

## Pro Se Page

### Court Rules

Dress Business Casual

No cut offs, halters, hats; shorts – Court is a place of importance to you, your case and nothing about court should suggest to you that you should dress like you are going to the beach.

No food or drink (including coffee) in the court room

Check Rolling Display – there are 2 one for Superior Court; One for District Court, your case is listed by your last name;

Family Court is held both at the main Court house – 1200 Franklin Street and at the Family Court Annex at 601 W. Evergreen, which is two blocks south of the courthouse at Franklin and Evergreen;

District Court is for Misdemeanors and Traffic, some civil including small claims;

Superior Court is Family Court, Civil and Felony Criminal

### Rules on Documents

Read the local court Rules on filing papers before you file so you can follow the timelines, page length and other requirements.

District Court can be found here

<https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/all/files/district-court/Local%20Court%20Rule/DCLocalRules.pdf>

Superior Court can be found here:

<https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/all/files/superior-court/LOCAL%20RULES%202016.pdf>

You cannot communicate with the judge or commissioner unless you are in court or unless it is what is called a Bench Copy. A judge cannot read what you give them as a Bench Copy unless you have given it to the person on the other side of the case as well.

When you want to file something in court, you need a total of 4 Copies of your documents:

The Original goes to the Court Clerk

A copy goes to the other side (Opposing)

A copy goes to the judge or Commissioner (called a bench copy)

You will keep a copy to refer to in court;

Everytime you file something at the end, you must have a certificate of mailing/service which says

“On X Date, I served a copy of this document on:

Name of Opposing

Court Clerk

Bench copy to Judge or Commissioner X.

This certification has to be attached to every document (pleading) you file. You cannot leave out anyone in your distribution list.

File your documents. Most paper for family court are due 2 weeks prior to any hearing. A response, generally 1 week prior to hearing. Rules have some changes, so **READ THE RULES** for your documents.

The law library is open weekdays, at the main courthouse, across from the snack bar. Here you can find forms, books on every legal subject, and the ability to research on computer or order books from other libraries. The librarians are helpful, but they are NOT attorneys and cannot give you legal advice.

There is a family court help center at the Courthouse. There is a fee (\$20.00) to use the court facilitator. If you need help with family court forms, consider using this service.

### **Court Day:**

Figure out where you are going

Family Court Annex – 601 W. Evergreen

Juvenile Building – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor 500 W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Main Court House – 1200 Franklin Street

Arrive Early, and go to your assigned courtroom

Check in with the Court Clerk with your name and if you know it, the number your case is assigned on the docket.

Bring with you – Pen and Paper so that you can write down what the judge or commissioner decides and tells you. You or the other side will be responsible for drafting an order, which writes out the ruling of the court. Do not try to rely on your memory.

Only one side talks at a time.

Talk to the judge not to the other side.

The moving party (party who brought the action or motion) talks first.

When they are done, the other side gets to talk

The moving party gets one more opportunity to speak (rebuttal)

The judge issues a ruling.

You may get another court date to come back and enter an order about what the judge has said

**What you should not do:**

Send letters to the Judge or Commissioner, unless you have filed the document with the clerk, given a copy to the other side and you file a certificate of mailing/service so that the Judge or Commissioner knows that they can read the document;

Just show up without having filed documents and expecting the court to take them from you at the hearing;

Interrupt the other side;

Interrupt the judge or commissioner;

Not bring pen and paper to court;

Not read the court rules;

Not show up for your court date; Court is not school – you cannot just not go – the court can sanction you, issue orders in your absence or sometimes dismiss your case. The court rules can tell you how to get your court date moved if you need to do that; again, read the court rules.

Not every case requires a lawyer; not everyone can afford counsel. There is a volunteer lawyers program in Clark County that may help, if you qualify. They are located at 1409 Franklin St # 101, Vancouver, WA 98660; Phone: (360) 695-5313