

Supreme Court of Texas

Misc. Docket No. 24-9006


Final Approval of Amendments to Texas Rule of Judicial Administration 7

ORDERED that:

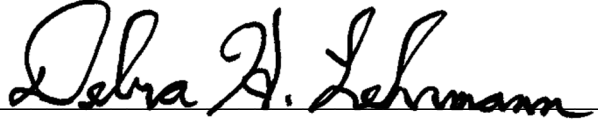
1. On August 25, 2023, in Misc. Dkt. No. 23-9068, the Court preliminarily approved amendments to Texas Rule of Judicial Administration 7 and invited public comment.
2. The comment period has expired. Only minor changes to the rule have been made to include references to the business court. This Order gives final approval to the amended rule. The amendments are shown in redline against the current rule.
3. Each court must adopt a confidentiality policy, as required by Rule of Judicial Administration 7.1, by May 1, 2024. Each court must also provide that policy to current court staff members and train them on it by May 1, 2024. Courts within the same county are encouraged to collaborate to adopt a uniform confidentiality policy.
4. The Court's confidentiality policy is attached to this Order and may serve as a model. Section 2(e) has been revised as shown since it was first published in Misc. Dkt. No. 23-9068.
5. The Clerk is directed to:
 - a. file a copy of this Order with the Secretary of State;
 - b. cause a copy of this Order to be mailed to each registered member of the State Bar of Texas by publication in the *Texas Bar Journal*;
 - c. send a copy of this Order to each elected member of the Legislature; and
 - d. submit a copy of this Order for publication in the *Texas Register*.

EXHIBIT A

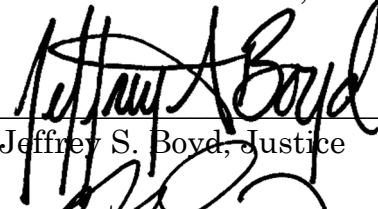
Dated: February 20, 2024.



Nathan L. Hecht, Chief Justice



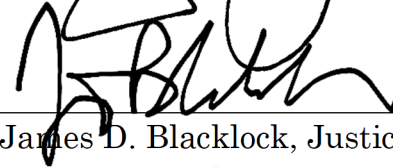
Debra H. Lehrmann, Justice



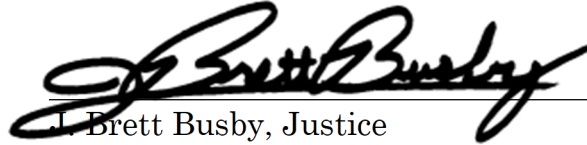
Jeffrey S. Boyd, Justice



John P. Devine, Justice



James D. Blacklock, Justice



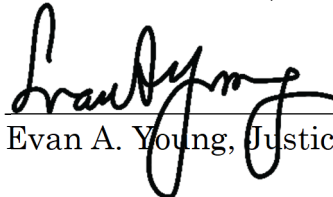
J. Brett Busby, Justice



Jane N. Bland, Justice



Rebeca A. Huddle, Justice



Evan A. Young, Justice

EXHIBIT A

TEXAS RULES OF JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

Rule 7. Administrative Responsibilities. (Clean Version)

Rule 7.1. All Courts.

(a) *Court Confidentiality Policy Required.* A court, including an appellate, district, statutory county, business, statutory probate, constitutional county, justice, and municipal court, must adopt a policy governing court confidentiality.

(b) *Policy Contents.* The policy must:

- (1) define who the policy applies to;
- (2) define confidential information;
- (3) impose a duty of confidentiality on all court staff that continues after employment at the court ends;
- (4) address when, if ever, the disclosure of confidential information is authorized;
- (5) provide the language of relevant laws, including section 21.013 of the Texas Government Code and section 39.06 of the Texas Penal Code;
- (6) address negligent or accidental disclosure of confidential information;
- (7) warn of potential penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information, including:
 - (A) referral to relevant law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution;
 - (B) termination of employment;
 - (C) for attorneys, referral to the State Bar of Texas for discipline;
 - (D) for law students, referral to the Texas Board of Law Examiners for consideration in determining eligibility to practice law in Texas; and

EXHIBIT A

(8) require all court staff to acknowledge receipt of the policy in writing.

(c) *Distribution and Training Required.* The court must:

(1) for all new court staff members, provide the policy and train on it before the new staff member begins any substantive work for the court;

(2) provide the policy to all existing court staff at least biannually.

Rule 7.2. District, Statutory County, and Business Courts.

A district, statutory county, or business court judge must:

(a) diligently discharge the administrative responsibilities of the office;

(b) rule on a case within three months after the case is taken under advisement;

(c) if an election contest or a suit for the removal of a local official is filed in the judge's court, request the presiding judge to assign another judge who is not a resident of the county to dispose of the suit;

(d) on motion by either party in a disciplinary action against an attorney, request the presiding judge to assign another judge who is not a resident of the administrative region where the action is pending to dispose of the case;

(e) request the presiding judge to assign another judge of the administrative region to hear a motion relating to the recusal or disqualification of the judge from a case pending in his court; and

(f) to the extent consistent with due process, consider using methods to expedite the disposition of cases on the docket of the court, including:

(1) adherence to firm trial dates with strict continuance policies;

(2) the use of teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other available means in lieu of personal appearance for motion hearings, pretrial conferences, scheduling, and other appropriate court proceedings;

EXHIBIT A

(3) pretrial conferences to encourage settlements and to narrow trial issues;

(4) taxation of costs and imposition of other sanctions authorized by the Rules of Civil Procedure against attorneys or parties filing frivolous motions or pleadings or abusing discovery procedures; and

(5) local rules, consistently applied, to regulate docketing procedures and timely pleadings, discovery, and motions.

Rule 7. Administrative Responsibilities. (Redline)

Rule 7.1. All Courts.

(a) Court Confidentiality Policy Required. A court, including an appellate court, district court, statutory county court, business, statutory probate court, constitutional county court, justice court, and municipal court, must adopt a policy governing court confidentiality.

(b) Policy Contents. The policy must:

(1) define who the policy applies to;

(2) define confidential information;

(3) impose a duty of confidentiality on all court staff that continues after employment at the court ends;

(4) address when, if ever, the disclosure of confidential information is authorized;

(5) provide the language of relevant laws, including section 21.013 of the Texas Government Code and section 39.06 of the Texas Penal Code;

(6) address negligent or accidental disclosure of confidential information;

(7) warn of potential penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information, including:

(A) referral to relevant law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution;

EXHIBIT A

(B) termination of employment;

(C) for attorneys, referral to the State Bar of Texas for discipline;

(D) for law students, referral to the Texas Board of Law Examiners for consideration in determining eligibility to practice law in Texas; and

(8) require all court staff to acknowledge receipt of the policy in writing.

(c) *Distribution and Training Required.* The court must:

(1) for all new court staff members, provide the policy and train on it before the new staff member begins any substantive work for the court;

(2) provide the policy to all existing court staff at least biannually.

Rule 7.2. District, ~~and~~ Statutory County, and Business Courts.

A district ~~court, or~~ statutory county ~~court, or business court~~ judge must:

- (a) diligently discharge the administrative responsibilities of the office;
- (b) rule on a case within three months after the case is taken under advisement;
- (c) if an election contest or a suit for the removal of a local official is filed in the judge's court, request the presiding judge to assign another judge who is not a resident of the county to dispose of the suit;
- (d) on motion by either party in a disciplinary action against an attorney, request the presiding judge to assign another judge who is not a resident of the administrative region where the action is pending to dispose of the case;
- (e) request the presiding judge to assign another judge of the administrative region to hear a motion relating to the recusal or disqualification of the judge from a case pending in his court; and
- (f) to the extent consistent with due process, consider using methods to expedite the disposition of cases on the docket of the court, including:

EXHIBIT A

(1) adherence to firm trial dates with strict continuance policies;

(2) the use of teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other available means in lieu of personal appearance for motion hearings, pretrial conferences, scheduling, and other appropriate court proceedings;

(3) pretrial conferences to encourage settlements and to narrow trial issues;

(4) taxation of costs and imposition of other sanctions authorized by the Rules of Civil Procedure against attorneys or parties filing frivolous motions or pleadings or abusing discovery procedures; and

(5) local rules, consistently applied, to regulate docketing procedures and timely pleadings, discovery, and motions.