INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMPLETION OF
A BLANK FAMILY LAW PETITION

The blank petition that is attached to this instruction sheet may be used to make a request for judicial action in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Tampa, Florida. **This petition should only be used when you are certain that a more suitable form has not yet been approved by the Florida Supreme Court.** Court approved form petitions are available for the following causes of action, and should be utilized instead of the blank petition (these approved forms can be found at the Florida State Courts Self-Help website):

- Petition for Simplified Dissolution of Marriage - Form 12.901(a)
- Petition for Dissolution of Marriage with Dependent or Minor Child(ren) – Form 12.901(b)(1)
- Petition for Dissolution of Marriage with Property but No Dependent or Minor Child(ren) – Form 12.901(b)(2)
- Petition for Dissolution of Marriage with No Dependent or Minor Child(ren) or Property – Form 12.901(b)(3)
- Petition for Support Unconnected with Dissolution of Marriage with Dependent or Minor Child(ren)- Form 12.904(a)
- Petition for Support Unconnected With Dissolution of Marriage with No Dependent or Minor Child(ren) – Form 12.904(b)
- Supplemental Petition to Modify Parenting Plan/Time-Sharing Schedule and Other Relief - Form 12.905(a)
- Supplemental Petition for Modification of Child Support. - Form 12.905(b)
- Supplemental Petition for Modification of Alimony – Form 12.905(c)
- Supplemental Petition for Temporary Modification of Parenting Issues for Child(ren) of Parent Activated, Deployed, or Temporarily Assigned to Military Service – Form 12.905(d)
- Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Domestic Violence - Form12.980(a)
- Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Repeat Violence - Form 12.980(f)
- Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Dating Violence – Form 12.980(n)
- Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Sexual Violence – Form 12.980(s)
- Joint Petition for Adoption by Stepparent- Form 12.981(b)(1)
- Petition for Adoption of Adult by Stepparent – Form 12.981(c)(1)
- Petition for Adoption Information - Form 12.981(d)(1)
- Petition for Change of Name (Adult) – Form 12.982(a)
- Petition for Change of Name (Minor Child(ren) – Form 12.982(c)
- Petition for Change of Name (Family) – Form 12.982(f)
- Petition to Determine Paternity and for Related Relief – Form 12.983

Before using the blank petition, you need to determine whether you should file a petition or a motion. A petition is the pleading that begins a lawsuit, or reopens a closed lawsuit. You must use a petition to begin a lawsuit against someone, or to modify a previous court order. A motion is used to

make a specific request for a court order during the course of a pending lawsuit after a petition has already been filed, or to ask the court to enforce a previous court order or find someone in contempt of court.

If you decide to use the attached blank petition, you must set forth your current legal problem or concern in the blank numbered paragraphs. Then, in the "Wherefore" section, you must set forth exactly what you want the court to order. The court generally cannot order something for your benefit, unless you specifically request what you want the court to order. After fully stating your legal problem and your request for a court order, you must sign the petition in front of a notary public, who then must notarize the petition.

You will need to notify the other party of the pending lawsuit against them once you file your petition. This notification will be achieved through personal service of the documents upon the other party. In order to do this, you will need to complete a "Summons on Personal Service on an Individual". (Form 12.910(a)); and a "Process Service Memorandum" (Form 12.910(b)).

When you are ready to file the petition, make enough extra copies so that you have a copy for your files, and so that each party to the action can be personally served with a copy of the petition by a certified process server. The original petition and accompanying documents must be filed with the court. In most cases, the court will charge you a fee for filing your petition.

As stated earlier, you are also required to have your petition served personally upon the other party. To do this, you will need to pay either the Sheriff's Office or a private process server to personally serve the other party with process (which includes a summons and a copy of your petition). Please check with the Clerk's Office to determine how much you have to pay in order to file the petition and also to have each party to the action served with process.

If you choose to file your petition in person, you may file at the following locations:

Edgecomb Courthouse
800 Twiggs Street, Room 101,
Tampa, FL 33602 Monday - Friday
(8 AM - 5 PM)

Brandon Regional Service Center
311 Pauls Drive
Suite 110
Brandon, FL 33511 Monday - Friday
(8 AM - 5 PM)

SouthShore Regional Service Center
410 30th St. S.E.
Ruskin, FL 33570 Monday - Friday
(8 AM - 5 PM)

Plant City Courthouse
302 North Michigan Avenue
Plant City, FL 33563 Monday - Friday
(8 AM - 5 PM).

If you choose to file by mail, you should send your documents to: Clerk of the Court, P.O. Box 3450, Tampa, Florida 33601. The phone number for the Family Law Department is 276-8100 extension 3450. If you have questions or concerns about your petition that you cannot resolve yourself, it is strongly recommended that you consult with a lawyer before taking any further action.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

_____, Case No. _____
Petitioner

AND

Division _____

_____.
Respondent.

PETITION TO/FOR_____

1._____

_____

_____.

2._____

_____

_____.

3._____

_____

_____.

WHEREFORE petitioner requests the court to _____

_____

_____.

_____
Signature of Petitioner

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH)

Sworn to and subscribed before me on _____20_____
by:_____
Petitioner

_____
NOTARY PUBLIC, STATE OF FLORIDA

____Personally known
____Produced I. D.
Type of identification

_____
Print, type or stamp commission