



**Superior Court of California  
County of Sonoma  
Summary of Proposed Amendments to the Local Rules  
Eff. 07/01/2025**

~~abcde~~ Deleted text  
abcde New/Revised text  
abcde Unchanged text

Proposed Amendments to Local Rules

Rule 9

Rule 17

Rule 20

**PLEASE NOTE:** If a rule or a subsection to a rule does not appear in this document, it remains unchanged from the 01/01/2025 edition.

## **RULE 9 RULES APPLICABLE TO FAMILY LAW PROCEEDINGS**

### **9.11 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS (FAMILY CODE §§ 6200-6389)**

**A.** Notice ~~and Delivery of Applications~~ of the intent to file an ex-parte/emergency Request for Domestic Violence Temporary Restraining Orders (DV-100) or Request to Change or End Restraining Order (DV-300), and delivery of the application, including ~~copies of~~ all declarations, attachments, and documents ~~to be submitted intended for court review~~, must be given to the opposing party or attorney by 10:00 a.m. the day before the application is scheduled to be reviewed by the assigned judicial officer. The notice requirement can be waived by the Court if (1) notice is impossible, (2) notice would frustrate the very purpose of the order, or (3) immediate and irreparable harm could be suffered if notice were given. ~~For details s~~ See Local Form FL-040 for information for applicants. A completed FL-040 must be submitted to the Court when a request for ex-parte/emergency orders is submitted.

**B.** Opposition papers must be received by 8:30 a.m. on the day of the review. A copy of the opposition papers shall also be served personally, by fax or e-mail on the opposing party by 8:00 a.m. on the day of judicial review. If service of the opposition papers is not possible, an ~~ex parte~~ declaration shall be filed providing the reasons for the lack of service. See Local Form FL-040.

**C.** Judicial review of the requests for temporary orders shall be conducted Monday through Friday beginning at 8:30 a.m. by a judicial officer designated by the Presiding Judge. At the discretion of the judicial officer, oral argument may be taken. If this is to occur, the court will notify counsel or parties by noon on the day of the review. If counsel or parties wish to appear by telephone, their pleadings shall so indicate.

(Eff. 7/1/13; Renumbered 1/1/2016; 7/1/2017, 7/1/2024, 7/1/2025)

### **9.14 MEDIATION AND CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELING (CCRC)**

#### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of the Mediation and CCRC session is to reduce the acrimony which may exist between the parties and to develop a custody/visitation plan which ensures minor child(ren)'s frequent and consistent contact with their parents, when it is in their best interest. All parties shall make a good faith effort to arrive at an agreement regarding child custody and visitation before scheduling appointments with Family Court Services ("FCS"), and before the court hearing, except in those cases where domestic violence or other restraining orders have been issued or are pending a hearing, or where there are allegations of child abuse

or neglect currently under investigation.

## **B. Services**

1. Confidential Mediation (Tier I): Tier I referrals are for confidential mediation for families unable to reach an agreement regarding custody and parenting time. Tier I mediations shall be made available in all cases in which child custody or visitation is an issue, except at the discretion of the Court in cases filed under the Domestic Violent Protection Act.
  - a. Children shall not participate in Tier I.
  - b. Tier I is confidential except the mediator may report any suspected Child abuse, elder abuse, if someone is a danger to themselves or others or if a parent reports to have committed or intends to commit a serious crime.
  - c. All cases filed with the Clerk's Office will be calendared in Tier I.
  - d. Any agreements reached by the parties, as well as any outstanding issues, will be reported to the Court and the parties, via a written report.
  - e. A hearing will be calendared following a Tier I session.
2. Information Review and Summary (Tier II): Tier II referrals are to review specific information filed with the Court. A judicial officer has the discretion to include specific areas of inquiry in a Tier II referral including but not limited to, local criminal records, Child Protective Services records, and child interviews. Tier II summary reports will be provided to the Court and the parties. The confidentiality of Tier II sessions is limited as a summary report is provided to the Court.
  - a. A review hearing will be calendared when a Tier II session is ordered.
  - b. Parties may not stipulate to bypass any tier in the tiered Family Court Services process.
3. Child Custody Recommending Counseling (Tier III): The Court may refer parties to Tier III, child custody recommending counseling sessions. The child custody recommending counselor will report on any agreements reached. In the absence of any agreements, recommendations will be made based on the child(ren)'s best interest. Tier III reports will be provided to the Court and the parties. The confidentiality of Tier III is limited as a report is provided to the Court.

- a. A review hearing will be calendared when a Tier III session is ordered.
  - b. In the absence of unusual circumstances as determined by the Director of Family Law or order of the Court after a hearing before a judicial officer, mediators will not be assigned to conduct Tier III sessions.
4. Relocation Mediation (Tier IV): The Court may refer parties to Tier IV relocation mediation sessions when one parent is moving, and the other remains, and a request is made to the Court to change custody orders. The child custody recommending counselor will report on any agreements reached. Without agreements, recommendations will be made based on the child(ren)'s best interest. Tier IV reports will be provided to the Court and the parties. The confidentiality of Tier IV is limited as a report is provided to the Court.

**C. Referral to the Online Orientation Program and Family Court Services**

All Requests for Orders regarding custody or parenting plan issues must be filed and served with Further Orders for Parties with Custody and Visitation Matters Local Form FL-017. Appointment dates for mediation or child custody recommending counseling appointments (hereafter referred to as recommending counseling) may be obtained through the Clerk's Office on the date of filing. No contested child custody or parental contact cases, including requests for review dates and requests for modifications, will be heard by the Court unless and until the parties have been provided appropriate opportunity to view an orientation class and attend a mediation or recommending counseling session.

All parties shall view the online orientation program and complete an online intake form, prior to attending the mediation or recommending counseling appointment as directed on the Further Orders for Parties with Custody and Visitation Matters document.

**D. Documents to be Delivered and Reviewed by the Mediator/Child Custody Recommending Counselor**

All relevant materials to be considered by Family Court Services must be ~~delivered to~~ served on all other parties or counsel as outlined below in a timely manner. Assistance with how to serve documents can found at: <https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/court-basics/service>. E-mail ~~delivery~~ service is permitted upon the attorney of a represented party. E-mail service is not permitted upon a self-represented party without the party's express consent on the Judicial Council Consent to Electronic Service and Notice of Electronic Service Address, Judicial Council form EFS-005-CV.

~~Delivery~~ Service shall be as follows:

1. Moving documents must be filed and served on ~~personally delivered or e-mailed to~~ all other parties, or counsel if represented, no less than seven (7) court days before the FCS appointment. If service delivery is by US Mail, documents must be mailed ~~to opposing party~~ seven (7) court days plus five (5) calendar days before the FCS appointment ~~date~~. Proof of service delivery is required. Responding documents must be filed and ~~personally delivered or e-mailed~~ served no less than two (2) court days before the FCS appointment. If ~~delivery~~ service is by US Mail, documents must be mailed ~~to opposing party~~ two (2) court days plus five (5) calendar days before the ~~Family Court Services~~ FCS appointment.
2. For review hearings, supplemental pleadings must be ~~personally delivered or e-mailed to~~ served on all other parties, or counsel if represented, no less than ten (10) court days ~~in advance of~~ before the FCS appointment. If service is by US mail, ~~sent by mail, then~~ documents must be mailed ten (10) court days plus five (5) ~~additional~~ calendar days before the FCS appointment ~~in advance~~. This does not affect either party's right to timely file any appropriate pleadings with the Court before the review hearing itself. Documents filed or ~~delivered~~ served after the time outlined in this paragraph will not be reviewed by the FCS staff. Courtesy copies shall not be submitted.
3. No court documents shall be served or exchanged at Family Court Services. Recordings, electronic communication and photos shall not be submitted or shared at the time of the session.

**E. Complaints or Requests for Change of Mediator or Recommending Counselor**

Any request for a change of mediator or recommending counselors must be received by the Office of the Court Executive Officer or their designee no later than 30 calendar days after the mediation or recommending counseling session and should be addressed to the Court Executive Officer. Requests or complaints received after this time will not be considered. The request or the complaint should be completed and submitted using the Family Court Services Complaint Process Regarding a Mediator/Child Custody Recommending Counselor online form. A response to the complaint will be issued in writing 30 calendar days after the complaint is received. The other party will be copied with the response.

Complaints or disagreements related to the content of the Family Court Services report must be addressed with the Court.

**F. Contact with Family Court Services**

No party, attorney, or the Court is permitted to have ex parte contact with the assigned Family Court Services mediator or recommending counselor about the pending case.

Minor's counsel may contact Family Court Services according to Family Code § 3151(c)5 to obtain and provide relevant information regarding the child(ren) they represent. However, Family Court Services is prohibited from contacting the minor's counsel according to California Rules of Court, Rule 5.235.

Unsolicited communications (e-mails and correspondence via regular mail) are not permitted and will not be reviewed or considered.

**G. Appointment of Child Custody Evaluators**

1. Referral:

In the event of a referral to a private psychological expert for a custody evaluation and report, the parties shall complete the Order Appointing Child Custody Evaluator (FL-327) and the Court shall make an order regarding the payments of the costs of such evaluation at the time the evaluation is ordered.

2. Time Limits:

Custody Evaluation Reports will be lodged with the Court within ninety (90) days of the date such investigation has commenced (120 days if one party resides outside the county). The "commencement date" for a report by a private psychological expert shall be when the parties have paid the required deposit/retainer and submitted any required paperwork.

Custody Evaluation Reports are confidential and shall be distributed to parties, attorneys, experts, and the Court. The report, or any portions thereof, shall not be shown or distributed to any other person or used or attached to any document filed with the Court, except as authorized by the Court. Upon a request by the evaluator or a party, the Court may make additional and/or more limited restrictions regarding the release and distribution of the report. The Court shall impose sanctions for any unauthorized distribution or use of the report.

3. Complaints or Requests for Change of Private Evaluator:

An evaluator may only be disqualified or removed at the request of a party on grounds that are similar to the disqualification or removal of a judicial

officer, referee or arbitrator (Code of Civil Procedure § 170.1).

An evaluator may decline appointment. Once appointed, an evaluator may petition the Court for withdrawal by submitting a letter to the Court, with copies to counsel and/or self-represented parties. The letter shall state the reasons for the request for withdrawal. The Court shall thereafter set a hearing to determine whether the request will be granted and if granted, to appoint a new evaluator.

A party with a grievance regarding an evaluator shall first meet with the evaluator to attempt to resolve the issue, if the evaluator is willing to meet. If the evaluator is not willing to meet, or if after meeting with the evaluator, the grievance is unresolved, complaints regarding an evaluator shall be directed to the Family Law Judicial Officer who is or has been hearing the case. The complaint shall be in writing and should set forth the case name, number and the nature of the complaint, including all the facts and circumstances with as much clarity and specificity as possible.

4. Contact with Private Child Custody Evaluator:

No party, attorney, or the Court is permitted to have any ex parte contact with the assigned child custody evaluator about the pending case, except as directed by the child custody evaluator during the custody evaluation procedure.

**H. Appointment of Parent Coordinator**

1. Parties may stipulate to the appointment of a Parent Coordinator or Parent Coordinator Team.
2. Parent Coordinator Team: If the parties stipulate to the appointment of a Parent Coordinator Team, the parties or their attorneys, if represented by counsel, shall contact the proposed mental health and attorney members of the Team to obtain their consent to act as a Team. The Team may only be appointed by agreement of both parties and upon each Team member signing the Stipulation and Order Regarding Appointment of Parenting Coordinator (Local Form FL030) and the attorneys for the parties signing The Role of the Client's Attorney in Parent Coordinator Cases (Local Form FL031). Any requested modifications to the provisions of the local forms must be approved by each Team member. A Stipulation and Order for Appointment of Parent Coordinator Team may only be submitted to the Court for approval and signature after obtaining the confirming signatures of the mental health and attorney members of the Team.

3. Attorneys and mental health professionals who want to be appointed as parent coordinators must complete the application for approval to serve as a parent coordinator (FL-037) and submit it to the Court.
4. The Court shall maintain a list of approved Parent Coordinators who have satisfied the requirements set forth in the application.
5. The Court shall annually contact the parent coordinators on the list and request declarations from them stating their current education and licensing status.

## **I. Appointment of Minor's Counsel**

### Family Code § 3150 Appointments

1. The Court may appoint counsel to represent a child in a custody proceeding. Upon appointment of Minor's Counsel, all mediation or child custody recommending counseling services provided by Family Court Services are immediately terminated. The Court shall require the parties to submit financial information, such as an Income and Expense Declaration, in order to consider whether the parties are able to pay the minor's counsel fees. The appointed attorney shall receive a reasonable sum for compensation and expenses. The Court shall set the attorney's hourly rate taking into consideration the parties' financial circumstances. The rate may be up to the attorney's full hourly rate. The Court shall apportion payment of the hourly rate between the parties depending on the parties' respective financial circumstances. The Court may order the parties to submit updated financial information.
2. If the Court finds that the parties cannot afford to compensate the minor's counsel, the appointed counsel shall be compensated at the rate established by the Superior Court of Sonoma County.  
Fees and expenses including, but not limited to, travel time, mileage to or from any location, tolls, photocopy charges, telephone or fax costs, secretarial or document processing fees, postage, preparation of billing package, and court runner and messenger fees, shall not be reimbursed. Fees shall not be charged by the Court for the filings of appointed counsel. The Court shall make an order of appointment, which will include the rate of payment and an expiration date for the appointment. Minor's counsel appointments will be reviewed annually, and the Court may require additional Income and Expense Declaration submissions by the parties to determine whether a change in circumstances has enabled the parties to pay future minor's counsel fees.

The appointed counsel shall submit invoices for payment on a monthly basis. The Court uses a fiscal year that operates from July 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup>. Request for payment by appointed counsel must be submitted on Local



Form FL-021, Declaration and Order for Payment of Court Appointed Minor's Counsel Fees, within the fiscal year that the services were performed, or the invoice will not be paid. The only exception is at the close of the fiscal year (June 30th), where the appointed counsel may submit an invoice for work performed in the last month of the fiscal year by July 31<sup>st</sup> of that calendar year.

When submitting Local Form FL-021 to the Court for reimbursement, the appointed counsel must include a detailed invoice that clearly describes the services provided and the hours assigned to each service. All requests for payment are subject to judicial review. If the reviewing judge seems the charges excessive or not confirming to this rule, charges may be reduced or disallowed.

All requests for payment are subject to judicial review. If the reviewing judge deems the charges excessive or not conforming to this rule, charges may be reduced or disallowed.

3. Application for Appointment for Family Code § 3150 Appointments:
  - a. To apply to be on the court-approved attorney panel for Family Code § 3150 appointments, an attorney must file an application and confirmation that they have met the educational requirements with the family law supervising judge.
  - b. The Court will evaluate the application and notify the applicant within 30 days of the Court's decision.
  - c. The Court will only appoint attorneys who are members of the court-approved attorney panel.
4. Annual Review:
  - a. Upon appointment of minor's counsel, the Court will set an annual review of the appointment of minor's counsel. This date will be approximately twelve 12 months after the first appearance of minor's counsel in the case.
  - b. At the annual review, the Court will determine whether the minor's counsel has satisfied their education requirements as set forth in California Rules of Court, Rule 5.242(c-e).
  - c. The annual review will be scheduled in the order of appointment or at the child's counsel's first court appearance of the case.
5. Relieving Minor's Counsel of Appointment:

The Court, in its discretion, will consider relieving minor's counsel of appointment under the following circumstances:

- a. At the time a final order or judgment has been filed, or 90 days thereafter, or;
- b. A motion filed by any party for good cause; or
- c. A motion to be relieved filed by the minor's counsel if the minor's counsel does not believe they can effectively represent the child; or
- d. At the annual review; or
- e. Minor's counsel will not be relieved if the Court, upon a showing of good cause, deems it necessary to extend the appointment, or if the Court requests periodic review or monitoring of the child related issues before the Court. At any hearing where the Court is considering relieving minor's counsel, the Court will address the issues of reimbursement of fees paid to minor's counsel by the Superior Court. All parties must file current income and Expense Declarations at the hearing.

6. Grievance:

A party or counsel who wishes to lodge a complaint regarding the performance of a minor's counsel appointed by the Court must do so in writing and serve the original of the complaint on the minor's counsel no later than 20 days after the event giving rise to the complaint or within 20 days of receiving any written report of the minor's counsel.

No later than 10 court days after the receipt of the complaint, the minor's counsel must serve the complainant with a written response to the complaint. Without conceding the accuracy of the contents of the complaint, minor's counsel may ask the Court to relieve them of the appointment and, if appropriate, appoint a new minor's counsel.

If the response served by the minor's counsel does not resolve the complaint, the complainant must serve a copy of the complaint and the response of the minor's counsel, if any, on the supervising family law judge whose decision concerning the complaint, which may include removing the minor's counsel from the panel of minor's counsel used by the Court, will be final. The decision by the supervising judge must be served on the complainant and minor's counsel within 15 court days of receipt.

7. Minor's counsel may contact Family Court Services pursuant to Family Code § 3151(c)5 to obtain and provide relevant information regarding the

child(ren) they represent. However, Family Court Services is prohibited from contacting the minor's counsel pursuant to California Rules of Court, Rule 5.235.

8. All other aspects of Family Code § 3150 appointments are governed by California Rules of Court 5.240 - 5.242.

#### **J. Family Code § 7860 Appointments**

The Court may appoint counsel to represent a child or parent in a freedom from parental custody and control proceeding. The appointed attorney shall receive a reasonable sum for compensation and expenses, the amount of which shall be determined by the Court. The amount shall be paid by the real parties in interest, other than the child, in proportions the Court deems just.

If the Court finds that the real parties in interest are unable to afford counsel, the amount shall be paid out of the general fund of the county.

All requests for payment are subject to judicial review. If the charges are deemed excessive by the reviewing judge, charges may be reduced or disallowed.

(Eff. 7/1/13; Rev. 7/1/14, Renumbered 1/1/2016; 1/1/2018, 7/1/19, 1/1/2021, 1/2022, 7/1/2024, 1/1/2025, [7/1/2025](#))

### **9.17 PREPARATION OF ORDERS AFTER HEARING**

- A.** Unless otherwise ordered by the court, the moving party must, within ten (10) days of the ruling, prepare a written order following any hearing. Parties shall follow the procedures outlined in California Rules of Court, Rule 5.125.
- B.** On the Child Support Calendar, the order shall be prepared and presented to the court for approval before the end of the court session whenever possible.
- C.** On the Domestic Violence Calendar, the order shall be prepared and presented to the court for approval before the end of the court session.
- D.** Any order that includes an order for child or family support shall have attached the following ~~Judicial Council forms~~:
  - ~~1. Notice of Rights and Responsibilities, Health Care Costs and Reimbursement Procedures (Judicial Council form FL192);~~
  - ~~2. Information Sheet on Changing a Child Support Order (Judicial Council form FL 192 side 2);~~

1. A Judicial Council approved computer-generated support calculation. If the parties do not agree upon a single calculation, each party may attach a computer-generated calculation; and
2. Notice of Rights and Responsibilities [Regarding Child Support](#), [Childcare Care and Healthcare](#) Costs and Reimbursement Procedures if the order provides for payment of ~~a percentage or ratio of~~ childcare costs [and/or healthcare costs](#) (Local Form [FL-192](#) ~~FL020~~).

In addition, the parties shall submit a completed Child Support Case Registry Form (Judicial Council form FL-191) with the order. This form is not required if the local child support agency is an intervener in the case.

- E.** The Court shall set a compliance calendar date within 90 days after the hearing to assure the Order After Hearing is filed.
- F.** In accordance with Local Rule 9.4.B.2, for cases in which both parties are self-represented, the Court may direct the Family Law Facilitator/Self Help Center staff to complete Judgment documents based on settlements reached during Settlement Conferences at court, or after Trial. The Family Law Facilitator/Self Help Center is not limited to ten (10) days in which to draft the Judgment.
1. After Settlement Conference, if the parties are not at court to review and sign the Judgment, the draft shall be mailed to the parties, who shall have twenty (20) days from the date the drafted Judgment is mailed in which to approve or refuse to sign the drafted Judgment.
  2. If the Judgment is approved by the parties, they shall cooperate in signing the Judgment and any other necessary documents and submit them for filing prior to the compliance date. The parties may use the service of the Family Law Facilitator/Self Help Center staff for assistance in signing and submitting the Judgment documents. Once the Judgment is filed, the compliance date shall be dropped.
  3. If either party refuses to approve the drafted Judgment, the refusing party shall provide the other party, in writing, with an itemization of objections and a proposed alternative to the drafted judgment.
    - a. If the refusal is resolved, and parties agree to sign the proposed Judgment or an alternative to the Judgment, they shall follow the procedures after approval as stated in #2 above.
    - b. If the parties do not resolve the refusal, they shall appear at the compliance hearing. Ten (10) days prior to the hearing, the refusing party(ies) shall file and serve a declaration itemizing the items refused and the reasons for the refusal.

4. After trial, the drafted Judgment shall be submitted directly to the judge for approval.

(Eff. 1/1/2006; Rev. 1/1/2007, 7/1/2008, 7/1/2009, 7/1/2010; Revised and Renumbered 7/1/2011 – formerly Rule 9.14, 7/1/2012, Rev., 1/1/2016, 1/1/2017, 1/1/2021, Revised and renumbered 1/1/2016, [Rev. 7/1/2025](#))

## **9.20 FAMILY LAW SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES**

- A. Family law judicial officers may refer cases for a Settlement Conference which shall be conducted by a settlement conference officer as directed by the family law judicial officers. When setting a settlement conference date, the Court shall always set a Case [Resolution Management](#) Conference date following the settlement conference date. The Court will serve all parties personally or by mail.
- B. **Interdisciplinary Settlement Conference Pilot Program**  
For child custody matters, the Court may, in its discretion, appoint a panel to assist the Court and the parties at the settlement conference. The panel may include attorneys, mediators, and/or mental health professionals. Experience requirements for panelists may be obtained from the Family Law Supervising Judge's Judicial Assistant or from the Court's website. Any such panelists will be appointed to serve as the Court's own expert pursuant to Evidence Code § 730, and the Court may find good cause to permit the panelists to review Family Court Services' recommendations and other confidential information in the file, pursuant to Family Code § 3025.5.
- C. To request a Settlement Conference, parties (or their attorney, if represented) shall submit Local Form FL-074, Request/Response to Request for Settlement Conference or Settlement Conference and Trial.

The family law judicial officer will review cases set on the domestic, Case [Resolution Management](#) Conference, Child Support, and Trial calendars. If the court determines the case could benefit from a Settlement Conference, an order will be entered and a date for the conference will be set as well as a Case [Resolution Management](#) Conference date. The court will serve all parties with an order regarding the conference personally or by mail.

Settlement Conferences will be scheduled only if Preliminary Declarations of Disclosure have been exchanged and an FL-141 has been filed by both parties or the requesting party has complied and there is good cause for proceeding without the other party having filed the Preliminary Declaration of Disclosure and FL-141.

- D. The request will be reviewed by a family law judicial officer. If the judicial officer determines a Settlement Conference is appropriate, the Court will issue an

order and serve the parties and/or attorneys with the order setting both a Settlement Conference and a Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference. If the party requesting a Settlement Conference and/or Trial has provided a Preliminary Declaration of Disclosure and the responding party has not, if the Court does not set a Settlement Conference and/or Trial Date, the Court will place the matter on the next scheduled Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference at which time the Court may issue orders relating to the non-complying party's failure to exchange Preliminary Declaration of Disclosure, including, but not limited to, an order to comply, sanctions, and setting a trial and settlement conference as originally requested.

**E.** Each party shall serve and submit Local Form ~~FL-002, Statement of Issues for Settlement Conference or Trial or Local Form~~ FL-048, Settlement Conference Statement/Trial Brief prior to the conference. The Statement shall be filed ten (10) calendar days prior to the Settlement Conference. The Statement shall be stamped as "received." Failure to submit a Statement in a timely manner may result in the Court doing one or more of the following: 1) Rescheduling the Settlement Conference with the same panelist; 2) ordering the non-complying party to pay sanctions.

**F.** Any request to drop or continue the Settlement Conference and Case Resolution Conference must be made to the Family Law Judicial Assistant by 5:00 p.m. at least three (3) court days prior to the conference. Absent extraordinary circumstances, making a request in an untimely manner or failing to appear at the Settlement Conference may result in the Court ordering such party to pay sanctions. The Court will not drop the Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference unless a Judgment resolving all issues is submitted to the Court prior to the Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference date.

**G. Appearances**

Each party and principal trial attorney for each party shall attend the Settlement Conference. The Settlement Conference shall be conducted by a Settlement Conference officer to be appointed by the court. Unless notified otherwise, appearance by all parties is mandatory. An attorney or party who fails to attend or participate effectively in any Settlement Conference may be subject to sanctions. Any alternative to personal appearance shall be pre-approved by a judicial officer. When the local child support agency has intervened in a case, the agency will determine if its appearance is necessary and notify the Court whether it intends to appear. The agency may appear by telephone.

Settlement Conferences will last a maximum of three (3) hours or until the parties are excused by the Settlement Conference officer. Parties and counsel are expected to be present for the entire Settlement Conference, with the exception of the local child support agency, which may appear for support-related issues alone. If the agency is a party to the action, any settlement involving support issues

requires the agency's signature.

- H.** If a complete settlement is not reached at the Settlement Conference, the case shall remain set for a Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference so the court can determine the next steps needed to resolve the case.

(Eff. 1/1/2005; Revised and renumbered 1/1/2016, Rev. 7/1/2022, 7/1/2024, 1/1/2025, [7/1/2025](#))

## **9.23 TRIAL AND EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS**

These proceedings are intended to take more time so that the parties may call and question witnesses, testify themselves, and submit documentary evidence for the court to review.

### **A. Setting Issues for Trial**

1. A family law contested cause may be set for trial by filing Sonoma County Local Form FL-074, Request/Response to Request for Settlement Conference, Trial or Default Hearing. The request for trial may be presented to the judicial officer at the domestic calendar hearing. If no hearing is pending, the request shall be served and filed with the family law clerk. The request for trial does not need to be filed as a joint request of the parties.
2. For contested causes set for trial directly from a domestic calendar, the judicial officer retains the discretion to set one or more of the following hearings: (1) Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference; (2) Settlement Conference.
3. Upon the filing of the Sonoma County Local Form FL-074 Request/Response to Request for Settlement Conference, Trial or Default Hearing, a Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference shall be scheduled before the judicial officer assigned to the case pursuant to Sonoma County Local Rule, Rule 9.2. Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference may be scheduled within thirty (30) days of the filing of the request for trial. The court shall serve all parties or attorneys with a notice of Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference.
4. If it is determined that a trial is necessary, the Court shall either set the trial date far enough out for the parties to be able to comply with the discovery deadlines set forth in the California Code of Civil Procedure, or obtain a stipulation from the parties regarding the discovery cut off dates and set the trial date accordingly.
5. No matter will be set for trial until and unless the parties have exchanged their Preliminary Declarations of Disclosure and, if required, filed form

**B. Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference**

If the court sets a Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference in lieu of a Settlement Conference or trial date, the parties or attorneys shall file a Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference Statement, form FL-092, ten (10) calendar days prior to the conference. At the Case ~~Resolution~~ Management Conference, the court will review the status of the case and may make orders pursuant to Sonoma County Local Rule, Rule 9.10.

**C. Statement of Issues**

If a Statement of Issues was submitted for a settlement conference, the Statement of Issues shall be deemed the Statement of Issues for trial and filed in the court file unless, at the time of the settlement conference, the party indicates they will be filing another Statement of Issues ten (10) calendar days prior to the trial date.

If a settlement conference was not held, the parties or attorneys shall file a Statement of Issues for Settlement Conference or Trial, Sonoma County form FL002, ten (10) calendar days prior to the trial date.

The statement of issues shall include all information requested in the Statement of Issues, Sonoma County form FL002.

**D. Meet and Confer**

The parties, and attorneys, if any, shall meet and confer in a good faith effort to resolve all of the issues in the case. The parties, and attorneys, if any, shall state in the statement of issues the dates they met and conferred.

**E. Continuing a Trial**

1. Continuing Domestic and Child Support Trials by Stipulation

The court, upon a showing of good cause, may grant stipulated requests to continue a trial. The stipulated request shall be submitted to the assigned judicial officer by noon ten (10) calendar days prior to the hearing date. Counsel or parties shall submit a stipulation to continue, a declaration stating why the continuance is necessary, and a proposed order for continuance. The court has discretion to determine if good cause exists to grant the continuance of the hearing. Stipulation by itself does not constitute good cause for granting a continuance.

2. Continuing Trials by Motion



Any motion which seeks to advance or continue a settlement conference, or any trial shall be set on the Domestic or Child Support calendar of the judicial officer assigned to hear the case. Requests for an order shortening time for service of a motion to continue shall be submitted to the judicial officer assigned to hear the case.

Any motion for continuance must be calendared for hearing at least seven (7) calendar days in advance of the trial (or other hearing) date, unless good cause is shown for a shortening of such time. Stipulation by itself does not constitute good cause for granting a continuance.

**F. Contempt Proceedings**

The defendant in contempt proceedings shall not be required to comply with the meet and confer rules set forth above or participate in the preparation of the statement of issues.

**G. Master Calendar Call**

All matters to be set for trial shall be called on the assigned Master Calendar ~~Call~~, or on another date set by the judicial officer, which will not be considered the initial trial date for discovery purposes. A matter will not proceed to trial on the date of the Master Calendar ~~Call~~, at which time a specific date and time (~~generally in the following week~~) for commencement of the trial will be set. ~~Parties and witnesses need not attend the Master Calendar Call unless it is necessary for them to be ordered back for the actual commencement of the trial.~~

(Eff. 7/1/2005; Rev. 7/1/2006, 7/1/2007, 1/1/2008, 1/1/2009, 7/1/2009, 7/1/2010; Revised and Renumbered 7/1/2011 – formerly Rule 9.20; Renumbered 1/1/2012 – formerly Rule 9.21, Rev. 7/1/2012, Rev. 7/1/2013, 7/1/2015, 1/1/2021, Renumbered 1/1/2016; 7/1/2017, Rev. 7/1/2025)

**9.30 COURT ORDERED THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT**

**A. Court Ordered Therapy**

The Court, upon determining a significant risk to a child's best interests and the potential benefits of therapeutic treatment, as per Family Code § 3190, may mandate parents, other parties in a custody dispute, and the minor child to engage in outpatient counseling with a licensed mental health professional.

**B. Court Ordered Therapist**

The Court considers any therapist providing therapy because the Court ordered therapeutic intervention a Court-Ordered Therapist.

**C. Information to be provided by Court Ordered Therapist**

The Court expects Court-Ordered Therapists to provide the Court with requested information consistent with California Civil Code § 56.11.

1. In general, the Therapist must inform the Court of the level of compliance with its orders displayed by those ordered to obtain therapeutic intervention and of the likely effectiveness of the therapeutic intervention in lessening or diminishing the identified risk factors determined by the Court to be detrimental to the best interest of the minors.
2. The Court occasionally requires additional information via a Tier II referral to Family Court Services. In that case, a Court-connected Child Custody Recommending Counsellor will request the information directly from the mental health professional.

**D. Channels of Communication**

The Channels of communication for reporting to the Court include the following:

1. The Court has adopted the FL 096 Therapeutic Intervention Attachment form for optional use. This form, designed for parents or parties initiating treatment, includes instructions for the court user and aids in the therapeutic process. Direct communication with Family Court Services staff may be required when the Court refers a case to Tier II Mediation (information gathering).
2. The Court adopted the FL 097 Therapeutic Report form for optional use. The form is designed to streamline the communication process for mental health professionals; however, it is not mandatory, and mental health professionals can choose to use their own report or request a Tier II collateral consultation with Family Court Services.

**E. Therapeutic Provider Referral List**

The Court makes a list of qualified therapists available to aid the Court user in finding a skilled therapist. The list does not validate a Therapist's licensure status, nor does the Court endorse any Therapist.

1. To be listed as a Therapeutic Provider
  - a. Application: A therapist must apply to be on the list by submitting

a letter of interest and a current curriculum vitae to the Supervising Judge of Family Law. Applicants should send these emails to the Supervising Judicial Assistant of Family Law.

- b. Referral: The Supervising Judge will request a referral and feedback from the Mental Health Liaison Committee.
- c. Decision: The final decision on the inclusion of a therapist in the list is made by the Supervising Judge of Family Law, following the receipt of the referral.

**F. Qualifications**

1. Required

- a. Proper licensure (may include pre-licensed professional, working under a supervisor's) license.
- b. Adherence to AFCC guidelines.
- c. Knowledge and familiarity with current research related to psychological issues in the applicable areas.

2. Desirable

- a. 35 hours of Court Involved Therapist Training (defined as training that gives the Therapist the knowledge, skills, and ability to follow the prescribed guidelines.
- b. 35 hours of mediation Training - If the Therapist offers co-parent counseling.
- c. Ongoing Court Involved Therapist specialty training.
- d. Regular consultation about Court-involved work.

**G. Required Agreement**

Therapists on the Court's list must agree in writing to the following:

- 1. To demonstrate and maintain the highest level of competency.

2. To communicate up-to-date information about their availability at a frequency and manner determined by the Court.
3. To communicate case information to the Court via the Therapeutic Report Form or Family Court Services.
4. To submit updated training information to the Court upon request.

(Effective: 7/1/2025)

## **9.31 SUPERVISED VISITATION PROVIDERS LIST**

### **Court Ordered Supervised Visitation**

#### **A. Standard**

According to Family Code Section 3200, all supervised visitation providers must operate their programs in compliance with the “Uniforms Standards of Practice for Providers of Supervised Visitation,” found in the California Rules of Court, Standards of Judicial Administration, Standard 5.20.

#### **B. Parent Responsibility**

Parents are solely responsible for selecting supervised visitation monitors. They must be familiar with the Standards of Practice and use good judgment when selecting a monitor.

#### **C. Professional Supervised Visitation Provider List**

Per Standard 5.20, the Court requires each provider on the referral list to register with TrustLine. TrustLine requires all caregivers listed on its registry to pass a background screening that qualifies them as childcare providers. All persons listed on TrustLine have been cleared through a fingerprint check of records at the California Department of Justice. They have no disqualifying criminal convictions or substantiated child abuse reports in California that would prevent them from being childcare providers. For further verification, you may call TrustLine at 1-800-822-8490.

Providers on this list are required to provide proof of 24 hours of training in specified topics per Family Code 3200.5 (e) (10) (i—xi); (B). Additionally, providers on this list are required to complete an online course provided by the State Department of Social Services for mandated child abuse reporters.

**D. Supervised Visitation Providers Not Connected To Court**

Individuals on this list have signed an initial FL-324(P) form declaring they will provide supervised visitation according to the “Uniform Standards of Practice for Providers of Supervised Visitation.” Any other services the programs offer, other than supervised visitation or supervised exchange, are not covered in this declaration.

1. Although these programs must comply with the “Standards of Practice,” no governing body oversees them.
2. Each service provider may have a separate governing board and/or operating policies and procedures.
3. Sonoma County Superior Court does not monitor, evaluate, or endorse the quality of these providers. See the disclaimer below.

**E. Disclaimer**

The Superior Court of California, County of Sonoma, is only making this list available as a public service. This list includes qualified providers who have signed a declaration, under penalty of perjury, that they meet the Standards of Judicial Administration 5.20. Sonoma County Superior Court has not and does not screen or evaluate the providers, their facilities, or the information they have listed, nor have we verified any information posted.

Sonoma County Superior Court does not recommend or endorse any of the listed providers, nor does it suggest that they meet the needs of parents or children. Sonoma County Superior Court is not a party to any transaction between the customer and the provider. It is not liable for any service cost. Sonoma County Superior Court is also not responsible for any damages arising directly or indirectly from services provided by any listed provider.

**F. Complaints**

The Court does not handle complaints about service providers. Any complaints may be sent directly to the independently contracted provider or business or the Better Business Bureau online at <https://www.bbb.org/file-a-complaint>

**G. Requirements To Be Listed**

To be listed, each provider must submit all required information to the Supervising Judge of Family Law.

**H.**    **List Access**

The Supervised Visitation Providers List is made available in the courtroom and online at <https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/Supervisedvisits>

## **RULE 17 RULES APPLICABLE TO FILING AND GENERAL PROCEDURE**

### **17.7 PREPAID, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPES REQUIRED**

~~A self-addressed envelope of sufficient size and with sufficient postage affixed is required for the mailed return of copies of papers submitted for filing. Copies submitted without a means of return will be placed in the will call box in the clerk's office and will be discarded after thirty calendar days.~~

To receive conformed copies of papers submitted in person, by mail, or by drop box, you must include a self-addressed envelope that is appropriately sized and has sufficient postage affixed. Alternatively, copies can be ordered online at: <https://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/online-services>

(Eff. 1/1/1997; Rev. 7/1/2001, 7/1/2003, 1/1/2011, 7/1/2011, 7/1/2022, 7/1/2025)

### **17.18 FEE FOR CREATION OF COMPACT DISC FROM ELECTRONIC RECORDING [Repealed]**

*Rule 17.18 repealed effective July 1, 2025*

~~A fee for creation of compact disc of a matter that has been Electronically Recorded (ER) is \$25.00. To order a copy contact the Archived Records Department located in room 110 J.~~

~~(Eff. 7/1/2014; 7/1/2015, 1/1/2025)~~

### **17.20 ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

All documents filed in paper form with the Civil, Probate, ~~and~~ Family Law, Juvenile, and Criminal Clerks will be scanned and entered into the Court's case management system as a computerized court record. This electronic record is the official record of the court.

This rule shall not apply to court reporters' transcripts or to specifications for electronic recordings made as the official record of oral proceedings. These records shall be governed by the California Rules of Court. This rule shall not apply to original wills and codicils delivered to the clerk of the court under § 8200 of the Probate Code. Original wills and codicils shall be retained as provided in Government Code § 26810.

Unless electronically certified by the court, a trial court record available by electronic access is not the official record of the court.

(Rev. 7/1/2025)

## **17.22 MANDATORY ELECTRONIC FILING**

- A.** Subject to the exceptions in Local Rule 17.23, all represented parties, other represented persons, and all attorneys, including but not limited to consulting attorneys, mediator/attorneys, and document-preparer attorneys, are required to electronically file documents pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure, § 1010.6 and California Rules of Court, Rule 2.250 *et seq* for the following case types/categories:
1. All Civil Matters
  2. All Probate Matters
  3. All Family Law Matters (including Department of Child Support Services matters)
- B.** Subject to the exceptions in Local Rule 17.23, all represented parties, other represented persons, and all attorneys, including but not limited to consulting attorneys, mediator/attorneys, and document-preparer attorneys may electronically file documents pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure, § 1010.6 and California Rules of Court, Rule 2.250 et seq for the following case types/categories:
1. All Criminal Matters
  2. All Juvenile Matters
- C.** Self-represented parties, or other self-represented persons, are exempt from mandatory electronic filing requirements pursuant to California Rules of Court, Rule 2.253 subdivision (b)(2).

(Adopted 1/1/2020, Rev 7/1/2023, 1/1/2025, [7/1/2025](#))

## **17.23 LIMITATIONS ON ELECTRONIC FILINGS**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law or these rules, the following items may not be electronically filed:

- A. Civil:**
1. Subpoenaed documents;
  2. Labor Commissioner deposit of cash or check; and
  3. Payments for Bonds and Undertakings.



**B. Criminal:**

1. Bail Bonds;
2. Jail Cites; and
3. Bail Bonds Motions.

**C. Probate:**

1. Affidavit re: Real Property of Small Value;
2. Bonds;
3. Financial Documents submitted by Private Professional Conservator;
4. Subpoenaed documents;
5. Undertakings; and
6. Will/Codicils – originals for filing or safekeeping.

**D. Family Law:**

1. Declaration for Default for Uncontested Judgment;
2. Judgments; and
3. Notice of Entry of Judgment.

(Adopted 1/1/2020; Rev. 7/1/2022, 1/1/2024, 7/1/2024, 7/1/2025)

## **RULE 20 RULES APPLICABLE TO TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS**

### **20.3 ABILITY TO PAY: CLERK DETERMINATIONS**

- A. The clerk of the court may make ability-to-pay determinations in the Superior Court of California for the County of Sonoma as authorized in Government Code § 68645.3(e) when the following criteria have been met:
  - 1. The litigant submits that they receive public benefits, including those listed in subdivision (a) of § 68632; or
  - 2. The litigant submits that their household income is equal to or below 500% of the federal poverty level.
- B. The clerk of the court shall not modify the reduction rate recommended by the MyCitations online tool consistent with Court-established administrative settings for calculating reduction rates.
- C. The defendant has the right to a review of the decision by a judicial officer in the trial court if the clerk of the court denies the reduction portion of the request.
- D. Criteria for reductions made by the clerk of the court are posted on the court's website.