

COURTROOM CONDUCT

The Judges, Magistrates, and Hearing Officers assigned to the Family Law Division in Bay County expect that all litigants, whether or not they are represented by attorneys, will conduct themselves in an appropriate fashion, so that all parties will be afforded a fair opportunity to present their case.

The following are meant to assist you in meeting appropriate standards of conduct when you appear in court:

1. Be truthful in all statements that you make in court. False statements given under oath constitute perjury, which is a criminal offense.
2. **DO NOT CALL OR WRITE THE JUDGE, MAGISTRATE, OR HEARING OFFICER.** As a general rule, documents and testimony can be read or heard only when in the presence of both parties.
3. **BE COURTEOUS.** Other than to make appropriate objections, do not interrupt anyone who is speaking. If you are representing yourself and you have an objection to something a witness says, merely say, "Objection", and the court will allow you to state the nature of your objection.
4. Treat all court personnel with respect, including the bailiffs, judicial assistants, clerks, court investigators, self-help personnel, judges, magistrates, and hearing officers.
5. Do not make faces or gestures at the opposing party, his or her attorney, witnesses, or the Judge while in the courtroom or the Judge's chambers. Speak directly to the Judge or your attorney, **not** the opposing party or a witness. You will be given an opportunity to be heard in court.
6. **Show your respect for the court by wearing appropriate attire. DO NOT come to court in shorts, tank tops, cutoff shirts, blue jeans, t-shirts, or sneakers.**
7. Do not bring food or beverages into the courtroom and do not chew gum or eat candy in the courtroom.
8. Make arrangements for someone to care for your child(ren) prior to appearing in court. **DO NOT BRING CHILDREN TO COURT** without a prior Order signed by the Judge.
9. Be aware that witnesses you bring to court are not usually permitted to remain in the courtroom while you, your spouse, your former spouse, or other witnesses testify.
10. Bring in at least four (4) copies of any documents that you intend to offer as evidence. Pro Se litigants are held to the same standard as a reasonably competent attorney. You are acting as your own attorney; therefore you are expected to prove/defend your case. The Judge, Magistrate, and Hearing Officer cannot represent you and will not independently investigate your claims. Papers filed with the Clerk before or after the hearing are not evidence. Once the hearing is over, your opportunity to present evidence is gone.
11. The courthouse is located in a congested area. Parking is limited and time consuming. You must also be prepared to pass through a metal detector at the front door. Please arrive for your hearing at least 15 minutes before the hearing is scheduled to begin.

By signing this document, I am acknowledging I have read it in its entirety and fully understand.

Signature