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United States District Court: Norther District of Georgia: Introduction by the Honorable William C. O'Kelley, Chief United States District Judge, Northern District of Georgia

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
1942 UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE
75 SPRING STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

October 21, 1992

Republished on the following pages are portions of the Report of the Advisory Group for the Northern District of Georgia, the court's Civil Justice Expense and Delay Reduction Plan, and new and amended Local Rules of Procedure for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia implementing the Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990, 28 U.S.C. §§ 471-482 (1992). The Northern District of Georgia, one of ten pilot districts under the Act, was required to develop a Plan that would "facilitate deliberate adjudication of civil cases on the merits, monitor discovery, improve litigation management, and ensure just, speedy, and inexpensive resolution of civil disputes."

On behalf of this court, I appointed an Advisory Group to study court procedures and records and based on its review, to make recommendations that it believed would improve the management and determination of civil litigation in this court. After receiving the Report of the Advisory Group, the court considered and enlarged upon the recommendations of the Advisory Group, and on December 17, 1991, adopted its Civil Justice Expense and Delay Reduction Plan. The following new and amended local rules adopted as part of the Plan went into effect on July 1, 1992:

Local Rules

201-2	Mandatory Interrogatories for All Parties
220-1(a)	Filing of Motions
225-1	Discovery Period
235-2	Settlement Conferences
235-3	Preliminary Statement and Scheduling Order
235-4(b)(26)	Consolidated Pretrial Order
250-1	Settlement Conferences

Appendix B:

Form I	Answers to Mandatory Interrogatories (Form I, titled "Settlement Certificate," deleted)
Form II	Joint Preliminary Statement and Scheduling Order

Form III Pretrial Order (Item 26)

Appendix F: (New)

Assignment of Categories of Civil Action to Tracks for Purposes of Discovery

The provisions of these new and amended local rules allow the court to better manage cases filed in the Northern District of Georgia and to expedite the attorneys' presentations of cases. The amendments are designed to encourage cooperation among attorneys, to promote settlements when settlement is appropriate, and to identify cases with special needs so that the court can become involved at an earlier state in the life of the case.

Examples of the court's new procedures are the local rules requiring parties to answer mandatory interrogatories,[1] adding a provision to the Preliminary Statement requiring attorneys to analyze discovery needs at the beginning of the case,[2] creating 0-, 4-, and 8-month discovery tracks,[3] and setting trial dates within eighteen months after filing of the complaint for cases in the four and eight months discovery tracks.[4] The Plan also sets forth guidelines for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs. Establishment of these ADR programs is dependent on government funding. Because such funds are not presently available, implementation of the ADR programs has been delayed indefinitely.

The procedural changes made in this court and in the other pilot districts and the courts' experiences with these new procedures are being continuously monitored and will ultimately serve as the basis for nationwide innovations in the conduct of civil litigation in the federal trial courts. I commend the Georgia State University Law Review for focusing attention on these reforms and express the court's appreciation for the Law Review's assistance in publicizing this court's recent procedural changes.

WILLIAM C. O'KELLEY
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

1. Local Rule 201-2; *see* 28 U.S.C. § 473(a)(4).
2. Local Rule 235-3(8); *see* 28 U.S.C. § 473(a)(3).
3. Local Rule 225-1(a); Local Rules, Appendix F; *see* 28 U.S.C. § 473(a)(1).
4. Local Rule 235-3(12); *see* 28 U.S.C. § 473(a)(2)(B).