SOFTWARE & TECH

Motion To Stay Eviction Florida

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582282863369

Understanding a Motion to Stay Eviction in Florida

Facing eviction is a stressful and often overwhelming experience, especially in a state like Florida where landlord-tenant laws are strictly enforced. However, the legal system provides certain safeguards for tenants who are trying to prevent or delay the removal process. One of the most powerful, yet frequently misunderstood, tools available is the **Motion to Stay Eviction Florida**procedure. This legal document asks the court to temporarily halt—or "stay"—the eviction process, giving the tenant a crucial window of time to address the underlying issues, appeal a judgment, or simply find new housing without the immediate threat of a sheriff's lockout.

A motion to stay is not a permanent solution, but it can be a vital lifeline. In Florida, evictions move quickly—often within a matter of weeks from the first notice to the final writ of possession. Knowing how and when to file this motion can make the difference between being forced onto the street and having the time to negotiate with your landlord, secure emergency rental assistance, or prepare for relocation. This article provides a comprehensive walkthrough of everything you need to know about filing a motion to stay eviction in Florida, including legal grounds, procedural steps, and practical strategies for success.

What Is a Motion to Stay Eviction?

A motion to stay eviction is a formal request made to the court to pause the enforcement of an eviction order. In Florida, once a judge issues a final judgment for eviction, the landlord can request a "writ of possession," which authorizes the sheriff to physically remove the tenant and their belongings. A **Motion to Stay Eviction Florida** filing effectively puts that writ on hold, at least temporarily, while the court reviews the tenant's situation.

It is important to differentiate between a stay and an appeal. An appeal challenges the correctness of the eviction judgment itself, while a stay simply pauses the enforcement. Often, tenants file a motion to stay alongside an appeal or while they are working on paying back rent. The Florida Rules of Civil Procedure and Florida Statutes, particularly **Florida Statute 83.60**(the eviction statute), outline the requirements for obtaining a stay.

Legal Grounds for Filing a Motion to Stay in Florida

Not every request for a stay is automatically granted. The court will evaluate several factors, and the tenant bears the burden of proving that a stay is justified. Common legal grounds include:

- Meritorious defense: The tenant must show they have a valid legal defense against the eviction, such as the landlord failing to maintain the property (breach of implied warranty of habitability), retaliation, or improper notice.
- Likelihood of success on appeal: If the tenant has already lost in trial court but is appealing, they must demonstrate that the appeal is not frivolous and has a reasonable chance of reversing the eviction.

- Irreparable harm: The tenant must show that without a stay, they will suffer harm that cannot be compensated by money damages, such as homelessness, loss of employment, or severe health consequences.
- Bond or deposit: In many cases, the court will require the tenant to post a bond or deposit the disputed rent into the court registry as a condition for the stay. This protects the landlord's financial interest during the delay.

Additionally, under **Florida Statute 83.232**, tenants in certain subsidized or federally funded housing may have extra protections. If you are in public housing or using a Section 8 voucher, you may have additional grounds to request a stay based on procedural violations by the housing authority.

How to File a Motion to Stay Eviction in Florida

The process for filing a motion to stay varies slightly depending on whether the eviction case is still pending or a final judgment has already been entered. Here is a step-by-step guide for the most common scenario—after a judgment has been issued.

Step 1: Obtain the Necessary Forms

Florida courts do not have a single statewide form for a motion to stay. You can usually find a template at the courthouse self-help center or online through the Florida Courts website. Alternatively, many legal aid organizations provide sample motions. The document should clearly state the case name, case number, and the relief you are requesting.

Step 2: Draft the Motion

Your motion must include specific information: the date the eviction judgment was entered, the date the writ of possession was or will be issued, and the reasons you believe a stay is warranted. Attach any supporting evidence, such as proof of rent payment, photographs of uninhabitable conditions, or a copy of your notice of appeal. Be concise but thorough. Avoid emotional language—stick to facts and legal arguments.

Step 3: File with the Clerk of Court

You must file the motion in the same county where the eviction case is being heard. Visit the clerk's office in person or check if electronic filing is available for self-represented litigants. There is often a filing fee, but if you cannot afford it, you can file an **Application for Determination of Civil Indigent Status** to have the fee waived.

Step 4: Notify the Landlord

After filing, you must serve a copy of the motion on the landlord or their attorney. This is typically done by mail or hand delivery. Keep a certificate of service signed by you showing how and when you provided the copy.

Step 5: Attend the Hearing

The court will schedule a hearing on your motion. This is your opportunity to present evidence and argue why the eviction should be stayed. Be prepared to answer questions from the judge. If you do not show up, the motion will likely be denied.

Timing: When Should You File the Motion to Stay Eviction Florida?

Timing is critical. In Florida, after the judge signs the final judgment, the landlord can request a writ of possession immediately. The sheriff then typically posts a 24-hour notice before physically removing you. To be effective, a **Motion to Stay Eviction Florida**should be filed as early as possible—preferably before the writ is issued. Once the sheriff has executed the writ and locked you out, it becomes much harder to reverse the situation.

If you have appealed the eviction judgment, Florida law (Rule 9.310 of the Florida Rules of Appellate

Procedure) allows you to request a stay from the trial court or the appellate court. The trial court usually handles the initial stay request. If denied, you can ask the appellate court for emergency relief. Note that 30 days of the final judgment, but the appeal must be filed within sooner.

Emergency vs. Standard Motion to Stay

In urgent situations, you may file an **Emergency Motion to Stay**. This is appropriate when the sheriff's eviction is imminent—for example, within 24 to 48 hours. An emergency motion should clearly state why immediate action is necessary and why you could not file earlier. Many Florida courts have an emergency judge available to hear such motions even outside regular business hours.

A standard motion to stay follows the normal court calendar and may take several days to be heard. If you have time (e.g., you received a 7-day notice but the writ hasn't been issued yet), a standard motion is appropriate. However, always err on the side of urgency—delays can be fatal to your case.

What Evidence Do You Need to Include?

The strength of your motion depends on the evidence you present. Consider gathering the following documents:

- Lease agreement – to show the terms and whether you are in compliance.
- Rent receipts or bank statements – if you have paid rent, prove it. If you haven't paid, show that you have a valid reason (e.g., the property was uninhabitable).
- Notices from the landlord – such as the 3-day notice to pay rent or quit, or a 7-day notice for non-compliance.
- Photographs or videos – of mold, leaks, broken appliances, or other conditions that make the unit unsafe.
- Proof of hardship – medical records, loss of income, or documentation of your efforts to obtain rental assistance.
- Appeal documents – if you have already filed an appeal, include the notice of appeal and any supporting brief.

The more concrete your evidence, the more likely the judge will grant the stay. Vague claims without documentation are usually insufficient.

What Happens After the Motion Is Granted or Denied?

If the judge grants your **Motion to Stay Eviction Florida**, the eviction process is paused. The court will set conditions, such as requiring you to pay rent into the court registry or post a bond. You must comply strictly with these conditions; otherwise, the stay can be lifted, and the landlord can proceed with the eviction. The stay usually lasts until the underlying issue is resolved (e.g., the appeal is decided) or for a specific period set by the judge.

If your motion is denied, you have few options left. You can immediately request an emergency stay from the appellate court, but this is very difficult without an attorney. Alternatively, you may need to negotiate with the landlord to voluntarily delay the eviction in exchange for a payment plan. In some counties, mediation programs are available to help tenants and landlords reach an agreement before the sheriff arrives.

Alternatives to a Motion to Stay Eviction in Florida

While a motion to stay is a powerful tool, it is not your only option. Depending on your circumstances, consider these alternatives:

- Rental assistance programs: Florida offers emergency rental assistance through local government agencies and nonprofit organizations. If you can secure funding to pay the past-due rent, the landlord may

agree to withdraw the eviction or dismiss the case.

- Bankruptcy filing: Filing for Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 bankruptcy triggers an automatic stay that halts most collection actions, including eviction. However, this is a drastic step with long-term consequences and should only be considered after consulting a bankruptcy attorney.
- Mediation: Many Florida counties have court-annexed mediation programs for landlord-tenant disputes. A neutral mediator can help you and your landlord reach a settlement that avoids eviction.
- Voluntary move-out: If the eviction seems inevitable, negotiating a “cash for keys” agreement (where the landlord pays you to move out by a certain date) can save you a formal eviction on your record and give you time to find new housing.

None of these alternatives are a substitute for a well-prepared motion to stay, but they can be used in combination to maximize your chances of avoiding homelessness.

Practical Tips for Tenants in Florida

1. Act quickly. The moment you receive a summons or a notice of eviction, start preparing your motion. Do not wait until the sheriff is at the door.
2. Seek legal help. Florida legal aid organizations, such as Florida Legal Services or your local bar association’s pro bono program, may be able to provide free or low-cost assistance, especially if you have a strong defense.
3. Keep a paper trail. Document every communication with your landlord, every payment, and every issue with the property. This will be invaluable in court.
4. Know your rights. Florida law prohibits self-help evictions (e.g., landlords changing locks or shutting off utilities without a court order). If your landlord tries this, you may have additional claims against them.
5. Be honest with the court. Judges are more likely to grant a stay to a tenant who appears reasonable and cooperative, rather than one who appears to be gaming the system.

Conclusion

Filing a **Motion to Stay Eviction Florida**is a legitimate and often necessary step for tenants who need more time to fight an unjust eviction or to transition to new housing without becoming homeless. While the process can be intimidating, understanding the legal grounds, timing, and procedural requirements gives you a realistic chance of success. Remember that the court’s primary concern is fairness and compliance with the law—not punishing tenants. By presenting a well-documented, evidence-based motion and attending all hearings, you can secure a temporary reprieve that may change the outcome of your case. If you are facing eviction, do not hesitate to explore this option immediately, and consider consulting with a qualified attorney or legal aid organization to guide you through the complexities of Florida

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