

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY, GEORGIA

2026ECV0357

Civil Action File No. 2026ECV0357

MAR 11, 2026 12:15 PM

  
Cindy Mason, Clerk  
Columbia County, Georgia

	WILLIS, WAYLAND B	)	
	Plaintiff	)	
		)	
v.		)	Judge: SHERYL B. JOLLY
		)	
	JOLLY, SHERYL B	)	
	Defendant	)	

**STANDING ORDER REQUIRING MEDIATION IN CIVIL CASES**

In accordance with the mandate of the Georgia Constitution of 1983 that the judicial branch of government provide "speedy, efficient and inexpensive resolution of disputes and prosecutions," and pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2 as well as the Georgia Supreme Court's Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules encouraging the use of alternative dispute resolution by the courts of this state, the following **Standing Order for Mediation in Civil Cases** is hereby entered. As set forth herein, all contested civil matters filed in the Superior Court of the Columbia Judicial Circuit, **unless exempted**, as set forth below, must be mediated in accordance with this Order.

**MEDIATION REQUIRED**

Mediation is a prerequisite to placement of this case on the trial calendar or, if a jury trial is not required, prior to a final hearing being conducted. Mediation **must be conducted in compliance with this Order** and shall be conducted in accordance with the rules of the Columbia Judicial Circuit Alternative Dispute Resolution Program (hereinafter "CJC ADR Program").

The parties shall utilize a mutually agreed-upon mediator from the roster of mediators registered by the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution (<http://godr.org/>) who have also been authorized for service in the CJC ADR Program. A copy of the roster may be obtained by contacting the Case Manager for the judge assigned to hear this case.

Parties shall contact the mediator directly and schedule the mediation. The Plaintiff or Plaintiff's counsel shall notify the court of the name of the mediator selected and agreed to by all parties and the date of mediation which shall be accomplished by completing the attached Notice of Mediation Status (Attachment A). The Notice of Mediation Status shall be provided by e-mail or U.S. mail to the relevant Case Manager, **prior to the scheduled mediation session**. Unless

otherwise agreed, the parties shall share the cost of the mediator equally, and each should be prepared to pay the mediator at the conclusion of the session. Should the parties fail to agree upon a mediator, the court will appoint one for them and may set the mediator's fee. If any party is unable to afford the cost of mediation, they may contact the relevant Case Manager to request an Application for Fee Waiver/Fee Reduction.

Should the parties desire to use a mediator not on the CJC ADR Program roster, they are permitted to **petition the court** to utilize any mediator **who is registered with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution in the appropriate category.** If approved, Plaintiff/Plaintiff's counsel shall remain under the same obligation to timely file the Notice of Mediation Status referenced above.

The parties and their counsel shall negotiate in ***good faith*** to resolve all issues in this case with the mediator. Within ***seven*** calendar days after mediation, Plaintiff/Plaintiff's counsel shall notify the relevant Case Manager whether mediation was successful, partially successful or failed to resolve any of the contested issues via submission of the attached Attestation Form (Attachment B).

Compliance with this Order does not require the parties to reach a settlement. The Court is not ordering arbitration through this Order. The mediator has no authority to compel settlement. Any settlement is entirely voluntary.

### **PERSONAL APPEARANCE REQUIRED**

The actual, in-person presence of parties at all mediation conferences is required unless the court excuses attendance for good cause shown. The requirement that a party appear at a mediation conference is satisfied if the following persons are physically present:

- a. The party and/or:
  1. The party's representative who has:
    - i. Full authority to settle without further consultation; and
    - ii. A full understanding of the dispute and full knowledge of the facts;
  2. A representative of an insurance carrier for any insured party if that representative has full authority to settle without further consultation. Appearance of an insurance carrier's representative by telephone is only permitted if all parties agree to such telephonic appearance.

### **EXEMPTIONS FROM MEDIATION**

Any party may petition the court to exempt the case from mediation by filing a Mediation Exemption Petition. The opposing party must be served a copy of any such request for exemption. An exemption from mediation may be requested for the following reasons:

- a. The issue(s) to be considered has been previously mediated by a mediator registered with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution;
- b. The issue(s) presents a question of law only; or
- c. Any reason the assigned judge finds sufficient to justify the parties not participating in mediation that would otherwise be mandatory under this Order.

Any exemption shall be within the discretion of the court.

Mandatory mediation is not required in the following types of cases:

- a. Appeals from rulings of administrative agencies;
- b. Forfeitures of seized properties;
- c. Bond validations; and
- d. Declaratory relief.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVILEGE**

The Georgia Supreme Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules and the Rule of the CJC ADR provide protections, immunities, and benefits to parties, counsel, and registered neutrals in properly conducted, court-connected mediations. All documents provided to a registered mediator, discussions, representations, and statements made in connection with a court-connected mediation proceeding shall remain confidential and privileged, consistent with Georgia law. Parties and neutrals acting in a court-annexed or court-referred ADR process are entitled to those confidentiality and immunity protections. (Supreme Court ADR Rule 6/1 and 6/2.) Non-registered mediators do not have the confidentiality or immunity protections provided by the Supreme Court of Georgia.

### **ATTESTATION OF MEDIATION PARTICIPATION OR EXEMPTION**

Plaintiff/Plaintiff's counsel shall file with the Clerk of Court a completed Attestation Form within the seven day time limit addressed above. Neither party may request a final hearing or request a pretrial conference or jury trial date unless and until the Attestation Form has been filed and an executed copy has been provided to the relevant Case Manager. Failure of Plaintiff/Plaintiffs counsel to timely file the completed Attestation Form will result in continuance of the matter until compliance has been demonstrated.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE OF ORDER**

This Order shall become effective the date it is filed and shall apply to all civil cases, except those specifically exempted as described above.

**SO ORDERED** this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge, Superior Court  
Columbia Judicial Circuit

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY, GEORGIA**

**CIVIL ACTION FILE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_) )  
PLAINTIFF, ) )  
 ) )  
v. ) )  
 ) )  
\_\_\_\_\_) )  
DEFENDANT ) )

**NOTICE OF MEDIATION STATUS**

**(Attachment A)**

Choose one and provide the requested information:

1. I do hereby confirm that the parties in the above styled action have selected and agreed to utilize the services of the following registered mediator:
  - a. Mediator's Name:.....
  - b. Date of Mediation:.....

**OR**

2. Parties request a mediator be assigned by the CJC ADR Program.

**OR**

3. These parties requested and were granted an exemption from mediation as evidenced by the attached order of this Court.

This \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Plaintiff/Plaintiff's Counsel  
Printed Name:.....

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY, GEORGIA

CIVIL ACTION FILE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_)  
PLAINTIFF, )  
 )  
v. )  
 )  
\_\_\_\_\_)  
DEFENDANT. )

ATTESTATION FORM

(Attachment B)

I do hereby attest that the parties in the above styled action have attended mediation with the following results:

Date of Mediation	
Name of Mediator	
Outcome of Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediation fully resolved all contested issues <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation partially resolved some of the contested issues <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation resolved none of the contested issues

This \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_ \_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Plaintiff/Plaintiff's Counsel

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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SO ORDERED this 11<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026



Judge, Superior Court  
Columbia Judicial Circuit