the mediator shall report, within 10 days, the lack of an agreement to the court without comment or recommendation.

(b) Agreement. If a partial or final agreement is reached, it shall be reduced to writing and signed by the parties and their counsel, if any. Within 10 days thereafter, the mediator shall file a report with the court on a form approved by the court.

Credits

Added effective July 1, 2010 (41 So.3d 161).