

No person other than judges and authorized court employees shall remove court records as defined in rule 2.430 from the clerk's office except by order of the chief judge or chief justice upon a showing of good cause.

#### Court Commentary

**1996 Adoption.** This rule was written as a result of the problems being encountered in the removal of files from clerks' offices. While the purpose of the rule is to discourage the removal of court files, it is not intended to prohibit chief judges or the chief justice from issuing for good cause a general order providing that attorneys or authorized individuals may be allowed to check out files on a routine basis to assist in the administrative efficiency of a court. We note that section 28.13, Florida Statutes (1995), similarly prohibits the removal of files from clerks' offices.

### **RULE 2.420. PUBLIC ACCESS TO JUDICIAL BRANCH RECORDS**

(a) **Scope and Purpose.** Subject to the rulemaking power of the Florida Supreme Court provided by article V, section 2, Florida Constitution, the following rule shall govern public access to the records of the judicial branch of government. The public shall have access to all records of the judicial branch of government, except as provided below.

(b) **Definitions.**

(1) "Records of the judicial branch" are all records, regardless of physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received in connection with the transaction of official business by any judicial branch entity and consist of:

(A) "court records," which are the contents of the court file, including the progress docket and other similar records generated to document activity in a case, transcripts filed with the clerk, documentary exhibits in the custody of the clerk, and electronic records, videotapes, or stenographic tapes of depositions or other proceedings filed with the clerk, and electronic records, videotapes, or stenographic tapes of court proceedings; and

(B) "administrative records," which are all other records made or received pursuant to court rule, law, or ordinance, or in connection with the transaction of official business by any judicial branch entity.

(2) "Judicial branch" means the judicial branch of government, which includes the state courts system, the clerk of court when acting as an arm of the court, The Florida Bar, the Florida Board of Bar Examiners, the Judicial Qualifications Commission, and all other entities established by or operating under the authority of the supreme court or the chief justice.

(3) "Custodian." The custodian of all administrative records of any court is the chief justice or chief judge of that court, except that each judge is the custodian of all records that are solely within the possession and control of that judge. As to all other records, the custodian is the official charged with the responsibility of maintaining the office having the care, keeping, and supervision of such records. All references to "custodian" mean the custodian or the custodian's designee.

(4) "Confidential," as applied to information contained within a record of the judicial branch, means that such information is exempt from the public right of access under article I, section 24(a) of the Florida Constitution and may be released only to the persons or organizations designated by law, statute, or court order. As applied to information contained within a court record, the term "exempt" means that such information is confidential. Confidential information includes information that is confidential under this rule or under a court order entered pursuant to this rule. To the extent reasonably practicable, restriction of access to confidential information shall be implemented in a manner that does not restrict access to any portion of the record that is not confidential.

(5) "Affected non-party" means any non-party identified by name in a court record that contains confidential information pertaining to that non-party.

(c) **Confidential and Exempt Records.** The following records of the judicial branch shall be confidential:

(1) Trial and appellate court memoranda, drafts of opinions and orders, court conference records, notes, and other written materials of a similar nature prepared by judges or court staff acting on behalf of or at the direction of the court as part of the court's judicial decision-making process utilized in disposing of cases and controversies before Florida courts unless filed as a part of the court record;

(2) Memoranda or advisory opinions that relate to the administration of the court and that require confidentiality to protect a compelling governmental interest, including, but not limited to, maintaining court security, facilitating a criminal investigation, or protecting public safety, which cannot be adequately protected by less restrictive measures. The degree, duration, and manner of confidentiality imposed shall be no broader than necessary to protect the compelling governmental interest involved, and a finding shall be made that no less restrictive measures are available to protect this interest. The decision that confidentiality is required with respect to such administrative memorandum or written advisory opinion shall be made by the chief judge;

(3) (A) Complaints alleging misconduct against judges until probable cause is established;

(B) Complaints alleging misconduct against other entities or individuals licensed or regulated by the courts, until a finding of probable cause or no probable cause is established, unless otherwise provided. Such finding should be made within the time limit set by law or rule. If no time limit is set, the finding should be made within a reasonable period of time;

(4) Periodic evaluations implemented solely to assist judges in improving their performance, all information gathered to form the bases for the evaluations, and the results generated therefrom;

(5) Only the names and qualifications of persons applying to serve or serving as unpaid volunteers to assist the court, at the court's request and direction, shall be accessible to the public. All other information contained in the applications by and evaluations of persons applying to serve or serving as unpaid volunteers shall be confidential unless made public by court order based upon a showing of materiality in a pending court proceeding or upon a showing of good cause;

(6) Copies of arrest and search warrants and supporting affidavits retained by judges, clerks, or other court personnel until execution of said warrants or until a determination is made by law enforcement authorities that execution cannot be made;

(7) All records made confidential under the Florida and United States Constitutions and Florida and federal law;

(8) All records presently deemed to be confidential by court rule, including the Rules for Admission to the Bar, by Florida Statutes, by prior case law of the State of Florida, and by the rules of the Judicial Qualifications Commission;

(9) Any court record determined to be confidential in case decision or court rule on the grounds that

(A) confidentiality is required to

- (i) prevent a serious and imminent threat to the fair, impartial, and orderly administration of justice;
- (ii) protect trade secrets;
- (iii) protect a compelling governmental interest;
- (iv) obtain evidence to determine legal issues in a case;

- (v) avoid substantial injury to innocent third parties;
- (vi) avoid substantial injury to a party by disclosure of matters protected by a common law or privacy right not generally inherent in the specific type of proceeding sought to be closed;
- (vii) comply with established public policy set forth in the Florida or United States Constitution or statutes or Florida rules or case law;

(B) the degree, duration, and manner of confidentiality ordered by the court shall be no broader than necessary to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (A); and

(C) no less restrictive measures are available to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (A).

(10) The names and any identifying information of judges mentioned in an advisory opinion of the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee.

**(d) Procedures for Determining Confidentiality of Court Records.**

(1) The clerk of the court shall designate and maintain the confidentiality of any information contained within a court record that is described in subdivision (d)(1)(A) or (d)(1)(B) of this rule. The following information shall be maintained as confidential:

(A) information described by any of subdivisions (c)(1) through (c)(6) of this rule; and

(B) except as provided by court order, information subject to subdivision (c)(7) or (c)(8) of this rule that is currently confidential or exempt from section 119.07, Florida Statutes, and article I, section 24(a) of the Florida Constitution under any of the following statutes or as they may be amended or renumbered:

(i) Chapter 39 records relating to dependency matters, termination of parental rights, guardians ad litem, child abuse, neglect, and abandonment. § 39.0132(3), Fla. Stat.

(ii) Adoption records. § 63.162, Fla. Stat.

(iii) Social Security, bank account, charge, debit, and credit card numbers in court records. § 119.0714(1)(i)–(j), (2)(a)–(e), Fla. Stat. (Unless redaction is requested pursuant to 119.0714(2), this information is exempt only as of January 1, 2011.)

(iv) HIV test results and patient identity within those test results. § 381.004(3)(e), Fla. Stat.

(v) Sexually transmitted diseases - test results and identity within the test results when provided by the Department of Health or the department's authorized representative. § 384.29, Fla. Stat.

(vi) Birth and death certificates, including court-issued delayed birth certificates and fetal death certificates. §§ 382.008(6), 382.025(1)(a), Fla. Stat.

(vii) Identifying information in a petition by a minor for waiver of parental notice when seeking to terminate pregnancy. § 390.01116, Fla. Stat.

(viii) Identifying information in clinical mental health records under the Baker Act. § 394.4615(7), Fla. Stat.

(ix) Records of substance abuse service providers which pertain to the identity, diagnosis, and prognosis of and service provision to individuals who have received services from substance abuse service providers. § 397.501(7), Fla. Stat.

- (x) Identifying information in clinical records of detained criminal defendants found incompetent to proceed or acquitted by reason of insanity. § 916.107(8), Fla. Stat.
- (xi) Estate inventories and accountings. § 733.604(1), Fla. Stat.
- (xii) The victim's address in a domestic violence action on petitioner's request. § 741.30(3)(b), Fla. Stat.
- (xiii) Information identifying victims of sexual offenses, including child sexual abuse. §§ 119.071(2)(h), 119.0714(1)(h), Fla. Stat.
- (xiv) Gestational surrogacy records. § 742.16(9), Fla. Stat.
- (xv) Guardianship reports and orders appointing court monitors in guardianship cases. §§ 744.1076, 744.3701, Fla. Stat.
- (xvi) Grand jury records. Ch. 905, Fla. Stat.
- (xvii) Information acquired by courts and law enforcement regarding family services for children. § 984.06(3)-(4), Fla. Stat.
- (xviii) Juvenile delinquency records. §§ 985.04(1), 985.045(2), Fla. Stat.
- (xix) Information disclosing the identity of persons subject to tuberculosis proceedings and records of the Department of Health in suspected tuberculosis cases. §§ 392.545, 392.65, Fla. Stat.
- (xx) Presentence investigation reports and attached psychological or psychiatric evaluations. Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.712; §§ 921.231(1)(i), 948.015(9), Fla. Stat.

(2) Any person filing any document containing confidential information shall, at the time of filing, file with the clerk a "Notice of Confidential Information within Court Filing" in order to: (A) indicate that confidential information described in subdivision (d)(1)(B) of this rule is included within the document being filed; (B) identify the provision of subdivision (d)(1)(B) of this rule that applies to the identified information; and (C) identify the precise location of the confidential information within the document being filed. A form Notice of Confidential Information within Court Filing accompanies this rule. The clerk of court shall review filings identified by filers as containing confidential information to determine whether the purported confidential information is facially subject to confidentiality under the identified provision in subdivision (d)(1)(B). If the clerk determines that filed information is not subject to confidentiality under the identified provision, the clerk shall notify the person who filed the document in writing within 5 days of the filing and thereafter shall maintain the information as confidential for 10 days from the day such notice is served. The information shall not be held as confidential for more than 10 days, unless the filer has filed a motion pursuant to subdivision (d)(3).

(3) Any person filing a document with the court shall ascertain whether any information contained within the document may be confidential under subdivision (c) of this rule notwithstanding that such information is not itemized at subdivision (d)(1) of this rule. A person filing information that he or she believes in good faith to be confidential but that is not described in subdivision (d)(1) of this rule shall request that the information be maintained as confidential by filing a "Motion to Determine Confidentiality of Court Records" under the procedures set forth in subdivision (e), (f), or (g), unless (A) the person filing the information is the only individual whose confidential information is included in the document to be filed or is the attorney representing all such individuals; and (B) a knowing waiver of the confidential status of that information is intended by the person filing the information. Any interested person may request that information within a court file be maintained as confidential by filing a motion as provided in subdivision (e), (f), or (g).

(4) If a notice of confidential information is filed pursuant to subdivision (d)(2), or a motion is filed pursuant to subdivision (e)(1) seeking to determine that information contained in court records is confidential, or pursuant to subdivision (e)(5) seeking to vacate an order that has determined that information in a court record is confidential or seeking to unseal information designated as confidential by the clerk of court, then the person filing the notice or motion shall give notice of such filing to any affected non-party. Notice pursuant to this provision must:

(A) be filed with the court;

(B) identify the case by docket number;

(C) describe the confidential information with as much specificity as possible without revealing the confidential information, including specifying the precise location of the information within the court record; and

(D) include:

(i) in the case of a request to deem materials confidential, a statement that if the motion is denied then the subject material will not be treated as confidential by the clerk; and

(ii) in the case of a motion to unseal confidential records or a motion to vacate an order deeming records confidential, a statement that if the motion is granted, the subject material will no longer be treated as confidential by the clerk.

Any notice described herein must be served together with the motion that gave rise to the notice in accordance with subdivision (e)(5) or (g)(5). When serving the notice and motion described in this subdivision on a non-party, the server shall use reasonable efforts to locate the non-party and may serve such non-party by any method set forth in Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.080(b).

**(e) Request to Determine Confidentiality of Trial Court Records in Noncriminal Cases.**

(1) A request to determine the confidentiality of trial court records in noncriminal cases under subdivision (c) must be made in the form of a written motion captioned "Motion to Determine Confidentiality of Court Records." A motion made under this subdivision must:

(A) identify the particular court records or a portion of a record that the movant seeks to have determined as confidential with as much specificity as possible without revealing the information subject to the confidentiality determination;

(B) specify the bases for determining that such court records are confidential; and

(C) set forth the specific legal authority and any applicable legal standards for determining such court records to be confidential.

Any motion made under this subdivision must include a signed certification by the party or the attorney for the party making the request that the motion is made in good faith and is supported by a sound factual and legal basis. Information that is subject to such a motion must be treated as confidential by the clerk pending the court's ruling on the motion. Notwithstanding any of the foregoing, the court may not determine that the case number, docket number, or other number used by the clerk's office to identify the case file is confidential.

(2) Except when a motion filed under subdivision (e)(1) represents that all parties agree to all of the relief requested, the court must, as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days after the filing of a motion under this subdivision, hold a hearing before ruling on the motion. Whether or not any motion filed under subdivision (e)(1) is agreed to by the parties, the court may in its discretion hold a hearing on such motion. Any hearing held under this subdivision must be an open proceeding, except that any person may request that the court con-

duct all or part of the hearing in camera to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (c). Any person may request expedited consideration of and ruling on the motion. The moving party shall be responsible for ensuring that a complete record of any hearing held pursuant to this subdivision be created, either by use of a court reporter or by any recording device that is provided as a matter of right by the court. The court may in its discretion require prior public notice of the hearing on such a motion in accordance with the procedure for providing public notice of court orders set forth in subdivision (e)(4) or by providing such other public notice as the court deems appropriate. The court must issue a ruling on the motion within 30 days of the hearing.

(3) Any order granting in whole or in part a motion filed under subdivision (e) must state the following with as much specificity as possible without revealing the information subject to the confidentiality determination:

(A) The type of case in which the order is being entered;

(B) The particular grounds under subdivision (c) for determining the information to be confidential;

(C) Whether any party's name determined to be confidential and, if so, the particular pseudonym or other term to be substituted for the party's name;

(D) Whether the progress docket or similar records generated to document activity in the case are determined to be confidential;

(E) The particular information that is determined to be confidential;

(F) Identification of persons who are permitted to view the confidential information;

(G) That the court finds that: (i) the degree, duration, and manner of confidentiality ordered by the court are no broader than necessary to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (c); and (ii) no less restrictive measures are available to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (c); and

(H) That the clerk of the court is directed to publish the order in accordance with subdivision (e)(4).

(4) Except as provided by law or court rule, notice must be given of any order granting in whole or in part a motion made under subdivision (e)(1) as follows. Within 10 days following the entry of the order, the clerk of court must post a copy of the order on the clerk's website and in a prominent public location in the courthouse. The order must remain posted in both locations for no less than 30 days. This subdivision shall not apply to orders determining that court records are confidential under subdivision (c)(7) or (c)(8).

(5) If a nonparty requests that the court vacate all or part of an order issued under subdivision (e), or requests that the court order the unsealing of records designated as confidential under subdivision (d), the request must be made by a written motion, filed in that court, that states with as much specificity as possible the bases for the request. The motion must set forth the specific legal authority and any applicable legal standards supporting the request. The movant must serve all parties and all affected non-parties with a copy of the motion. If the subject order determines that the names or addresses of one or more parties are confidential, the movant must state prominently in the caption of the motion "Confidential Party — Court Service Requested." When a motion so designated is filed, the court shall be responsible for providing a copy of the motion to all parties and all affected non-parties in such a way as not to reveal the confidential information to the movant. Except when a motion filed under this subdivision represents that all parties agree to all of the relief requested, the court must, as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days after the filing of a motion under this subdivision, hold a hearing on the motion. Regardless of whether any motion filed under this subdivision is agreed to by the parties, the court may in its discretion hold a hearing on such motion. Any person may request expedited consideration of and ruling on the motion. Any hearing held under this subdivision must be an open proceeding, except that any person may request that the court conduct all or part of the hearing in camera to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (c). The court must issue a ruling on the motion within 30 days of the hearing. The movant shall be responsible for ensuring that a complete record of any hearing held under this subdivision be created, either by

use of a court reporter or by any recording device that is provided as a matter of right by the court. This subdivision shall not apply to orders determining that court records are confidential under subdivision (c)(7) or (c)(8).

(6) After notice and an opportunity to respond, the court may impose sanctions against any party or non-party and/or their attorney, if:

(A) the court determines that a designation made under subdivision (d) or a motion made under subdivision (d)(3) or (e) was not made in good faith and was not supported by a sound legal or factual basis, or

(B) a document is filed in violation of subdivision (d)(2) or (d)(3).

**(f) Request to Determine Confidentiality of Court Records in Criminal Cases.**

(1) Subdivision (e) shall apply to any motion by the state or a defendant to determine the confidentiality of trial court records under subdivision (c), except as provided in subdivision (f)(3). As to any motion filed in the trial court under subdivision (f)(3), the following procedure shall apply:

(A) Unless the motion represents that both the movant and any other party subject to the motion agree to all of the relief requested, as evidenced by all such parties signing the motion, the court shall hold a hearing on a motion filed under this subdivision within 15 days of the filing of the motion. Any hearing held under this subdivision must be an open proceeding, except that any person may request that the court conduct all or part of the hearing in camera to protect the interests set forth in subdivision (c)(9)(A).

(B) The court shall issue a written ruling on a motion filed under this subdivision within 10 days of the hearing on a contested motion or within 10 days of the filing of an agreed motion.

(2) Subdivision (g) shall apply to any motion to determine the confidentiality of appellate court records under subdivision (c), except as provided in subdivision (f)(3). As to any motion filed in the appellate court under subdivision (f)(3), the following procedure shall apply:

(A) The motion may be made with respect to a record that was presented or presentable to a lower tribunal, but no determination concerning confidentiality was made by the lower tribunal, or a record presented to an appellate court in an original proceeding.

(B) A response to a motion filed under this subdivision may be served within 10 days of service of the motion.

(C) The court shall issue a written ruling on a motion filed under this subdivision within 10 days of the filing of a response on a contested motion or within 10 days of the filing of an uncontested motion.

(3) Any motion to determine whether a court record that pertains to a plea agreement, substantial assistance agreement, or other court record that reveals the identity of a confidential informant or active criminal investigative information is confidential under subdivision (c)(9)(A)(i), (c)(9)(A)(iii), (c)(9)(A)(v), or (c)(9)(A)(vii) of this rule may be made in the form of a written motion captioned "Motion to Determine Confidentiality of Court Records." Any motion made pursuant to this subdivision must be treated as confidential and indicated on the docket by generic title only, pending a ruling on the motion or further order of the court. As to any motion made under this subdivision, the following procedure shall apply:

(A) Information that is the subject of such motion must be treated as confidential by the clerk pending the court's ruling on the motion. Filings containing the information must be indicated on the docket in a manner that does not reveal the confidential nature of the information.

(B) The provisions of subdivisions (e)(3)(A)–(G), (e)(6), and (g)(7) shall apply to motions made under

this subdivision. The provisions of subdivisions (e)(1), (e)(2), (e)(3)(H), (e)(4), and (e)(5) shall not apply to motions made under this subdivision.

(C) No order entered under this subdivision may authorize or approve the sealing of court records for any period longer than is necessary to achieve the objective of the motion, and in no event longer than 120 days. Extensions of an order issued hereunder may be granted for 60-day periods, but each such extension may be ordered only upon the filing of another motion in accordance with the procedures set forth under this subdivision. In the event of an appeal or review of a matter in which an order is entered under this subdivision, the lower tribunal shall retain jurisdiction to consider motions to extend orders issued hereunder during the course of the appeal or review proceeding.

(D) The clerk of the court shall not publish any order of the court issued hereunder in accordance with subdivision (e)(4) or (g)(4) unless directed by the court. The docket shall indicate only the entry of the order.

(4) This subdivision does not authorize the falsification of court records or progress dockets.

**(g) Request to Determine Confidentiality of Appellate Court Records in Noncriminal Cases.**

(1) A motion to determine the confidentiality of appellate court records in noncriminal cases under subdivision (c) must be filed in the appellate court and must be in compliance with the guidelines set forth in subdivision (e)(1). Such a motion may be made with respect to a record that was presented or presentable to a lower tribunal, but no determination concerning confidentiality was made by the lower tribunal, or a record presented to an appellate court in an original proceeding.

(2) A response to a motion filed under subdivision (g)(1) may be served within 10 days of service of the motion.

(3) Any order granting in whole or in part a motion filed under subdivision (g)(1) must be in compliance with the guidelines set forth in subdivisions (e)(3)(A)–(H). Any order requiring the sealing of an appellate court record operates to also make those same records confidential in the lower tribunal during the pendency of the appellate proceeding.

(4) Except as provided by law, within 10 days following the entry of an order granting a motion under subdivision (g)(1), the clerk of the appellate court must post a copy of the order on the clerk's website and must provide a copy of the order to the clerk of the lower tribunal, with directions that the clerk is to seal the records identified in the order. The order must remain posted for no less than 30 days.

(5) If a nonparty requests that the court vacate all or part of an order issued under subdivision (g)(3), or requests that the court order the unsealing of records designated as confidential under subdivision (d), the request must be made by a written motion, filed in that court, that states with as much specificity as possible the bases for the request. The motion must set forth the specific legal authority and any applicable legal standards supporting the request. The movant must serve all parties and all affected non-parties with a copy of the motion. If the subject order determines that the names or addresses of one or more parties are confidential, the movant must state prominently in the caption of the motion "Confidential Party—Court Service Requested." When a motion so designated is filed, the court shall be responsible for providing a copy of the motion to all parties and all affected non-parties in such a way as not to reveal the confidential information to the movant. A response to a motion may be served within 10 days of service of the motion.

(6) The party seeking to have an appellate record sealed under this subdivision has the responsibility to ensure that the clerk of the lower tribunal is alerted to the issuance of the order sealing the records and to ensure that the clerk takes appropriate steps to seal the records in the lower tribunal.

(7) Upon conclusion of the appellate proceeding, the lower tribunal may, upon appropriate motion showing changed circumstances, revisit the appellate court's order directing that the records be sealed.

(8) If the court determines that a designation made under subdivision (d) or a motion made under subdivision (g)(1) was not made in good faith and was not supported by a sound legal or factual basis, the court may impose sanctions on the movant after notice and an opportunity to respond.

(9) Records of a lower tribunal determined to be confidential by that tribunal must be treated as confidential during any review proceedings. In any case where information has been determined to be confidential under this rule, the clerk of the lower tribunal shall so indicate in the index transmitted to the appellate court. If the information was determined to be confidential in an order, the clerk's index must identify such order by date or docket number. This subdivision does not preclude review by an appellate court, under Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.100(d), or affect the standard of review by an appellate court, of an order by a lower tribunal determining a record to be confidential.

**(h) Denial of Access Request for Administrative Records.** Expedited review of denials of access to administrative records of the judicial branch shall be provided through an action for mandamus or other appropriate relief, in the following manner:

(1) Where a judge who has denied a request for access to records is the custodian, the action shall be filed in the court having appellate jurisdiction to review the decisions of the judge denying access. Upon order issued by the appellate court, the judge denying access to records shall file a sealed copy of the requested records with the appellate court.

(2) All other actions under this rule shall be filed in the circuit court of the circuit in which such denial of access occurs.

**(i) Procedure.** Requests and responses to requests for access to records under this rule shall be made in a reasonable manner.

(1) Requests for access to records shall be in writing and shall be directed to the custodian. The request shall provide sufficient specificity to enable the custodian to identify the requested records. The reason for the request is not required to be disclosed.

(2) The custodian shall be solely responsible for providing access to records of the custodian's entity. The custodian shall determine whether the requested record is subject to this rule and, if so, whether the record or portions of the record are exempt from disclosure. The custodian shall determine the form in which the record is provided. If the request is denied, the custodian shall state in writing the basis for the denial.

(3) Fees for copies of records in all entities in the judicial branch of government, except for copies of court records, shall be the same as those provided in section 119.07, Florida Statutes (2001).

#### Committee Note

**1995 Amendment.** This rule was adopted to conform to the 1992 addition of article I, section 24, to the Florida Constitution. Amendments to this rule were adopted in response to the 1994 recommendations of the Study Committee on Confidentiality of Records of the Judicial Branch.

Subdivision (b) has been added by amendment and provides a definition of "judicial records" that is consistent with the definition of "court records" contained in rule 2.075(a)(1) [renumbered as 2.430(a)(1) in 2006] and the definition of "public records" contained in chapter 119, Florida Statutes. The word "exhibits" used in this definition of judicial records is intended to refer only to documentary evidence and does not refer to tangible items of evidence such as firearms, narcotics, etc. Judicial records within this definition include all judicial records and data regardless of the form in which they are kept. Reformatting of information may be necessary to protect copyrighted material. *Seigle v. Barry*, 422 So. 2d 63 (Fla. 4th DCA 1982), *review denied*, 431 So. 2d 988 (Fla. 1983).

The definition of "judicial records" also includes official business information transmitted via an electronic mail (e-mail) system. The judicial branch is presently experimenting with this new technology. For example, e-mail is currently being used by the judicial branch to transmit between judges and staff multiple matters in the courts including direct communications between judges and staff and other judges, proposed drafts of opinions and orders, memoranda concerning pending cases, proposed jury instructions, and even votes on proposed opinions. All of this type of information is exempt from public disclosure under rules 2.051(c)(1) and (c)(2) [renumbered as 2.420(c)(1) and

(c)(2) in 2006]. With few exceptions, these examples of e-mail transmissions are sent and received between judicial officials and employees within a particular court's jurisdiction. This type of e-mail is by its very nature almost always exempt from public record disclosure pursuant to rule 2.051(c). In addition, official business e-mail transmissions sent to or received by judicial officials or employees using dial-in equipment, as well as the use of on-line outside research facilities such as Westlaw, would also be exempt e-mail under rule 2.051(c). On the other hand, we recognize that not all e-mail sent and received within a particular court's jurisdiction will fall into an exception under rule 2.051(c). The fact that a non-exempt e-mail message made or received in connection with official court business is transmitted intra-court does not relieve judicial officials or employees from the obligation of properly having a record made of such messages so they will be available to the public similar to any other written communications. It appears that official business e-mail that is sent or received by persons outside a particular court's jurisdiction is largely non-exempt and is subject to recording in some form as a public record. Each court should develop a means to properly make a record of non-exempt official business e-mail by either electronically storing the mail or by making a hard copy. It is important to note that, although official business communicated by e-mail transmissions is a matter of public record under the rule, the exemptions provided in rule 2.051(c) exempt many of these judge/staff transmissions from the public record. E-mail may also include transmissions that are clearly not official business and are, consequently, not required to be recorded as a public record. Each court should also publish an e-mail address for public access. The individual e-mail addresses of judicial officials and staff are exempt under rule 2.051(c)(2) to protect the compelling interests of maintaining the uninterrupted use of the computer for research, word-processing, preparation of opinions, and communication during trials, and to ensure computer security.

Subdivision (c)(3) was amended by creating subparts (a) and (b) to distinguish between the provisions governing the confidentiality of complaints against judges and complaints against other individuals or entities licensed or regulated by the Supreme Court.

Subdivision (c)(5) was amended to make public the qualifications of persons applying to serve or serving the court as unpaid volunteers such as guardians ad litem, mediators, and arbitrators and to make public the applications and evaluations of such persons upon a showing of materiality in a pending court proceeding or upon a showing of good cause.

Subdivision (c)(9) has also been amended. Subdivision (c)(9) was adopted to incorporate the holdings of judicial decisions establishing that confidentiality may be required to protect the rights of defendants, litigants, or third parties; to further the administration of justice; or to otherwise promote a compelling governmental interest. *Barron v. Florida Freedom Newspapers, Inc.*, 531 So.2d 113 (Fla.1988); *Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Lewis*, 426 So.2d 1 (Fla.1982). Such confidentiality may be implemented by court rule, as well as by judicial decision, where necessary for the effective administration of justice. *See, e.g.*, Fla.R.Crim.P. 3.470, (Sealed Verdict); Fla.R.Crim.P. 3.712, (Presentence Investigation Reports); Fla.R.Civ.P. 1.280(c), (Protective Orders).

Subdivision (c)(9)(D) requires that, except where otherwise provided by law or rule of court, reasonable notice shall be given to the public of any order closing a court record. This subdivision is not applicable to court proceedings. Unlike the closure of court proceedings, which has been held to require notice and hearing prior to closure, *see Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Lewis*, 426 So. 2d 1 (Fla.1982), the closure of court records has not required prior notice. Requiring prior notice of closure of a court record may be impractical and burdensome in emergency circumstances or when closure of a court record requiring confidentiality is requested during a judicial proceeding. Providing reasonable notice to the public of the entry of a closure order and an opportunity to be heard on the closure issue adequately protects the competing interests of confidentiality and public access to judicial records. *See Florida Freedom Newspapers, Inc. v. Sirmons*, 508 So.2d 462 (Fla. 1st DCA 1987), *approved, Barron v. Florida Freedom Newspapers, Inc.*, 531 So.2d 113 (Fla.1988); *State ex rel. Tallahassee Democrat v. Cooksey*, 371 So.2d 207 (Fla. 1st DCA 1979). Subdivision (c)(9)(D), however, does not preclude the giving of prior notice of closure of a court record, and the court may elect to give prior notice in appropriate cases.

## 2002 Court Commentary

The custodian is required to provide access to or copies of records but is not required either to provide information from records or to create new records in response to a request. *Op. Atty. Gen. Fla. 80-57* (1980); *Wootton v. Cook*, 590 So.2d 1039 (Fla. 1st DCA 1991); *Seigle v. Barry*, 422 So.2d 63 (Fla. 4th DCA 1982).

The writing requirement is not intended to disadvantage any person who may have difficulty writing a request; if any difficulty exists, the custodian should aid the requestor in reducing the request to writing.

It is anticipated that each judicial branch entity will have policies and procedures for responding to public records requests.

The 1995 commentary notes that the definition of "judicial records" added at that time is consistent with the definition of "court records" contained in rule 2.075(a)(1) [renumbered as 2.430(a)(1) in 2006] and the definition of "public records" contained in chapter 119, Florida Statutes. Despite the commentary, these definitions are not the same. The definitions added in 2002 are intended to clarify that records of the judicial branch include court records as defined in rule 2.075(a)(1) and administrative records. The definition of records of the judicial branch is consistent with the definition of "public records" in chapter 119, Florida Statutes.

## 2005 Court Commentary

Under courts' inherent authority, appellate courts may appoint a special magistrate to serve as commissioner for the court to make findings of fact and oversee discovery in review proceedings under subdivision (d) of this rule. *Cf. State ex rel. Davis v. City of Avon Park*, 158 So. 159 (Fla. 1934) (recognizing appellate courts' inherent authority to do all things reasonably necessary for administration of justice within the scope of courts' jurisdiction, including the appointment of a commissioner to make findings of fact); *Wessells v. State*, 737 So. 2d 1103 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998) (relinquishing jurisdiction to circuit court for appointment of a special master to serve as commissioner for court to make findings of fact).

**2007 Court Commentary**

New subdivision (d) applies only to motions that seek to make court records in noncriminal cases confidential in accordance with subdivision (c)(9).

**2007 Committee Commentary**

Subdivision (d)(2) is intended to permit a party to make use of any court-provided recording device or system that is available generally for litigants' use, but is not intended to require the court system to make such devices available where they are not already in use and is not intended to eliminate any cost for use of such system that is generally borne by a party requesting use of such system.

IN THE \_\_\_\_\_ COURT, \_\_\_\_\_  
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND  
FOR \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY, FLORIDA

CASE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Plaintiff/Petitioner,

v.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Defendant/Respondent.  
\_\_\_\_\_ /

#### NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION WITHIN COURT FILING

Pursuant to Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420(d)(2), the filer of a court record at the time of filing shall indicate whether any confidential information is included within the document being filed; identify the confidentiality provision that applies to the identified information; and identify the precise location of the confidential information within the document being filed.

Title/Type of Document(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicate the applicable confidentiality provision(s) below from Rule 2.420(d)(1)(B), by specifying the location within the document on the space provided:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 39 records relating to dependency matters, termination of parental rights, guardians ad litem, child abuse, neglect, and abandonment. § 39.0132(3), Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed within a Chapter 39 case, this form is not required.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption records. § 63.162, Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed within a Chapter 63 adoption case, this form is not required.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security, bank account, charge, debit, and credit card numbers in court records. § 119.0714(1)(i)–(j), (2)(a)–(e), Fla. Stat. (Unless redaction is requested pursuant to § 119.0714(2), this information is exempt only as of January 1, 2011.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ HIV test results and patient identity within the HIV test results. § 381.004(3)(e), Fla. Stat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sexually transmitted diseases — test results and identity within the test results when provided by the Department of Health or the department’s authorized representative. § 384.29, Fla. Stat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth and death certificates, including court-issued delayed birth certificates and fetal death certificates. §§ 382.008(6), 382.025(1)(a), Fla. Stat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identifying information in petition by minor for waiver of parental notice when seeking to terminate pregnancy. § 390.01116, Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed within a Ch. 390 waiver of parental notice case, this form is not required.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identifying information in clinical mental health records under the Baker Act. §394.4615(7), Fla. Stat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Records of substance abuse service providers which pertain to the identity, diagnosis, and prognosis

of and service provision to individuals who have received services from substance abuse service providers. § 397.501(7), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Identifying information in clinical records of detained criminal defendants found incompetent to proceed or acquitted by reason of insanity. § 916.107(8), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Estate inventories and accountings. § 733.604(1), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Victim’s address in domestic violence action on petitioner’s request. § 741.30(3)(b), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Information identifying victims of sexual offenses, including child sexual abuse. §§ 119.071(2)(h), 119.0714(1)(h), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Gestational surrogacy records. § 742.16(9), Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Guardianship reports and orders appointing court monitors in guardianship cases. §§ 744.1076, 744.3701, Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Grand jury records. Ch. 905, Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed in a Ch. 905 grand jury proceeding, this form is not required.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Information acquired by courts and law enforcement regarding family services for children. § 984.06(3)–(4), Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed in a Ch. 984 family services for children case, this form is not required.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Juvenile delinquency records. §§ 985.04(1), 985.045(2), Fla. Stat. (If the document is filed in a Ch. 985 juvenile delinquency case, this form is not required.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Information disclosing the identity of persons subject to tuberculosis proceedings and records of the Department of Health in suspected tuberculosis cases. §§ 392.545, 392.65, Fla. Stat.

\_\_\_\_\_ Presentence investigation reports and attached psychological or psychiatric evaluations. Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.712; §§ 921.231(1)(i), 948.015(9), Fla. Stat.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing was furnished by U.S. mail / personal service to: \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attorney Name .....  
Address .....  
Phone .....  
Florida Bar No. ....

Note: The clerk of court shall review filings identified as containing confidential information to determine whether the information is facially subject to confidentiality under the identified provision. The clerk shall notify the filer in writing within 5 days if the clerk determines that the information is NOT subject to confidentiality, and the records shall not be held as confidential for more than 10 days, unless a motion is filed pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of the Rule. Fla. R. Jud. Admin. 2.420(d)(2).

**RULE 2.425. MINIMIZATION OF THE FILING OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

**(a) Limitation for Court Filings.** Unless authorized by subdivision (b), statute, another rule of court, or the court orders otherwise, designated sensitive information filed with the court must be limited to the following

format:

- (1) The initials of a person known to be a minor;
- (2) The year of birth of a person's birth date;
- (3) No portion of any
  - (A) social security number,
  - (B) bank account number,
  - (C) credit card account number,
  - (D) charge account number, or
  - (E) debit account number,
- (4) The last four digits of any
  - (A) taxpayer identification number (TIN),
  - (B) employee identification number ,
  - (C) driver's license number,
  - (D) passport number,
  - (E) telephone number,
  - (F) financial account number, except as set forth in subdivision (a)(3),
  - (G) brokerage account number,
  - (H) insurance policy account number,
  - (I) loan account number,
  - (J) customer account number,
  - (K) patient or health care number,
- (5) A truncated version of any
  - (A) email address,
  - (B) computer user name,
  - (C) password, or
  - (D) personal identification number (PIN); and

(6) A truncated version of any other sensitive information as provided by court order.

(b) **Exceptions.** Subdivision (a) does not apply to the following:

(1) An account number which identifies the property alleged to be the subject of a proceeding;

(2) The record of an administrative or agency proceeding;

(3) The record in appellate or review proceedings;

(4) The birth date of a minor whenever the birth date is necessary for the court to establish or maintain subject matter jurisdiction;

(5) The name of a minor in any order relating to parental responsibility, time-sharing, or child support.

(6) The name of a minor in any document or order affecting the minor's ownership of real property.

(7) The birth date of a party in a writ of attachment or notice to payor.

(8) Traffic and criminal proceedings;

(9) Information used by the clerk for case maintenance purposes or the courts for case management purposes; and

(10) Information which is relevant and material to an issue before the court.

(c) **Remedies.** Upon motion by a party or interested person or sua sponte by the court, the court may order remedies, sanctions or both for a violation of subdivision (a). Following notice and an opportunity to respond, the court may impose sanctions if such filing was not made in good faith.

(d) **Motions Not Restricted.** This rule does not restrict a party's right to move for protective order, to move to file documents under seal, or to request a determination of the confidentiality of records.

(e) **Application.** This rule does not affect the application of constitutional provisions, statutes, or rules of court regarding confidential information or access to public information.

## **RULE 2.430. RETENTION OF COURT RECORDS**

(a) **Definitions.** The following definitions apply to this rule:

(1) "Court records" mean the contents of the court file, including the progress docket and other similar records generated to document activity in a case, transcripts filed with the clerk, documentary exhibits in the custody of the clerk, and electronic records, video tapes, or stenographic tapes of depositions or other proceedings filed with the clerk, and electronic records, videotapes or stenographic tapes of court proceedings.

(2) "After a judgment has become final" means:

(A) when a final order, final judgment, final docket entry, final dismissal, or nolle prosequi has been en-