

**United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma
Chambers Rules for Judge Sara E. Hill**

General Chambers Rules

- 1. Scope:** These Chambers Rules apply to all matters before Judge Hill. Counsel must be familiar with these rules and shall strictly adhere to them. Failure to comply with these Chambers Rules may result in adverse consequences. The Court will apply these rules to *pro se* parties more leniently.
- 2. Conduct:** The Court expects parties and counsel to conduct themselves in a professional manner throughout the litigation process. Zealous advocacy is an integral part of litigation, but you must always conduct yourself in a professional and collegial manner. Abusive conduct will not be tolerated.
- 3. Communications with the Court:** The Court will not permit or entertain any improper *ex parte* communications. However, permissible communications such as those related to scheduling or administrative matters should be directed to the Court's courtroom deputy.
- 4. Courtesy Copies:** For all filings longer than 50 pages (inclusive of all exhibits), a physical courtesy copy must be submitted to the Court. The Courtesy copy must be an exact duplicate of the filing after it was filed with the Court. All exhibits must be separated by numbered tabs. All pages filed under seal must be clearly designated as such.
- 5. New and Less-Experienced Lawyers:** The Court encourages new and less-experienced attorneys to participate in courtroom proceedings and conferences. The Court will permit multiple attorneys to speak during court proceedings if it creates an opportunity for a new or less-experienced attorney to participate. The Court may also grant a request for oral argument on motions that are not typically set for hearing if it will give a new or less-experienced attorney an opportunity to gain experience.

- 6. Proposed Orders:** The Court requires all proposed orders to be based on the template order posted on the Court’s website. The case caption should have a right vertical border line in the center as opposed to parentheses. Paragraphs should be indented 0.25 as opposed to 0.5. Text within proposed orders must be left justified, 13 pt., double spaced, and in Century Schoolbook font. Quoted material containing 50 or more words should be block quoted. Citations to CM/ECF filings shall follow this format: [ECF No. ## at ##]. For example: “Before the Court is Plaintiff’s Complaint. [ECF No. 1].” Judge Hill’s name below her signature line should not be in all caps, as it should read “Sara E. Hill.” Failure to comply with this rule may result in an instruction to provide a corrected proposed order and a delay in entry of the order.
- 7. Motions in Limine:** Motions in limine must be combined in one filing. If a motion in limine is directed at a proposed trial exhibit, the proposed trial exhibit shall be filed as an exhibit to the motion in limine. The Court discourages filing a motion in limine requesting an order that the parties be required to follow the Federal Rules of Evidence. The Court also discourages motions in limine seeking to exclude broad categories of information. Motions in limine should concern specific evidence.
- 8. Table of Authorities:** The Court does not require a table of statutes, rules, ordinances, cases, and other authorities as stated in LCvR7-1(d) & LCrR47-5(b). However, the Court requires compliance with the remainder of LCvR7-1 & LCrR47-5.

Courtroom and Trial Rules

- 1. Presenting Argument and Examining Witnesses:** Examination of witnesses must take place from the lectern. Opening and closing statements must be made from the lectern. The Court prefers for all other statements and arguments to be made from the lectern or at the bench for sidebar conferences, but brief statements may be made while seated at counsel table. Counsel and parties with a physical limitation are exempt from this rule.

- 2. Conduct During Jury Trials:** The Court reminds all counsel to be cautious about what statements and objections are made in the presence of the jury. The Court highlights a few common issues:
 - a. Objections and responses to objections must be concise.
 - b. Do not argue objections (beyond initial concise objections and responses) or rulings on objections in the presence of the jury.
 - c. Do not make motions in the presence of the jury.
 - d. Do not ask the Court to declare that a witness is an expert in the presence of the jury.
 - e. Do not argue about discovery or disclosure matters in the presence of the jury.
 - f. Remain mindful of who is in the courtroom when the rule of sequestration is invoked.
 - g. The Court will provide water pitchers and cups at counsel table for counsel and others sitting at counsel table. Absent prior approval from the Court, no other outside food or drinks are allowed in front of the bar. Members of the public will be allowed to bring water into the courtroom so long as it is in a container that can be closed.

- 3. Exhibits:**
 - a. For all trials and other hearings where a party intends to offer evidence, except for emergency or other expedited matters, all parties must provide separate exhibit notebooks for: (1) the witness stand; (2) opposing counsel or opposing *pro se* parties; (3) the Court; and (4) the Court's law clerk.
 - b. For electronic exhibits, placeholder pages must be included in all exhibit notebooks. Electronic exhibits must also be provided in

electronic format to: (1) opposing counsel or opposing *pro se* parties; and (2) the Court.

- c. Except in the case of emergency or expedited matters, exhibit notebooks and electronic exhibits must be provided to opposing counsel and the Court at least two full business days before a trial or hearing begins.

4. **Courtroom Technology:** The Court encourages the parties to use the electronic evidence presentation system in the courtroom. Parties should contact the Court's courtroom deputy to schedule time to test courtroom technology before use in a hearing or at trial. The Court will only allow a brief amount of time to resolve unanticipated technical issues during hearings and trials. The Court is particularly sensitive to technical delays during jury trials.
5. **Trial Scheduling:** Trials may be set on a trailing docket, and criminal trials will be conducted before civil trials. Parties and counsel will be informed of the order in which trials will proceed during a given trial setting. Parties and counsel must be prepared to commence trial immediately upon the conclusion of the case they are set behind.
6. **Leaving the Courtroom:** Absent an emergency, counsel and parties should not leave the courtroom while trial is in progress.
7. **Electronic Devices:** Counsel and parties with business before the Court, along with their assistants, may use electronic devices in the courtroom so long as the devices are silent and are not used in a distracting manner. No other electronic devices will be allowed in the courtroom.

Civil Rules

- 1. Duty to Confer:** Before filing any motion, unless filed *ex parte* or in an emergency or expedited situation, the party filing the motion must make a meaningful effort to confer with all opposing parties and/or counsel about the planned motion in an effort to resolve or minimize the issues presented to the Court. All motions must contain either: (1) a certification that the filing party conferred with all opposing parties and/or counsel; or (2) a statement explaining why the filing party could not confer before the motion was filed.

- 2. Redaction and Sealed Documents:** The Court requires strict adherence to LCvR5.2. Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, all motions to seal must be made at least two full business days before a filing deadline. Failure to comply with this rule may result in a deadline passing before the Court has an opportunity to rule on a motion to seal.

- 3. Motions for Extensions of Time:**
 - a. A proposed order is not required.
 - b. Absent an emergency or other good cause, all requests to extend a deadline must be made at least two full business days before the scheduled deadline. Failure to comply with this rule may result in a deadline passing before the Court has an opportunity to rule on the request.
 - c. All requests for extension of scheduling order deadlines may affect the trial setting.
 - d. If multiple motions for extension of the scheduling order are made, the court may set a status and scheduling conference before ruling on the motion.

Criminal Rules

1. Motions for Extensions of Time:

- a. A proposed order is not required.
- b. Absent an emergency or other good cause, all requests to extend a deadline must be made at least two full business days before the scheduled deadline. Failure to comply with this rule may result in a deadline passing before the Court has an opportunity to rule on the request.
- c. All motions for extension of scheduling order deadlines that affect the trial setting will be held in abeyance until all defendants in the matter file correct, executed, speedy trial waivers.
 - i. The waiver must be submitted on the Court's CR-06 form, which can be downloaded at this link: [Criminal Forms | Northern District of Oklahoma | United States District Court \(uscourts.gov\)](https://www.uscourts.gov/criminal-forms-northern-district-oklahoma).
 - ii. The waiver must specifically reference the excludable dates. For example, if the defendant is set on the December 2, 2024 trial docket and is requesting a continuance to the January 6, 2025 trial docket, the waiver shall state "Defendant specifically requests that all delays from a continuance of his/her jury trial from December 2, 2024 to January 6, 2025 be excluded from computation under the Speedy Trial Act pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161, et seq."
 - iii. The waiver must be signed by the defendant and by defendant's counsel.
 - iv. Ideally, the waiver should be filed contemporaneously with the motion to continue.
 - v. If a motion to continue is filed before the pretrial conference but a signed waiver is not filed before the pretrial conference, the motion to continue will be addressed at the pretrial conference. However, defense counsel are expected to timely meet with their clients in advance of the pretrial conference, and the Court discourages the use of the pretrial conference simply to obtain waivers.
- d. If multiple motions for extension of the scheduling order are made, the court may set a hearing before ruling on the motion.

2. Hearings on Motions:

- a.** It is the general practice of this Court to hear pending motions during the Pretrial Conference. If one or more of the parties believe an evidentiary hearing is necessary in advance of the Pretrial Conference, they should file a motion seeking an expedited hearing.
- b.** At least two full business days before any evidentiary hearing, the parties must provide four paper copies of a typewritten Witness List and Exhibit List to the Court's courtroom deputy and email the Court's courtroom deputy the proposed witness and exhibit lists.

3. Pretrial Motions and Responses:

- a.** In accordance with LCr47-4, any motion must state on the first page whether it is opposed or unopposed. If concurrence to the motion could not be obtained or was refused, the motion should explain why concurrence could not be obtained. Each party's position must be addressed—including all codefendants. A motion that fails to recite the position of each party may be summarily denied.
- b.** Pursuant to LCrR 47-2, any response shall be filed within seven days of any motion's filing.
- c.** Replies are not permitted without leave of Court. If leave is granted, replies shall be limited to five pages.
- d.** Motions related to probation/supervised release issues must also state the position of the United States Probation Office.

4. Changes of Plea:

- a.** If a defendant desires to plead guilty, counsel should notify the Court's courtroom deputy by email. Please include dates that are good for the change of plea hearing and any dates to avoid.
- b.** Counsel for the parties must submit the plea petition and plea agreement (if any) at least three full business days before any change of plea hearing. Failure to do so may result in the change of plea hearing being reset to a later date. The parties are strongly encouraged to use the Court's CR-05 form, which can be downloaded at this link: [Criminal Forms | Northern District of Oklahoma | United States District Court \(uscourts.gov\)](https://www.uscourts.gov/cr-05).

- c. Absent good cause, any superseding charging instrument must be filed at least three business days before the change of plea hearing.

5. Before trial:

- a. If counsel anticipates any question of law or evidence to be particularly difficult, please give the Court as much advance notice as possible.
- b. Objections to proposed jury instructions and pertinent case law should be provided to the Court via email to the Court's intake email inbox at: SEHIntake_OKND@oknd.uscourts.gov.

6. Sentencing:

- a. Criminal defendants appearing for their sentencing hearing may make all statements from the lectern or while seated at counsel table, whichever is preferred.
- b. The parties are encouraged to submit letters and all other materials they wish for the Court to consider during sentencing at least one week before sentencing.

Rules Last Updated: February 26, 2025