

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULES OF PROCEDURE
FORMS 12.920(a), MOTION FOR REFERRAL TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE,
12.920(b), ORDER OF REFERRAL TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE, and
12.920(c), NOTICE OF HEARING BEFORE GENERAL MAGISTRATE
(04/22)**

When should these forms be used?

A **general magistrate** is an attorney appointed by a **judge** to take testimony and recommend orders on certain matters connected with a divorce. These recommended orders are then reviewed and entered by the judge unless contrary to the law or the facts of the case. The primary purposes of having general magistrates hear family law matters are to reduce the costs of litigation and to speed up cases. Either **party** may request that their case, or portions of their case, be heard by a general magistrate by filing **Motion for Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(a). You must also prepare an **Order of Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(b), to submit to the judge assigned to your case.

Many times, the court, either on its own motion or under current administrative orders of the court, may refer your case to a general magistrate. Even in those instances, you may be required to prepare and submit an **Order of Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(b), to the judge.

Once a general magistrate has been appointed to your case, the general magistrate will assign a time and place for a **hearing** as soon as reasonably possible after the referral is made. The general magistrate will give notice of that hearing to each of the parties directly or will direct a party or attorney in the case to file and serve a notice of hearing on the other party. If you are asked to send the notice of hearing, you will need to use the form entitled **Notice of Hearing Before General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(c). Regardless of who prepares the notice of hearing, the moving party (the one who requested referral to the general magistrate) is required to have the notice properly served on the other party.

These forms should be typed or printed in black ink. After completing this form, you should **file** these documents with the **clerk of the circuit court** in the county where your case is filed and keep a copy for your records.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING E-FILING

THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES ONLY TO FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULES OF PROCEDURE FORMS 12.920(a) and 12.920(c) BUT DOES NOT APPLY TO FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULE OF PROCEDURE FORM 12.920(b).

The Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration now require that all petitions, pleadings, and documents be filed electronically except in certain circumstances. **Self-represented**

litigants may file petitions or other pleadings or documents electronically, however, they are not required to do so. If you choose to file your pleadings or other documents electronically, you must do so in accordance with Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.525, and you must follow the procedures of the judicial circuit in which you file. The rules and procedures should be carefully read and followed.

The copy you are providing to the other party must be either mailed, e-mailed, or hand-delivered to the opposing party or his or her attorney on the same day indicated on the certificate of service. If it is mailed, it must be postmarked on the date indicated in the certificate of service.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING E-SERVICE ELECTION

After the initial service of process of the petition or supplemental petition by the Sheriff or certified process server, the Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration now require that all documents required or permitted to be served on the other party must be served by electronic mail (e-mail) except in certain circumstances. You must strictly comply with the format requirements set forth in the Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration. If you elect to participate in electronic service, which means serving or receiving pleadings by e-mail, or through the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal, you must review Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.516. You may find this rule at www.flcourts.org through the link to Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration provided under either Family Law Forms: Getting Started, or Rules of Court in the A-Z Topical Index.

SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS MAY SERVE DOCUMENTS BY E-MAIL, HOWEVER THEY ARE NOT REQUIRED TO DO SO. If a self-represented litigant elects to serve and receive documents by e-mail, the procedures must always be followed once the initial election is made.

To serve and receive documents by e-mail, you must designate your e-mail address by using the **Designation of Current Mailing and E-mail Address**, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915, and you must provide your e-mail address on each form on which your signature appears. Please **CAREFULLY** read the rules and instructions for: **Certificate of Service (General)**, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.914; **Designation of Current Mailing and E-mail Address**, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915; and Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.516.

What should I do next?

If you are filing a **Motion for Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(a), you need to send or deliver your motion directly to the judge assigned to your case, along with an **Order of Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(b), and an addressed, stamped envelope for each party in the case. The judge will then either grant or deny the motion, usually without a hearing.

If you are required to submit an **Order of Referral to General Magistrate**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.920(b), to the judge assigned to your case, you will need to send or deliver the order directly to the judge, along with addressed, stamped envelopes for each party in the case.

The party who prepares any of these forms must file this document with the clerk of the circuit court. A copy of the motion must be served on any other party in your case. **Service** must be in accordance with Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.516.

Where can I look for more information?

Before proceeding, you should read General Information for Self-Represented Litigants found at the beginning of these forms. The words that are in **bold underline** in these instructions are defined there. For further information, see Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.490.

Special notes...

IMPORTANT: After the judge refers your case to a general magistrate, either party (including the party who was required to prepare and submit the Order of Referral) may object to the referral within 10 days of the date that the referral is made (if the Order of Referral is served by mail, the parties have an additional 5 days within which to object to the referral). Every litigant is entitled to have his or her case heard by a judge. However, before you decide to object to an Order of Referral to General Magistrate, you should consider the potential extra costs and time delays that may result from having a judge hear your case instead of a general magistrate. You may want to speak with an attorney in your area who can assist you in making a more informed decision regarding whether you should file an objection to an Order of Referral to General Magistrate.

Remember, a person who is NOT an attorney is called a nonlawyer. If a nonlawyer helps you fill out these forms, that person must give you a copy of **Disclosure from Nonlawyer**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.900(a), before he or she helps you. A nonlawyer helping you fill out these forms also **must** put his or her name, address, and telephone number on the bottom of the last page of every form he or she helps you complete.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE _____ JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR _____ COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case No: _____
Division: _____

Petitioner,

and

Respondent.

MOTION FOR REFERRAL TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE

I, *{full legal name}* _____, request that the Court enter an order referring this case to a general magistrate. The case should be referred to a general magistrate on the following issues: *{explain}*

I certify that a copy of this document was [check all used]: () emailed () mailed () faxed
() hand delivered to the person(s) listed below on *{date}* _____.

Other party or his/her attorney:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone Number: _____
Fax Number: _____
Email Address(es): _____

Signature of Party or his/her attorney:
Printed Name: _____
Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone Number: _____
Fax Number: _____
Email Address(es): _____
Florida Bar Number: _____

IF A NONLAWYER HELPED YOU FILL OUT THIS FORM, HE/SHE MUST FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW:

[fill in **all** blanks] This form was prepared for the: *{choose only one}* () Petitioner () Respondent

This form was completed with the assistance of:

{name of individual} _____,

{name of business} _____,

{address} _____,

{city} _____, *{state}* _____, *{telephone number}* _____.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE _____ JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR _____ COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case No: _____

Division: _____

Petitioner,
and

Respondent.

ORDER OF REFERRAL TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE

THIS CASE IS REFERRED TO THE GENERAL MAGISTRATE on the following issues:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

AND ANY OTHER MATTER RELATED THERETO.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the above issues are referred to General Magistrate

{name} _____ ,
for further proceedings, under rule 12.490 of the Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure and current administrative orders of the Court. Financial Affidavits, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.902(b) or (c), shall be filed in accordance with Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.285. The General Magistrate is authorized to administer oaths and conduct hearings, which may include taking of evidence, and shall file a recommended order that contains findings of fact, conclusions of law, and the name of the court reporter, if any.

The General Magistrate shall assign a time for the proceedings as soon as reasonably possible after this referral is made and shall give notice to each of the parties either directly or by directing counsel or a party to file and serve a notice of hearing.

Counties within the State of Florida may have different rules. Please consult the (.....) Clerk of the Court (.....) Family Law Intake Staff (.....) other _____ relating to this procedure.

A REFERRAL TO A GENERAL MAGISTRATE REQUIRES THE CONSENT OF ALL PARTIES. YOU ARE ENTITLED TO HAVE THIS MATTER HEARD BY A JUDGE. IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO HAVE THIS MATTER HEARD BEFORE THE GENERAL MAGISTRATE, YOU MUST FILE A WRITTEN OBJECTION TO THE REFERRAL WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE TIME OF SERVICE OF THIS ORDER. IF THE TIME SET FOR THE HEARING IS LESS

THAN 10 DAYS AFTER SERVICE OF THIS ORDER, THE OBJECTION MUST BE FILED BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HEARING. IF THIS ORDER IS SERVED WITHIN THE FIRST 20 DAYS AFTER SERVICE OF PROCESS, THE TIME TO FILE AN OBJECTION IS EXTENDED TO THE TIME WITHIN WHICH A RESPONSIVE PLEADING IS DUE. FAILURE TO FILE A WRITTEN OBJECTION WITHIN THE APPLICABLE TIME PERIOD IS DEEMED TO BE A CONSENT TO THE REFERRAL.

If either party files a timely objection, this matter shall be returned to the undersigned judge with a notice stating the amount of time needed for hearing.

REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDED ORDER MADE BY THE GENERAL MAGISTRATE MUST BE BY A MOTION TO VACATE AS PROVIDED IN RULE 12.490(e), FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULES OF PROCEDURE. A RECORD, WHICH INCLUDES A TRANSCRIPT, IS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT THE MOTION TO VACATE, UNLESS WAIVED BY ORDER OF THE COURT PRIOR TO ANY HEARING ON THE MOTION TO VACATE.

YOU ARE ADVISED THAT IN THIS CIRCUIT:

- a. _____ electronic recording is provided by the court. A party may provide a court reporter at that party's expense.
- b. _____ a court reporter is provided by the court.
- c. _____ no electronic recording is provided by the court and the court does not provide a court reporter. A party may provide a court reporter at that party's expense.

SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEEK REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDED ORDER MADE BY THE GENERAL MAGISTRATE, YOU MUST FILE A MOTION TO VACATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 12.490(e), FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULES OF PROCEDURE. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE THE COURT WITH A RECORD SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT YOUR MOTION TO VACATE, OR YOUR MOTION WILL BE DENIED. A RECORD ORDINARILY INCLUDES A WRITTEN TRANSCRIPT OF ALL RELEVANT PROCEEDINGS UNLESS WAIVED BY ORDER OF THE COURT PRIOR TO ANY HEARING ON THE MOTION TO VACATE. THE PERSON SEEKING REVIEW MUST HAVE THE TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FOR THE COURT'S REVIEW.

ORDERED on _____.

CIRCUIT JUDGE

COPIES TO:

Petitioner (or his or her attorney)
Respondent (or his or her attorney)
General Magistrate

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE _____ JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR _____ COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case No: _____
Division: _____

Petitioner,

and

Respondent.

NOTICE OF HEARING BEFORE GENERAL MAGISTRATE

[fill in all blanks]

TO: _____

There will be a hearing before General Magistrate *{name of general magistrate}* _____,
on *{date}* _____, at *{time}* ____ m., in Room _____ of the _____
Courthouse, on the following issues: _____

_____ hour(s)/ _____ minutes have been reserved for this hearing.

PLEASE GOVERN YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

If the matter before the General Magistrate is a Motion for Civil Contempt/Enforcement, FAILURE TO APPEAR AT THE HEARING MAY RESULT IN THE COURT ISSUING A WRIT OF BODILY ATTACHMENT FOR YOUR ARREST. IF YOU ARE ARRESTED, YOU MAY BE HELD IN JAIL UP TO 48 HOURS BEFORE A HEARING IS HELD.

IF THIS IS A CONTEMPT PROCEEDING:

YOUR ABILITY TO PAY IS A CRITICAL ISSUE IN A CONTEMPT PROCEEDING;

YOU ARE STRONGLY URGED TO PREPARE AND FILE A FAMILY LAW FINANCIAL AFFIDAVIT PRIOR TO THE HEARING IN ORDER FOR THE COURT TO BE ABLE TO ELICIT RELEVANT FINANCIAL INFORMATION FROM YOU; YOU WILL BE PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY AT THE HEARING TO RESPOND TO STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL STATUS; AND

TO BE HELD IN CONTEMPT, THE COURT MUST MAKE AN EXPRESS FINDING THAT YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO PAY.

PLEASE GOVERN YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

This part to be filled out by the court or filled in with information you have obtained from the court:

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact:

{identify applicable court personnel by name, address, and telephone number}
at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.

SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEEK REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDED ORDER MADE BY THE GENERAL MAGISTRATE, YOU MUST FILE A MOTION TO VACATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 12.490(e), FLORIDA FAMILY LAW RULES OF PROCEDURE. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE THE COURT WITH A RECORD SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT YOUR MOTION TO VACATE, OR YOUR MOTION WILL BE DENIED. A RECORD ORDINARILY INCLUDES A WRITTEN TRANSCRIPT OF ALL RELEVANT PROCEEDINGS UNLESS WAIVED BY ORDER OF THE COURT PRIOR TO ANY HEARING ON THE MOTION TO VACATE. THE PERSON SEEKING REVIEW MUST HAVE THE TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FOR THE COURT'S REVIEW.

YOU ARE HEREBY ADVISED THAT IN THIS CIRCUIT:

- a. _____ electronic recording is provided by the court. A party may provide a court reporter at that party's expense.
- b. _____ a court reporter is provided by the court.
- c. _____ no electronic recording is provided by the court and the court does not provide a court reporter. A party may provide a court reporter at that party's expense.

If you are represented by an attorney or plan to retain an attorney for this matter you should notify the attorney of this hearing.

If this matter is resolved, the moving party shall contact the General Magistrate's Office to cancel this hearing.

I certify that a copy of this document was [check **one** only]: () mailed () faxed and mailed () hand delivered to the person(s) listed below on {date} _____.

Other party or his/her attorney:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address(es): _____

Signature of Party or his/her Attorney

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address(es): _____

Florida Bar Number: _____

IF A NONLAWYER HELPED YOU FILL OUT THIS FORM, HE/SHE MUST FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW:

[fill in **all** blanks] This form was prepared for the: *{choose only one}* () Petitioner () Respondent

This form was completed with the assistance of:

{name of individual} _____,

{name of business} _____,

{address} _____,

{city} _____, *{state}* _____, *{telephone number}* _____.