

General Information for Office of Lee County Family Law Magistrates

- I. Contact information for the Office of the Family Law Magistrates is:
Mail: Lee County Justice Center Complex, 1700 Monroe St., Fort Myers, FL 33901.
Phone: (239) 533-3343 ***(for general public)**
Fax: (239) 485-2999
E-Mail: For Magistrate Kantor and Magistrate Studybaker (*for cases ending in odd numbers only*), contact Deb Jordan at (239) 533-2634 ***(direct number for attorneys and their staff only)** djordan@ca.cjis20.org

For Magistrate Swift and Magistrate Studybaker (*for cases ending in even numbers only*), contact LaToya White at (239) 533-2629 ***(direct number for attorneys and their staff only)** lwhite@ca.cjis20.org
Personal Delivery: Lee County Justice Center, 2nd Floor Mailroom – Magistrate Mailbox
- II. Family Court Case Division Assignments for referrals:
- Divisions “N” (Judge Corbin) and “U” (Judge Duryea) are referred to Magistrate Kantor
Case Managers – Scott Reduga (“N”) and Tina Baginski (“U”)
Division “C” (Judge Adams) are referred to Magistrate Studybaker
Case Manager – Cindy Valenti (“C”)
Divisions “A” (Judge Cary) and “B” (Judge Carlin) are referred to Magistrate Swift
Case Managers – Michelle Simon (“A”) and Myron Bancroft (“B”)
- III. Magistrate Kantor will hold all proceedings in Courtroom 4-F located on the 4th floor of the Justice Center, 1700 Monroe Street, Fort Myers, FL 33901. Magistrate Kantor will use the Docket Sounding procedure for all Trials or matters in which 2 hours or more have been requested. Docket sounding is the 3rd Thursday of the month for a trial period which is usually in the 1st and 2nd weeks of the following month. However, please bring a calendar for at least 2 months. If less than 2 hours is requested, a date and time certain will be assigned; however, if you underestimate the time needed, your trial **MUST** be finished without any continuance.
- IV. Magistrate Studybaker will hold all proceedings in Courtroom 4-C located on the 4th floor of the Justice Center and he will use the Docket Sounding procedure for all Trials or matters in which 2 hours or more have been requested. Docket Sounding is usually the last Monday of every other month for a two-week trial period beginning the 1st & 2nd full weeks of the following month. If less than 2 hours is requested, a date and time certain will be assigned; however, if you underestimate the time needed, your trial will be heard in multiple parts.
- V. Magistrate Swift will hold all proceedings in Courtroom 4-E located on the 4th floor of the Justice Center and will use the Docket Sounding procedure for all Trials where 2 hours or more have been requested. Normally Docket Sounding is the 3rd Wednesday of the month. If less than 2 hours is requested, a date and time certain will be assigned, but if you underestimate the time needed, your trial will be heard in multiple parts.

Procedures for Matters Referred to Family Magistrates

Send a courtesy copy to the Magistrate's Office if you file an ***Objection to the Magistrate*** so we may take it off our docket (to avail others of the time previously set aside for you) and so that we may file the necessary court document remanding the case back to the Judge assigned to that Division.

Procedure for setting hearings: In order to expedite the procedure, please file your ***Motion & Order of Referral*** simultaneously with your Motion(s) for hearing so that opposing parties may have an opportunity to object, should they so desire. Then call our office to coordinate hearing time with the Magistrate (and opposing counsel, if necessary) and fax the Magistrate's Office a courtesy copy of the Notice of Hearing only. If you don't have the necessary forms, please ask the Magistrates' office to email the required forms under Rule 12.490 for matters referred to the Magistrate.

Call the Magistrate's Office **immediately** if a Hearing is to be canceled. You must also fax a signed Notice of Cancellation before we can remove the case from the docket.

Procedure for setting trials: When you file your Notice for Trial, a copy is sent to the Judge and the Judge will decide on referral to the Magistrate. If a case is referred by the Judge to the Magistrate, our Case Manager will research it to see if it's trial ready; if so, our office or the office of Case Management will then contact the parties to coordinate the date for a trial time certain. If a settlement is reached prior to the trial date, the first and last page with signatures of a fully executed Agreement must be faxed to our office before the case will be removed from the docket. Only the Magistrate or the Judge can cancel a Trial.

When requested to prepare a Report for the Magistrate, e-mail the proposed Report & Recommendation in **Word format only** to the Magistrate's Assistant. **Do not send hard copies and envelopes**. Use the full mailing address (not Courthouse Box #) in the Certificate of Service for proposed Reports. The 15-day Exception period includes mailing & e-mail time, unless there is an Agreed Order, in which case there is no hold and the Order is immediately routed to the Judge for signature.

Magistrates are not authorized to sign an Order or Final Judgment. **Do not send Orders or Final Judgments to the Magistrates to sign**. Also, **do not send Orders/Final Judgments to Adopt a Magistrate Report directly to the division judge**; those will be prepared and forwarded by the Magistrate's office at the appropriate time. We routinely monitor the 15-day exception period and submit an Order Adopting Magistrate Report or Final Judgment at the expiration of that period.

Do send the Magistrate's Office a courtesy copy of any ***Exceptions to the Magistrate's Report*** that is filed. Although we check the court record for such filing prior to sending the Order or Final Judgment to the Judge, this will expedite our internal processing. Once Exceptions are filed, the Magistrate is divested of jurisdiction, and the hearing on those Exceptions must be set on the assigned Judge's docket. The party filing the Exception is responsible for setting the Hearing on the Exception in front of the Judge. Also, please send our office a courtesy copy of the Judge's Order Approving/Denying Exceptions.