



Dallas County Civil Court at Law No. 4
Judge Dianne K. Jones, Presiding
Policies & Procedures

Contacting the Court

For all matters relating to trial dates, trial settings, Dismissal Docket, Final Disposition Docket and special requests for Trial Only, please contact the Court Coordinator:

Cathy Moran
(214) 653-7345
Email: CMoran@dallascounty.org

New Process (Effective 3/1/2025) - For all matters relating to scheduling hearings on motions, please use the link below:

County Court at Law No. 4 Hearing Request Form

<https://form.jotform.com/250416790970057>

Hearings will no longer be set by the Clerk's Office.

New: - For matters relating to **filings submitted and status on signed orders**, contact the Clerk's Office -**214-653-7446** or obtain additional instruction on the Clerk's website: County Clerk/ Civil Courts Division – Contact Us.

To determine whether the Court has ruled on a motion or to verify Trial and Hearing Dates, please check the case record on the County Clerk's website via the County Case Search Portal.

For all matters relating to transcripts, contact the Official Court Reporter:

Vearneas Faggett
(214) 653-7468
Vearneas.Faggett@dallascounty.org

For information regarding audio/visual and courtroom security and decorum, contact the Bailiff:

Officer Rickey Wilson Rickey.Wilson@dallascounty.org; (972) 978-0641

You must be familiar and follow the Local Rules for the Civil Courts of Dallas County. See, [https://www.dallascounty.org/Assets/uploads/docs/district-clerk/New Local Rules for CivilCourt.pdf](https://www.dallascounty.org/Assets/uploads/docs/district-clerk/New%20Local%20Rules%20for%20CivilCourt.pdf).

Scheduling Orders

The Court requires a Scheduling Order/Docket Control Order in all cases.

After the first answer is filed, the Court Coordinator Ms. Cathy Moran, will set the trial date and notify counsel by letter. Parties will have 20 days from the date of such letter to file their Agreed Scheduling Order; the deadlines must be date-specific (vs. "XX days before trial, according to TRCP.") and track the Dallas County Uniform Scheduling Order.

Accordingly, all scheduling orders require that dispositive motions and expert challenges be filed and heard not later than 30 days before trial. Motion for summary judgment will not be set or considered until mediation has taken place (see below). In complex cases, your scheduling order must include a "rebuttal expert" deadline.

Mediation Order

Mediation is not optional and must take place no later than 45 days before trial. However, if the Defendant is denying liability and the parties do not believe mediation will be beneficial, they should file an objection to mediation and set the matter for a hearing.

If the parties do not select their own mediator within 20 days from the date the first answer is filed, the Court will select a mediator. The parties may file a motion to substitute the mediator within 60 days from the date of the signing of the initial trial order. Motions to substitute the appointed mediator filed after 60 days will only be granted in extenuating circumstances. All cases are expected to attempt mediation in good faith with the mediator assigned to them. If the parties wish to use another mediator after the Court has selected one, they must file an agreed motion to change the mediator and provide a good reason for the change.

Dismissal For Want of Prosecution

The Court Coordinator sets cases on the DWOP docket four months after the filing date. If a plaintiff needs more time to effect service, contact the coordinator prior to the hearing date and the dismissal time may be extended. DWOP hearings are generally not reset if a call is received on the day of the hearing.

Continuances

All requests for continuance require the filing of a motion. Parties will be allowed one continuance per side. Cases over one year must comply with Local Rule 3.01 and a hearing may be required. Contested motions for continuance should be set for a hearing on the Court's regular motion docket.

Attorney Withdrawals

The Court requires strict compliance with Rule 10 of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure and Local Rule 402. If the party that will be left without counsel (if the motion is granted) is a corporate entity, contemporaneous with advising the party of its right to object, counsel must also advise the corporate party that only an attorney licensed in the State can represent its interests in Court. In other words, the corporate party cannot represent itself pro se.

New: Hearing Docket

Settings: Once a motion and order has been filed and the filing party has conferred with opposing counsel, the movant must use the link below to schedule a hearing.

County Court at Law No. 4 Hearing Request Form

<https://form.jotform.com/250416790970057>

Hearings will no longer be set by the Clerk's Office.

Hearings days and times:

Mondays 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. -4:00 p.m.

Thursday 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Fridays 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Please arrive at least five minutes before your scheduled hearing time.

Hearings are scheduled in 15- minute intervals. Dispositive motions, discovery disputes (e.g. motion to compel, protective orders, etc.) and expert challenges will receive a 30 -minute slot. If you need more time, please send an email to CCL4zoomhearings@dallascounty.org

Certificate of Conference

Please do not set a hearing on a motion without a certificate of conference, except to the extent excluded by Local Rules, such as for motions for summary judgment. The certificates must substantially comply with Local Rule 2.07

Submission Docket

When a motion can be considered without a hearing (e.g. parties have agreed to submission, etc.) the movant must notify the Clerks the matter is being set on the submission docket. The Clerks will docket the motions by submission as soon as possible on Friday afternoons following the filing. The Court will consider the pleadings related to the motion and issue a ruling promptly (usually within a few days).

Zoom Hearings

The Court Strongly encourages Zoom hearings. However, if the parties do not agree, each party can individually decide whether they will appear in person or via zoom. The court will accommodate everyone's decision; however, they must communicate with the other side on their method of appearance prior to the hearing date and work out with the Court Reporter all exhibits the parties intend to use during the hearing.

Cancellations of Hearings

To cancel a hearing please send an email to:

CCL4Zoomhearings@dallascounty.org

Pleadings & Motions

Courtesy Copies/Notebooks

No later than three (3) business days before the hearing, the moving party must deliver to the Court a courtesy notebook containing the motion, notice of hearing, response, and reply, if any. Therefore, responses must be filed three (3) days in advance. For large cases, the parties should deliver a courtesy notebook or documentation via email seven (7) business days before the hearing.

Motions/Briefs Organization

Create a topic outline, index of cases, and summary of the arguments.

Cases relied upon should be attached to the briefs.

Pertinent language should be highlighted.

Be succinct (i.e., do not submit more than 10 pages, whenever possible).

Present a proposed order to the Court at the commencement of the hearing.

Emergency Relief/Contacting the Court

In a true emergency, counsel may contact the coordinator by telephone or email and explain the nature of the emergency. The coordinator will relay the message to the judge.

Discovery

In accordance with the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, attorney's fees may be awarded if the Court must grant any part of a Motion to Compel.

If a dispute arises during a deposition, the court will rule on objections if available.

Protective Orders

Protective Orders are intended to preserve the rights of litigants in proceedings to claim confidentiality of certain documents to be produced in litigation between the parties. The Court has a proposed form that may be utilized for this purpose. See Standing Order: Protective Order.

Protective Orders filed under the Texas Uniform Trade Secrets Act ("TUTSA") must specifically state in the caption: "Protective Order Under TUTSA, CPRC 134.006" and be consistent with the statutory provisions therein.

The closure of trial proceedings and sealing of the record of a trial involve specific statutory considerations which may be taken up in a separate matter upon the motion of any party in compliance with Rule 76a TRCP. NO DOCUMENT SHALL BE FILED WITH THE COURT UNDER SEAL UNLESS CONSISTENT WITH RULE 76a.

Trials

Voir Dire panels. If the parties have a large or complex case, please notify the court of the number of jurors needed as the Court must order large panels 8 weeks in advance of trial.

Announcements

Do not expect the Court coordinator to contact you about your announcements. Your legal team should call or email (CMoran@dallascounty.org). Parties must announce ready for trial on Thursday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. but no later than 10:30 a.m. on Friday. If you fail to make your announcement for trial, your case may be dismissed for want of prosecution.

Dockets

Jury Trials are conducted Tuesday-Wednesday.

Bench Trials are conducted on Thursday mornings

For bench trials, findings of facts and conclusions of law need not be filed unless the Court requests them.

Seven (7) Days Before Trial Setting

Parties must file with the Court 1) the material stated in Rule 166; 2) an estimate of the length of trial; 3) the designation of deposition testimony to be offered in direct examination; and 4) any Motions in Limine. Failure to file such materials may result in dismissal for want of prosecution or other appropriate sanction. (This requirement is included in the Uniform Scheduling Order).

Hearings on Motion in Limine and Exhibit Lists will occur at 9 a.m. on the morning of trial.

Trial Lasting More than Three (3) Days

If parties anticipate that a trial will last more than three days, they should request a pretrial conference at least a week in advance of the setting.

Voir Dire

Voir Dire time limits will be set on a case-by-case basis.

Parties may submit questionnaires, but they must be pre-approved by the Court at least three days before trial.

Disqualification, exemption, and hardship issues will be addressed by the Court and taken up with individual panel members and attorneys after voir dire, but before challenges.

The Court allows attorneys to identify specific jurors to be questioned individually before making for-cause challenges outside the presence of the venire panel.

Opening/Closing

The Court will seek counsel's input regarding time allocations before imposing any time restrictions.

Direct Examination/Cross Examination

Attorneys are required to stand when they address the Court and the Jury but may remain seated to examine witnesses.

Audio and Visual Equipment

The Court is equipped with a document reader ("the Elmo"), a DVD player, and the capacity for counsel to connect laptops and iPads to project presentations and video in the courtroom.

If you want to test the equipment, please contact the Bailiff Rickey Wilson (972) 978-0641; Rickey.Wilson@dallascounty.org to schedule an appointment days or weeks in advance of hearing or trial.

Jury Charge

A Proposed word version of the jury charge should be emailed to the Court Reporter at vearneas.faggett@dallascounty.org at least two (2) days in advance.

Jury Input

The Court will seek the Jury's input on the trial schedule: what time to start each day; what time to end each day; and how long for the lunch breaks.

Jurors will be allowed to ask questions of witnesses. Jurors will be given an opportunity to write down any questions they would like to ask a witness. Upon the conclusion of the questioning of the witness by the lawyers, the bailiff will collect whatever questions the members of the jury have and bring them to the judge. Counsel will approach the bench, and the judge will read each question (out of the hearing of the jurors and witness). The judge will then hear any objections from counsel and rule on which questions are proper and relevant. Those questions are then asked of the witness by the judge. After the witness answers the questions, counsel will be allowed further questioning by the lawyers. The Court will give Preliminary Instructions and Final Instructions on the process.

Court Appointments

The Court maintains a wheel for court appointed guardian ad litem. Individuals wishing to serve should email their resume to CMoran@dallascounty.org outlining their experience, training and the types of cases to which they would like to be appointed.