

# **Motion Practice in N.J. Municipal Court**

## **Lesson Plan**

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## 1:6-2. Form of Motion; Hearing

(a) Generally. An application to the court for an order shall be by motion, or in special cases, by order to show cause. A motion, other than for bail pursuant to *R. 3:26-2(d)* or one made during a trial or hearing, shall be by notice of motion in writing unless the court permits it to be made orally. Every motion shall state the time and place when it is to be presented to the court, the grounds upon which it is made and the nature of the relief sought, and, as to motions filed in the Law Division-Civil Part only, the discovery end date or a statement that no such date has been assigned. The motion shall be accompanied by a proposed form of order in accordance with *R. 3:1-4(a)* or *R. 4:42-1(e)*, as applicable. The form of order shall note whether the motion was opposed or unopposed. If the motion or response thereto relies on facts not of record or not subject of judicial notice, it shall be supported by affidavit made in compliance with *R. 1:6-6*. The motion shall be deemed uncontested and there shall be no right to argue orally in opposition unless responsive papers are timely filed and served stating with particularity the basis of the opposition to the relief sought. If the motion is withdrawn or the matter settled, counsel shall forthwith inform the court.

#### 7:7-1. Pleadings; Objections

Pleadings in municipal court actions shall consist only of the complaint. A defense or objection capable of determination without trial of the general issue shall be raised before trial by motion to dismiss or for other appropriate relief, except that a motion to dismiss based upon lack of jurisdiction or the unconstitutionality of a municipal ordinance may be made at any time.

## 7:7-2. Motions

(a) How Made. Except as otherwise provided by R. 7:5-2 (motion to suppress), motions in the municipal court and answers to motions, if any, shall be made orally, unless the court directs that the motion and answer be in writing. Oral testimony or affidavits in support of or in opposition to the motion may be required by the court in its discretion.

(b) Hearings. A motion made before trial shall be determined before trial unless the court, in the interest of justice, directs that it be heard during or after trial.

(c) Effect of Determination of Motion. Except as otherwise provided by R. 7:6-2(c) (conditional pleas), if a motion is determined adversely to the defendant, the defendant shall be permitted to plead, if a plea has not already been entered. If a plea has been entered, the defendant may be permitted to stand trial as soon as the adverse determination on the motion is made. If an objection or defense specified in R. 7:7-1 is sustained and is not otherwise remediable, the court shall order the complaint dismissed. If the court dismisses the complaint and the defendant is held in custody on that complaint, the court shall order the defendant released.

## 7:7-7. Discovery and Inspection

(a) Scope. If the government is represented by the municipal or a private prosecutor, discovery shall be available to the parties only as provided by this rule, unless the court otherwise orders. In the absence of a municipal or private prosecutor, discovery shall be available to the parties in the manner directed by the court. All discovery requests by defendant shall be served on the municipal prosecutor, who shall be responsible for making government discovery available to the defendant. If the matter is, however, not being prosecuted by the municipal prosecutor, the municipal prosecutor shall transmit defendant's discovery requests to the prosecutor, or, if there is no prosecutor, the municipal prosecutor shall transmit defendant's court ordered discovery requests to the complaining witness.

(b) Discovery by Defendant. In all cases involving a consequence of magnitude or when ordered by the court, the defendant, on written notice to the municipal prosecutor or private prosecutor, shall be allowed to inspect, copy, and photograph or to be provided with copies of any relevant:

- (1) books, tangible objects, papers or documents obtained from or belonging to the defendant;
- (2) records of statements or confessions, signed or unsigned, by the defendant or copies thereof, and a summary of any admissions or declarations against penal interest made by the defendant that are known to the prosecution but not recorded;
- (3) grand jury proceedings recorded pursuant to R. 3:6-6;
- (4) results or reports of physical or mental examinations and of scientific tests or experiments made in connection with the matter or copies of these results or reports, that are within the possession, custody or control of the prosecuting attorney;
- (5) reports or records of defendant's prior convictions;
- (6) books, originals or copies of papers and documents, or tangible objects, buildings or places that are within the possession, custody or control of the government;
- (7) names and addresses of any persons whom the prosecuting attorney knows to have relevant evidence or information, including a designation by the prosecuting attorney as to which of those persons the prosecuting attorney may call as witnesses;

(8) record of statements, signed or unsigned, by the persons described by subsection (7) of this rule or by co-defendants within the possession, custody or control of the prosecuting attorney, and any relevant record of prior conviction of those persons;

(9) police reports that are within the possession, custody or control of the prosecuting attorney;

(10) warrants, that have been completely executed, and any papers accompanying them, as described by R. 7:5-1(a);

(11) the names and addresses of each person whom the prosecuting attorney expects to call to trial as an expert witness, the expert's qualifications, the subject matter on which the expert is expected to testify, a copy of the report, if any, of the expert witness, or if no report was prepared, a statement of the facts and opinions to which the expert is expected to testify and a summary of the grounds for each opinion. If this information is requested and not furnished, the expert witness may, upon application by the defendant, be barred from testifying at trial.

(c) Discovery by the State. In all cases involving a consequence of magnitude or when ordered by the court, the municipal prosecutor or private prosecutor, on written notice to the defendant, shall be allowed to inspect, copy, and photograph or to be provided with copies of any relevant:

(1) results or reports of physical or mental examinations and of scientific tests or experiments made in connection with the matter or copies of these results or reports within the possession, custody or control of the defendant or defense counsel;

(2) any relevant books, originals or copies of papers and other documents or tangible objects, buildings or places within the possession, custody or control of the defendant or defense counsel;

(3) the names and addresses of those persons known to defendant who may be called as witnesses at trial and their written statements, if any, including memoranda reporting or summarizing their oral statements;

(4) written statements, if any, including any memoranda reporting or summarizing the oral statements, made by any witnesses whom the government may call as a witness at trial; and

(5) the names and addresses of each person whom the defense expects to call to trial as an expert witness, the expert's qualifications, the subject matter on which the expert is expected to testify, and a copy of the report, if any, of such expert witness, or if no report is prepared, a statement of the facts and opinions to which the expert is expected to testify and a summary of the grounds for each opinion. If

this information is requested and not furnished, the expert may, upon application by the prosecuting attorney, be barred from testifying at trial.

(d) Documents Not Subject to Discovery. This rule does not require discovery of a party's work product, consisting of internal reports, memoranda or documents made by that party or by that party's attorney or agents, in connection with the investigation, prosecution or defense of the matter. Nor does it require discovery by the government of records or statements, signed or unsigned, by defendant made to defendant's attorney or agents.

(e) Protective Orders.

(1) Grounds. Upon motion and for good cause shown, the court may at any time order that the discovery or inspection, copying or photographing sought pursuant to this rule be denied, restricted, or deferred or make such other order as is appropriate. In determining the motion, the court may consider the following: protection of witnesses and others from physical harm, threats of harm, bribes, economic reprisals and other intimidation; maintenance of such secrecy regarding informants as is required for effective investigation of criminal activity; protection of confidential relationships and privileges recognized by law; and any other relevant considerations.

(2) Procedures. The court may permit the showing of good cause to be made, in whole or in part, in the form of a written statement to be inspected by the court alone. If the court enters a protective order, the entire text of the statement shall be sealed and preserved in the court's records, to be made available only to the appellate court in the event of an appeal.

(f) Time and Procedure. A defense request for discovery shall be made contemporaneously with the entry of appearance by the defendant's attorney, who shall submit a copy of the appearance directly to the municipal prosecutor. If the defendant is pro se, any requests for discovery shall be made in writing and submitted by the defendant directly to the municipal prosecutor. The municipal prosecutor shall respond to the discovery request in accordance with paragraph (b) of this rule within 10 days after receiving the request. Unless otherwise ordered by the judge, the defendant shall provide the government with discovery, as provided by paragraph (c) of this rule within 20 days of the prosecuting attorney's compliance with the defendant's discovery request.

(g) Continuing Duty to Disclose; Failure to Comply. If a party who has complied with this rule discovers, either before or during trial, additional material or names of witnesses previously requested or ordered subject to discovery or inspection, that party shall promptly notify the other party or that party's attorney of the existence of these additional materials and witnesses. If at any time during the course of the proceedings it is brought to the attention of the court that a party has failed to comply with this rule or with an order issued pursuant to this rule, the

court may order that party to permit the discovery, inspection, copying or photographing of materials not previously disclosed, grant a continuance, prohibit the party from introducing in evidence the material not disclosed or enter such other order as it deems appropriate.

## 7:10-2. Post-Conviction Relief

(a) Petition for Relief. A person convicted of an offense may, pursuant to this rule, file with the municipal court administrator of the municipality in which the conviction took place, a petition for post-conviction relief captioned in the action in which the conviction was entered.

(b) Limitations and Exclusiveness.

(1) A petition to correct an illegal sentence may be filed at any time.

(2) A petition based on any other grounds shall not be accepted for filing more than five years after entry of the judgment of conviction or imposition of the sentence sought to be attacked, unless it alleges facts showing that the delay in filing was due to defendant's excusable neglect.

(3) A petition for post-conviction relief shall be the exclusive means of challenging a judgment of conviction, except as otherwise required by the Constitution of New Jersey, but it is not a substitute for appeal from a conviction or for a motion incident to the proceedings in the trial court, and may not be filed while appellate review or the filing of a motion in the municipal court is available.

(c) Grounds. A petition for post-conviction relief is cognizable if based on any of the following grounds:

(1) substantial denial in the conviction proceedings of defendant's rights under the Constitution of the United States or the Constitution or laws of New Jersey;

(2) lack of jurisdiction of the court to impose the judgment rendered on defendant's conviction;

(3) imposition of sentence in excess of or otherwise not in accordance with the sentence authorized by law; or

(4) any ground previously available as a basis for collateral attack on a conviction by habeas corpus or any other common law or statutory remedy.

(d) Bar of Grounds Not Raised in Prior Proceedings; Exceptions.

(1) The defendant is barred from asserting in a proceeding under this rule any grounds for relief not raised in a prior proceeding under this rule, or in the proceedings resulting in the conviction, or in a post-conviction proceeding brought and decided prior to the adoption of R. 3:22-4, or in any appeal taken in any of those proceedings, unless the court on motion or at the hearing finds that:

(A) the grounds for relief not previously asserted could not reasonably have been raised in any prior proceeding;

(B) enforcement of the bar would result in fundamental injustice; or

(C) denial of relief would be contrary to the Constitution of the United States or of New Jersey.

(2) A prior adjudication on the merits of any grounds for relief asserted in the petition is conclusive, whether made in the proceedings resulting in the conviction or any prior post-conviction proceeding, or in any appeal taken from those proceedings.

(e) Assignment of Counsel. A defendant may annex to the petition a sworn statement asserting indigency in the form (Form 5A) prescribed by the Administrative Director of the Courts, which form shall be furnished by the municipal court administrator. If the court finds that the defendant is indigent as herein provided, and that the original conviction involved a consequence of magnitude, it shall order counsel assigned to represent defendant and shall further order a transcript of testimony of any proceeding shown to be necessary in establishing the grounds of relief asserted. Absent a showing of good cause, which shall not include lack of merit of the petition, the court shall not substitute new assigned counsel. If counsel is assigned, the court shall not thereafter substitute new assigned counsel absent a showing of good cause, which shall not, however, include lack of merit of the petition.

(f) Procedure.

(1) The municipal court administrator shall make an entry of the filing of the petition in the proceedings in which the conviction took place, and if it is filed pro se, shall forthwith transmit a copy to the municipal prosecutor. An attorney filing the petition shall serve a copy on the municipal prosecutor before filing.

(2) The petition shall be verified by defendant and shall set forth with specificity the facts upon which the claim for relief is based, the legal grounds of the complaint asserted and the particular relief sought. The petition shall include the following information:

(A) the date, docket number and contents of the complaint upon which the conviction is based and the municipality where filed;

(B) the sentence or judgment complained of, the date it was imposed or entered, and the name of the municipal court judge then presiding;

(C) any appellate proceedings brought from the conviction, with copies of the appellate opinions attached;

(D) any prior post-conviction relief proceedings relating to the same conviction, including the date and nature of the claim and the date and nature of disposition, and whether an appeal was taken from those proceedings and, if so, the judgment on appeal;

(E) the name of counsel, if any, representing defendant in any prior proceeding relating to the conviction, and whether counsel was retained or assigned; and

(F) whether and where defendant is presently confined.

A separate memorandum of law may be submitted.

(G) In addition, the moving papers in support of such an application shall include, if available, records related to the underlying conviction, including, but not limited to, copies of all complaints, applications for assignment of counsel, waiver forms and transcripts of the defendant's first appearance, entry of guilty plea and all other municipal court proceedings related to the conviction sought to be challenged. The petitioner shall account for any unavailable records by way of written documentation from the municipal court administrator or the custodian of records, as the case may be.

(3) Amendments of the petitions shall be liberally allowed. Assigned counsel may, as a matter of course, serve and file an amended petition within 25 days after assignment. Within 30 days after service of a copy of the petition or amended petition, the municipal prosecutor shall serve and file an answer to the petition or move on ten days' notice for dismissal. If the motion for dismissal is denied, the government's answer shall be filed within fifteen days after entry of the order denying the dismissal.

(4) A defendant in custody shall be present in court if oral testimony is adduced on a material issue of fact within the defendant's personal knowledge. A defendant in custody may otherwise be present in court only in the judge's discretion.

(5) In making a final determination on a petition, either on motion for dismissal or after hearing, the court shall state separately its findings of fact and conclusions of law and shall enter judgment or sentence in the conviction proceedings and any appropriate provisions as to rearraignment, retrial, custody, bail, discharge, correction of sentence or as may otherwise be required.

(g) Petition to Obtain Relief from an Enhanced Custodial Term Based on a Prior Conviction

(1) Venue. A post-conviction petition to obtain relief from an enhanced custodial term based on a prior conviction shall be brought in the court where the prior conviction was entered.

(2) Time Limitations. The time limitations for filing petitions for post-conviction relief under this section shall be the same as those set forth in Rule 3:22-12.

(3) Procedure. A petition for post-conviction relief sought under this section shall be in writing and shall conform to the requirements of Rule 7:10-2(f). In addition, the moving papers in support of such an application shall include, if available, records related to the underlying conviction, including, but not limited to, copies of all complaints, applications for assignment of counsel, waiver forms and transcripts of the defendant's first appearance, entry of guilty plea and all other municipal court proceedings related to the conviction sought to be challenged . The petitioner shall account for any unavailable records by way of written documentation from the municipal court administrator or the custodian of records, as the case may be.

(4) Appeal. Appeals from a denial of post-conviction relief from the effect of a prior conviction shall be combined with any appeal from proceedings involving the repeat offense. Appeals by the State may be taken under R. 3:23-2(a).

#### 7:8-5. Dismissal

If the complaint is not moved on the day for trial, the court may direct that it be heard on a specified return date and a notice thereof be served on the complaining witness, all defendants and all other known witnesses. If the complaint is not moved on that date, the court may order the complaint dismissed. A complaint may also be dismissed by the court for good cause at any time on its own motion, on the motion of the State, county or municipality or on defendant's motion. On dismissal, any warrant issued shall be recalled, and the matter shall not be reopened on the same complaint except to correct a manifest injustice.

#### 1:7-4. Findings by the Court in Non-jury Trials and on Motions

(a) Required Findings. The court shall, by an opinion or memorandum decision, either written or oral, find the facts and state its conclusions of law thereon in all actions tried without a jury, on every motion decided by a written order that is appealable as of right, and also as required by R. 3:29 The court shall thereupon enter or direct the entry of the appropriate judgment.

(b) Motion for Amendment. On motion made not later than 20 days after service of the final order or judgment upon all parties by the party obtaining it, the court may grant a rehearing or may, on the papers submitted, amend or add to its findings and may amend the final order or judgment accordingly, but the failure of a party to make such motion or to object to the findings shall not preclude that party's right thereafter to question the sufficiency of the evidence to support the findings. The motion to amend the findings, which may be made with a motion for a new trial, shall state with specificity the basis on which it is made, including a statement of the matters or controlling decisions that counsel believes the court has overlooked or on which it has erred. Motions for reconsideration of interlocutory orders shall be determined pursuant to R. 4:42-2.

#### 7:9-4. Reduction or Change of Sentence

(a) Time. The court, in its discretion, may reduce or change a sentence, either on its own motion or on the motion of defendant, which may be either oral or written, at any time during which the court retains jurisdiction over the matter.

(b) Procedure. All changes of sentence shall be made in open court upon notice to the defendant and the prosecuting attorney. An appropriate order setting forth the revised sentence and specifying the change made and the reasons for the change shall be entered on the record.

## 7:5-2. Motion to Suppress Evidence

(a) Jurisdiction. The municipal court shall entertain motions to suppress evidence seized without a warrant in matters within its trial jurisdiction on notice to the prosecuting attorney and, if the county prosecutor is not the prosecuting attorney, also to the county prosecutor. A motion to suppress evidence seized pursuant to a warrant and motions to suppress evidence seized without a warrant, but in matters beyond the trial jurisdiction of the municipal court, shall be made and heard in the Superior Court.

(b) Procedure. Written briefs in support of and opposition to the motion to suppress shall be filed only in the discretion of the judge, who shall determine the briefing schedule, if briefs are permitted. All motions to suppress shall be heard before the start of the trial.

(c) Order; Stay.

(1) Order Granting Suppression. An order granting a motion to suppress evidence shall be entered immediately upon decision of the motion. Within ten days after its entry, the municipal court administrator shall provide a copy of the order to all parties and, if the county prosecutor is not the prosecuting attorney, also to the county prosecutor. All further proceedings in the municipal court shall be stayed pending a timely appeal by the State, pursuant to R. 3:24. The property that is the subject of the suppression order shall, if not otherwise subject to lawful detention, be returned to the person entitled to it only after exhaustion by the State of its right to appeal.

(2) Order Denying Suppression. An order denying suppression may be reviewed on appeal from an ensuing judgment of conviction pursuant to R. 3:23 whether the judgment was entered on a guilty plea or on a finding of guilt following trial.

(d) Waiver. Unless otherwise ordered by the court for good cause, defendant's failure to make a pretrial motion to the municipal court pursuant to this rule shall constitute a waiver of any objection during trial to the admission of the evidence on the ground that the evidence was unlawfully obtained.

7:5-3. Search and Seizure Without a Warrant

R. 7:5 shall not be construed to make illegal a lawful search and seizure executed without a warrant.

7:6-2. Pleas, Plea Agreements

(b) Withdrawal of Plea. A motion to withdraw a plea of guilty shall be made before sentencing, but the court may permit it to be made thereafter to correct a manifest injustice.

#### 7:10-1. New Trial

On defendant's motion, the court may, pursuant to the time limitations of this rule, grant the defendant a new trial if required in the interest of justice. The court may vacate the judgment if already entered, take additional testimony, and direct the entry of a new judgment. A motion for a new trial, based on the ground of newly discovered evidence, shall be made within two years after entry of a final judgment. A motion for a new trial on the grounds of fraud or lack of jurisdiction may be made at any time. A motion for a new trial, based on any other grounds, shall be made within twenty days after the entry of judgment of conviction or within such further time as the court fixes during the twenty-day period.

1:12-1. Cause for Disqualification; On the Court's Motion

The judge of any court shall be disqualified on the court's own motion and shall not sit in any matter, if the judge

(a) is by blood or marriage the second cousin of or is more closely related to any party to the action;

(b) is by blood or marriage the first cousin of or is more closely related to any attorney in the action. This proscription shall extend to the partners, employers, employees or office associates of any such attorney except where the Chief Justice for good cause otherwise permits;

(c) has been attorney of record or counsel in the action; or

(d) has given an opinion upon a matter in question in the action; or

(e) is interested in the event of the action; or

(f) when there is any other reason which might preclude a fair and unbiased hearing and judgment, or which might reasonably lead counsel or the parties to believe so.

Paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) shall not prevent a judge from sitting because of having given an opinion in another action in which the same matter in controversy came in question or given an opinion on any question in controversy in the pending action in the course of previous proceedings therein, or because the board of chosen freeholders of a county or the municipality in which the judge resides or is liable to be taxed are or may be parties to the record or otherwise interested.

RULE 3:24. APPEALS FROM ORDERS IN COURTS OF LIMITED CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

- (a) Either the prosecuting attorney or the defendant may seek leave to appeal to the Superior Court, Law Division from an interlocutory order entered before trial by a court of limited criminal jurisdiction.
- (b) The prosecuting attorney may appeal, as of right, a pre-trial or post-trial judgment dismissing a complaint and, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a), an order suppressing evidence entered in a court of limited criminal jurisdiction.
- (c) Appeals pursuant to this rule shall be taken within 20 days after the entry of such order by filing with the Superior Court, Law Division in the county of venue a notice of motion for leave to appeal under paragraph (a) or the notice of appeal under paragraph (b), except that an appeal from the grant of a motion to suppress shall be taken within 30 days after the entry of the order. A copy of the notice shall be filed with the clerk of the court below, and a copy thereof shall be served on the prosecuting attorney as defined by R. 3:23-9 or on the defendant or defendant's attorney, as appropriate, at least 10 days prior to the return date fixed therein. The original filed with the court and the copy served shall have annexed thereto copies of all papers of record and any affidavits essential to the determination of the motion and shall be accompanied by a brief. The respondent shall file and serve any answering brief and other papers in opposition at least 3 days before the hearing. With respect to interlocutory applications, the court may grant or deny leave to appeal on terms and may elect simultaneously to grant the motion and decide the appeal on the merits on the papers before it, or it may direct the filing of additional briefs or make such other order as it deems appropriate for the expeditious disposition of the matter. A copy of any order or judgment entered by it shall be promptly transmitted to the clerk of the court below.
- (d) On appeal by the State from the grant of a motion to suppress the matter shall be tried de novo on the record. In cases in which the Attorney General or county prosecutor did not appear in the municipal court, the State shall be permitted to supplement the record and to present any evidence or testimony concerning the legality of the contested search and seizure. The defendant shall be permitted to offer related evidence in opposition to the supplementary evidence offered by the State.

7:13-2. Stay

Notwithstanding R. 3:23-5, a sentence or a portion of a sentence may be stayed by the court in which the conviction was had or to which the appeal is taken on such terms as the court deems appropriate.