



Justice Court of Loving County

Rules of Administration and Court Decorum

These Rules of Administration and Court Decorum are hereby adopted by the Justice Court Judges of Loving County.

Adopted August 16, 2021

Approval



Judge Amber King
Justice of the Peace, Precinct 1-4 Place 1
Loving County



Table of Contents

Section 1 – General

- 1.1 – Objective
- 1.2 – Scope
- 1.3 – Jurisdiction
- 1.4 – Organization
- 1.5 – Calendar
- 1.6 – Bench Exchange
- 1.7 – Review
- 1.8 – Recording or Broadcasting of Court Proceedings

Section 2 – Rules of Decorum

- 2.1 – General Rules of Conduct
- 2.2 – Dress Code
- 2.3 – Electronic Devices

Section 3 – Civil Cases

- 3.1 – Filing of Civil Cases
- 3.2 – Setting Cases
- 3.3 – Demand for Jury
- 3.4 – Provision and Cost of Copies
- 3.5 – Provision of Self-Addressed, Postage-Paid Envelopes
- 3.6 – Postponing Trial / Continuances
- 3.7 – Conflicting Engagements of Attorneys
- 3.8 – Assignment and Transfer of Cases
- 3.9 – Dismissal for Want of Prosecution
 - 3.9.1 – Case Selection
 - 3.9.2 – Procedures for Retaining Cases and Objecting to Motions to Retain
- 3.10 – Drafts of Orders and Judgments

Section 4 – Criminal Cases

- 4.1 – Filing of Criminal Cases
- 4.2 – Court Appearance
- 4.3 – Plea of Guilty or Nolo Contendere (No Contest)
- 4.4 – Plea of Not Guilty
- 4.5 – Setting of Cases
- 4.6 – Court Appointed Attorneys
- 4.7 – Withdrawal or Substitution of Counsel
- 4.8 – Jury Selection
- 4.9 – Conflicting Engagements of Attorneys

Section 1 General

1.1 Objective

Whereas, Section 27.061, Texas Government Code, requires that the Justice of the Peace in each county adopt local rules of administration; and Section 15.0821 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code requires the transfer of pending civil cases from one precinct to a different precinct; and Article 4.12 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure requires the Justice of the Peace in every county to adopt local rules of administration regarding the transfer of a pending misdemeanor case from one precinct to a different precinct, the Justice of the Peace of Loving County do hereby adopt the following local rules of administration to provide for the administration, assignment, docketing, transfer, and hearing of cases.

These rules are promulgated to provide a uniform system for the fair, impartial, and prompt disposition of matters before the Justice Court of Loving County in accordance with the Texas statutes. Any interpretation of the following rules should be consistent with this objective.

1.2 Scope

These rules govern cases and hearings within the Justice Court of Loving County, Texas.

1.3 Jurisdiction

The Justice Court of Loving County hear all cases over which they have statutory or constitutional powers. Those civil cases within statutory limits, criminal cases where the punishment is fine only, administrative hearings, inquests, peace bond hearings, and any other hearings or cases over which a justice court has statutory or administrative authority.

1.4 Organization

There is one Justice Court in Loving County. The Justice Court presides over Loving County, precincts 1-4 in their entirety.

1.5 Calendar

Loving County Justice Court will keep a docket of scheduled hearings and trials. Dockets shall be made available to the public through the official website for the Loving County Justice Court.

The Judge is responsible for informing the County Judges of their absences for vacation, extended illness, training, or other reason and ensure that, when required, another judge preforms the duties of the absent judge through a bench exchange from a neighboring county.

1.6 Bench Exchange

Any Justice Court Judge the Loving County Justice of the Peace has a bench exchange agreement with, during an absence or recusal may fill in for the Judge for an agreed upon time.

1.7 Review

These rules shall be reviewed every four years from their date of initial adoption by the Justice of the Peace of Loving County.

1.8 Recording or Broadcasting of Court Proceedings

Unless written permission is obtained from the presiding Justice of the Peace, recording or broadcasting of court proceedings is strictly prohibited and subject to Contempt of Court.

Section 2 Rules of Decorum

2.1 General Rules of Conduct

All officers of the court, except for the Judge and jurors, and all other participants shall promptly enter the courtroom before the scheduled time for each court session. When the bailiff calls the Court to order, complete order should be observed.

During court proceedings all participants shall refer to all other participants respectfully and impersonally, proper titles and surnames shall be used rather than first names, nicknames, or other names.

During court proceedings all participants should show common decency and respect to the court and other participants by remaining quiet and not disrupt proceedings.

2.2 Dress Code

Proper attire shall be worn to all court proceedings. All officers of the Court are expected to dress appropriately and professionally. Court participants should dress appropriately, this includes:

1. No bare midriffs or tank tops

2. No hats
3. Shorts should not be worn
4. Shoes must be worn
5. No sunglasses

2.3 Electronic Devices

Handheld electronic devices should not be used during court proceedings, other than those required for use during a hearing. Including but not limited to laptop computers, tablets, cellular phones, and smart watches.

Videography, photography, and audio recording are prohibited without permission from the presiding Judge during all court proceedings. This includes handheld electronic devices such as tablets, cellular phones, and smart devices. Persons found violating this policy may be held in contempt of court.

Section 3 Civil Cases

3.1 Filing of Civil Cases

All civil cases filed in Loving County Justice Court shall be filed in accordance with Part V of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure (TRCP), *Rules of Practice in Justice Court*. It is the responsibility of the party filing a case to ensure the case is filed in the proper court.

3.2 Setting Cases

All justice court cases are to be brought to trial or final disposition as promptly as practicable.

The Justice Court shall be responsible for the setting of hearings and trials in each court and for the notices thereof.

3.3 Demand for Jury

A party requesting a civil jury trial shall file a written request to the court no later than 14 days before the date a case is set for trial. If the demand is not timely, then the right to a jury trial is waived, unless the late filing is excused by the presiding judge for good cause. Jury fees are to be paid at the time the request is submitted to the court. Once either party requests a jury trial, that

request cannot be withdrawn without written approval of both parties. Jury fees are non-refundable.

3.4 Provision and Cost of Copies

In accordance with Part V of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure (TCRP), parties in Justice Court suits are responsible for providing an adequate number of copies of petitions and accompanying documents filed with the court for all parties being served.

A Court may assess fees to the party who fails to comply with TCRP, in order to provide necessary copies of documents to parties, up to \$1.00 for a titled documents first page and \$0.25 for each additional page of the document.

3.5 Provision of Self-Addressed, Postage-Paid Envelopes

A party desiring to have file-stamped copies of any document returned to them by mail, shall include with the original document to be filed a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope for the court's return.

3.6 Postponing Trial / Continuances

When practicable, prior to filing a motion for continuance, the party seeking a continuance in a justice civil case should attempt to confer with the opposing party or parties in an effort to secure an agreement to the delay. Requests for continuance must be submitted to the court in writing **at least three business days preceding the date of the trial or hearing**, unless it may be shown that the grounds for the request arose thereafter. The notice and pleading requirement of law must be followed. Motions for continuance may be granted or denied with or without a hearing by the court.

3.7 Conflicting Engagements of Attorneys

An attorney who is, or is scheduled, to be in trial in another court, will, in writing and as soon as the conflict becomes apparent, inform the Justice Court of the case number and the court in which the conflicting case is being tried. When informed that an attorney is in trial, the Court will verify the assignment. The case will be reset upon confirmation. If the attorney is not actually in trial as represented by the attorney or agent, the case may be tried without further notice. An attorney who requests a reset under this rule is responsible for ensuring the motion was granted by the presiding judge.

3.8 Assignment and Transfer of Cases

Notwithstanding other provisions of law regarding venue, a civil case in justice court, shall be heard by the court in which the case was filed, unless presented with a proper motion by a party in accordance with Part V of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, at which time the motion will be set for a hearing, if required by the court. If the motion is granted, the Justice of the Peace will:

Transfer the case to another Justice Court in Loving County, or another County and Precinct having proper venue and jurisdiction; or

If the presiding judge is disqualified from hearing the case, transfer the case to another Justice of the Peace in Loving County by bench exchange.

An order transferring the case shall identify the court to which the case is being transferred and a copy of the order shall be delivered to each party or their attorney of record.

If the motion is denied, the case will be heard in the court in which the plaintiff initially filed the suit.

3.9 Dismissal for Want of Prosecution by the Court

3.9.1 Case Selection

The following cases are eligible for dismissal for want of prosecution *sua sponte* by the Court in which the case is filed:

- (1) Cases on file for more than 120 days in which no answer has been filed;
- (2) Cases that have been on file for more than 12 months that are not set for trial and have had no filings or settings within the prior 180 days;
- (3) Any other case designated by the court that has not had sufficient activity to remain on the docket.

3.9.2 Procedures for Retaining Cases and Objecting to Motions to Retain

Motions to retain shall be filed with the Court at least 10 business days prior to the date specified for the dismissal for want of prosecution. Any party who files a motion to retain shall state in writing the factual and legal basis why the case should not be dismissed for want of prosecution. Parties objecting to a motion to retain shall provide the Court and the opposing party in writing the basis for any objection to the motion to retain within 3 days

of service of a motion to retain. If either party wishes to provide oral arguments they must request so in their motion or objection. The Court may rule on the motion with or without a hearing.

3.10 Drafts of Orders and Judgments

As far as practicable, every draft of an order or judgment to be signed by a judge should be approved as to form by attorneys for all parties prior to being presented to the judge. A draft of an order or judgment shall its own page and not typed on the same page as a pleading, motion, certificate of service, or any part thereof. Each draft shall have a proper heading including the cause number, the style of the case, and the court in which the case is pending. The court may decide to use the presented orders and judgments or prepare their own.

Section 4 Criminal Cases

4.1 Filing of Criminal Cases

Justice Court cases shall generally be filed:

In the precinct where the offense is alleged to have occurred; or

In the precinct in which the defendant resides

4.2 Court Appearance

Unless otherwise directed by the court, defendants shall appear at the Justice Court in which the case is filed, according to the date and time specified on their citation or summons.

Subsequent appearances will be scheduled by the court in which the case is pending.

4.3 Plea of Guilty or Nolo Contendere (No Contest)

Defendants, or their attorney of record, may enter a plea of guilty or nolo contendere at any time, with or without a plea agreement. Guilty and nolo contendere pleas may be made in person, at the bench, by mail, or other correspondence designated as acceptable by the presiding judge. In accordance with Article 27.14(c) of the Code of Criminal Procedure when a defendant makes a payment in full that payment constitutes a plea of nolo contendere by the defendant, even without a written plea.

4.4 Plea of Not Guilty

Defendants, or their attorney of record, may enter a plea of not guilty at any time. Upon entering a plea of not guilty the defendant may be set to either a pretrial docket or a trial docket. An appearance bond (personal bond only) may be required by the presiding judge at the time such plea is entered.

A defendant who refuses to enter a plea shall be deemed to have entered a plea of not guilty and set to a pretrial docket or trial docket.

4.5 Setting of Cases

Each Justice Court in Loving County maintains its own criminal docket, which are available from each respective court.

Attorneys or defendants may request a reset of an appearance no later than 24 hours before the setting, unless the circumstances justify the request for reset occur thereafter as determined by the presiding judge.

Each Justice Court may stipulate its own rules as to the number of resets allowed on specific types of cases.

4.6 Court Appointed Attorneys

Indigent defendants are not entitled to a court appointed attorney, as a matter of law, when charged with an offense punishable by fine only.

4.7 Withdrawal or Substitution of Counsel

An attorney becomes an attorney of record in a misdemeanor case by listing his or her name on pleadings, by correspondence with the court indicating such, or by setting or resetting the case. He or she remains the attorney of record until relieved by written order of the court.

If an attorney is to be substituted as an attorney for the party, the court must receive written notification of the substitution prior to continuing with the case. The notification shall include the original attorney's information, the substitute attorney's information, and the defendant's information for whom the substitution is occurring.

4.8 Jury Selection

The Justice Court of Loving County utilize the same jury selection as the Loving County Court and the 143th District Court. When this process does not yield an appropriate number of jurors to build a pool, the presiding judge may order the Constable in the precinct to hand deliver jury summons to Loving County residents chosen at random in public places in Loving County.

4.9 Conflicting Engagements of Attorneys

An attorney who is, or is scheduled, to be in trial in another court, will, in writing and as soon as the conflict becomes apparent, inform the Justice Court of the case number and the court in which the conflicting case is being tried. When informed that an attorney is in trial, the Court will verify the assignment. The case will be reset upon confirmation. If the attorney is not actually in trial as represented by the attorney or agent, the case may be tried without further notice. An attorney who requests a reset under this rule is responsible for ensuring the motion was granted by the presiding judge.