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NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

STANDING ORDER
PROCEDURES FOR PROBATE AND GUARDIANSHIP CASES

A. COURT APPEARANCES

1. Court appearances for Probate cases shall be in person for the following matters: Hearings, Pre-trial Conferences, Settlement Conferences, and Trials. The Court may allow virtual appearances for these matters by Zoom, upon proper motion and for good cause shown.
2. Appearances for other matters may proceed in person or via the Zoom platform.
3. When appearing via Zoom, all participants should place their full name (first and last) within their Zoom square; all attorneys and self-represented parties should place the case number as well as their name within their Zoom square. Attorneys shall inform the Clerk immediately upon entering the Zoom Courtroom if their case is contested or uncontested. Whether in-person or via Zoom, all participants are expected to wear proper court attire.
4. For each court call, the Court intends to call the cases in the following order:
 - a. Openings and Closings of Decedent's Estates
 - b. In person uncontested cases and then Zoom uncontested cases.
"Uncontested cases" include matters that are routine; for example, agreed upon matters, the scheduling of future court dates, setting briefing schedules, or other matters that do not require a lengthy amount of time to handle.
 - c. Contested motions or other cases that need more extensive discussion with the Court. Matters where Courtesy Copies have been received timely will take priority over those with late-arriving Courtesy Copies or none at all.
5. Cases will be scheduled by the Probate Clerk as follows:

- Decedent's Estates and Minor Guardianships with attorneys – Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays at 9:00 am
 - Adult Guardianships with Self-Represented Litigants and Attorneys – Wednesdays at 9:00 am
 - Self-Represented Litigant Cases, including Minor Guardianships – Fridays at 9:00 am
6. Cases heard at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm Monday through Friday are specially set by the Court. The Clerk is unable to set cases at those times without the Court's authority.
 7. Even where an order is agreed, or uncontested, the Court reserves the right to require the parties to appear in person, to require additional documentation, or to deny the proposed relief and/or order.
 8. Physical courtesy copies of pleadings and notice of motions are required to be delivered to the Court in all contested matters seven (7) days in advance of the court date. The copies may be delivered to Court Administration or to the Probate Clerk. If the case is set for hearing, the Movant is responsible for delivering a complete package of Motion, Response, and Reply with all exhibits to the Court seven (7) days in advance of the hearing date.
 9. All cases where courtesy copies are required to be delivered to the Court, either by this Standing Order or by Court Order, and are not delivered timely, will not be heard on the day of hearing unless the Court decides otherwise for good cause shown.

B. PETITIONS TO OPEN OR CLOSE A DECEDENT'S ESTATE IN PERSON OR BY ZOOM VIRTUAL APPEARANCE.

1. For Petitions for Opening a Decedent's Estate, the following documents shall be physically received by the Judge seven (7) days prior to the court date obtained from the Probate Clerk.

a. A cover letter referencing the name of the estate, the number of the case, whether the matter is Testate (the cover letter should indicate where within the Will surety on bond is waived, if applicable) or Intestate, and the specific action requested, with copies of the following file-stamped documents:

- 1) Petition for Probate and for Letters including Exhibit A;
- 2) Affidavit of Heirship;

- 3) Waiver of Notices or reference in the cover letter as to why Waivers are not filed;
- 4) Notice of Motion, if required pursuant to statute

b. Copy of the previously filed original Last Will and Testament, if any, and the receipt of said filing;

c. Proposed Orders.

The proposed Order Declaring Heirship, proposed Oath of Office and Bond**, and the proposed Order Appointing Representative of Decedent's Estate ***shall*** be uploaded into the eCourt portal consecutively and as three (3) separate orders. Please upload proposed orders one time only twenty-four (24) hours prior to the court date.

**If there is a request to waive bond, please indicate the reason for same in the cover letter for the Court's consideration.

2. For Petitions for Closing a Decedent's Estate, the following documents shall be physically received by the Judge seven (7) days prior to the court date obtained from the Probate Clerk.

a. A cover letter referencing the name of the estate, the number of the case, whether the matter is Testate or Intestate, and the specific action requested, with copies of the following filed-stamped documents:

- 1) Petition for Probate and for Letters including Exhibit A;
- 2) Affidavit of Heirship;
- 3) Order of Heirship;
- 4) Order Appointing Representative of Decedent's Estate;
- 5) Notice to Heirs and Legatees or Waiver of Notice Appearance for Letters of Office and Consent;
- 6) Receipt Consent and Waiver on Closing of Decedent's Estate;
- 7) Certificate of Publication to Creditors, and unknown heirs and legatees, if required;
- 8) Final Report(s) of Independent Representative;
- 9) Claim Dismissals or Release of Claim orders, if applicable.

b. Copy of the previously filed original Last Will and Testament, if any, and the receipt of said filing;

c. Proposed Order of Discharge

The proposed Order of Discharge shall be uploaded into the eCourt portal. Please upload proposed orders one time only twenty-four (24) hours prior to the court date

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C. SUPREME COURT RULE 218 CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES

1. Pursuant to Local Court Rule, all cases in the Probate Division shall be given a Supreme Court Rule 218 Case Management date upon filing. All parties that have filed an appearance and received additional notice shall appear on the case management date, unless that date has been stricken due to a prior court appearance or other activity on the case.
2. This court date is not a date to open an estate or hold a hearing, and the Court will not authorize those requests, except for good cause shown. The case management date is to manage the case pursuant to the Supreme Court Rules.
3. Parties may utilize the Supreme Court Rule 218 Case Management date to present a Motion and receive a briefing schedule, if proper notice has been given.

D. CITATION CALLS

1. Pursuant to Local Court Rule, all Decedent's Estates must file an Annual Status Report and if supervised, an Annual Accounting as well; all Guardianships of the Person of Minors and Adults with Disabilities must file an Annual Status Report; and all Guardianships of Estates of Minors and Adults with Disabilities must file an Annual Accounting.
2. If these Reports and Accountings are not filed, the cases lacking compliance will be notified to appear on a Citation Call and be subject to a Rule to Show Cause for Contempt of Court.
3. This court date is not a date for hearings, except for the issuance of a Rule to Show Cause. If the missing report is filed prior to the Citation date, the party need not appear. However, all Annual Accountings must be placed on a court call for judicial approval by contacting the Circuit Clerk to obtain a court date.

E. OTHER INFORMATION

1. The email for the Probate courtroom shall not be used for courtesy copies or communications to the Judge. Communications to the Probate Clerks may occur through the courtroom email. Guardian ad Litem reports are authorized to be submitted to the Court's email address at CC303@lakecountyil.gov.
2. All attorneys and parties shall electronically file documents as mandated by the Illinois Supreme Court; this is to be done via the e-filing system and with the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

3. E-filing is not to be confused with the uploading of orders via the eCourt portal. Only proposed orders shall be uploaded via the eCourt portal. This does not include documents with a file stamp or other documents that do not require a Judge's signature.
4. Proposed Orders uploaded into the eCourt portal shall use a proper document title. If the document title is not correct, the Order will be rejected and returned to the sender without entry. For example, do not title an Order as an "Agreed Order" when it is not.
4. Attorneys are encouraged to bring laptop computers to court and upload proposed orders while in the courtroom. Attorneys may upload proposed orders twenty-four (24) hours prior to the court proceeding taking place. All court orders from the morning court call are to be submitted and uploaded by 2:00 P.M. the same day.
5. To schedule cases or ask questions, please contact the Probate Clerk at 847-377-3260.

F. SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS.

Self-represented litigants filing Petitions for Minor Guardianships no longer need to seek a Fee Waiver in order to file their cases. Self-represented litigants may choose to apply for a Fee Waiver for other expenses in their case, such as publication and birth certificate expenses. Self-represented litigants seeking Fee Waivers may apply without making a court appearance by submitting a request to the Clerk's Office by email or in person, and the request will be routed for approval to the assigned Judge. The order granting or denying the request will be emailed back to the self-represented litigant.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court may receive Civil Division filings by mail or over the counter from Self-Represented Litigants seeking an exemption from electronic filing.

G. CIVILITY.

Please be mindful to practice civility in dealings with colleagues and with the Court as well as being mindful of the time of others and of the Court as you schedule and proceed with your matters.

Effective as of the 12th day of January, 2026.

Judge Donna-Jo Vorderstrasse