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Superior Courts
Southern Judicial Circuit

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Attorneys practicing in the Southern Judicial Circuit
Moultrie Bar Association
Thomasville Bar Association
Valdosta Bar Association

CC: Clerks of Superior Court of Brooks, Colquitt, Echols, Lowndes, and Thomas
Counties

FROM: Chief Judge Harry Jay Altman, II
Judge Richard M. Cowart
Judge James E. Hardy
Judge Brian A. McDaniel
Judge James G. Tunison, Jr.

DATE: August 6, 2018

RE: Procedure for filing Adoptions in the Southern Judicial Circuit

As many of you may be aware, the new changes to the Adoption Code become effective on September 1, 2018. The changes to the Code are significant. All of the existing statutory forms are impacted by the changes made by HB 159, and additional forms have been added.

Due to multiple recent issues, we feel it is necessary to remind attorneys of our circuit's policy for filing adoptions. This policy has been in effect for several years and is followed by many other circuits. It is to your benefit to have adoptions approved prior to filing to prevent amended pleadings or denial of the adoption at a hearing with your clients present. Many issues can and do arise with adoptions.

SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT POLICY FOR FILING ADOPTIONS

- ◆ Once you have prepared and proofread the adoption petition, exhibits, and proposed orders, please mail or hand deliver a hard copy of all documents to a staff attorney for review (do not submit via email). This is required for **ALL** adoptions, including adult adoptions. Our staff attorneys' contact information is available on our website: www.southernjudicialcircuit.com
- ◆ For adoptions to be filed in Brooks, Colquitt, and Thomas Counties, please send a hard copy of your documents to Brooklyn Key. For adoptions to be filed in Echols and Lowndes Counties, please send a hard copy of your documents to Niki Brooks. Lowndes County adoptions may be dropped off in Judge Cowart or Judge Tunison's basket in the front of the Clerk's Office.
- ◆ Please include a proposed rule nisi or order setting hearing with a blank for the hearing date. Once your adoption has been reviewed and approved by the staff attorney and judge, the judge will sign the necessary orders. Your documents will then be returned to you for filing, and you can schedule the hearing with the Clerk's Office at that time. Please do not include your filing fee check when your documents are submitted for review.
- ◆ If there are any deficiencies in your pleadings or exhibits, you will receive a letter and/or email from the assigned staff attorney and your documents will be returned to you to be resubmitted once all deficiencies are corrected. Another review will then be done by the staff attorney and judge.

Adoptions will be reviewed by one of our staff attorneys and a judge as soon as our schedules allow. However, any deficiencies in your pleadings or exhibits may delay the review process. As there are expirations on surrenders and other documents, it is in your best interest to correct deficiencies as quickly as possible, otherwise, you will be required to obtain new surrenders.

It is your responsibility to read the Code, have all documents in order when they are submitted for review, and to correct any deficiencies in a timely manner.

An ICLE adoption law seminar addressing the statutory changes will be held on August 24, 2018, in Atlanta, Savannah, and Tifton. This seminar can also be viewed via webstream. All attorneys who intend to file adoptions after September 1, 2018, are strongly encouraged to attend this seminar.

Thank you for your continued cooperation with these procedures.