



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

FAMILY CENTERED CASE RESOLUTION PROCESS GENERAL INFORMATION

Family law cases include divorce, legal separation, nullity, parentage, and domestic violence. Detailed information about each type of family law case can be found on the San Diego Superior Court's website (www.sdcourt.ca.gov) and the California Judicial Council's website (www.courts.ca.gov). These websites provide answers to frequently asked questions, terms and definitions used in family law cases, forms with step-by-step instructions, local and state rules of court, and information on where to find help.

CASE RESOLUTION PROCESS & CONFERENCES

All family law cases are governed by the Family Centered Case Resolution Process. In San Diego, when one or both parties have an attorney, the court will set a Family Centered Case Resolution Conference (FRC). An FRC is a hearing at which the parties, their attorneys, and a judicial officer work together to develop a plan for managing the case and resolving issues as quickly, fairly, and efficiently as possible. When both parties are self-represented litigants (SRL), the court will set a Case Status Conference (CSC). If the matter cannot be resolved through a CSC, the court will set a Self-Represented Family Resolution Conference (SFRC). The court automatically sets the initial FRC/CSC. A request for an FRC/SFRC earlier than or in addition to the one set by the court can be made by ex parte application.

- **FRC/SFRC.** Attendance at the FRC or SFRC is mandatory. **Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all conferences are held virtually.** For information on virtual hearings, visit the court's website at www.sdcourt.ca.gov. Both attorneys and SRLs must be familiar with the case, prepared to discuss the party's positions on all issues, and enter into stipulations where possible. The hearing will typically end with a written case resolution order signed by the judicial officer. This order will provide an easily accessible written record of the decisions made at the FRC/SFRC, facilitate future case management planning, and minimize disputes over previous decisions.
- **CSC.** CSC is scheduled prior to an SFRC when both parties are self-represented. A CSC is conducted by Facilitator staff by telephone and attendance is mandatory. The Facilitator will help the parties correct any procedural deficiencies and negotiate a full or partial settlement of their case when possible. If the parties reach a settlement, the Facilitator will assist in preparing a judgment to be submitted to the judicial officer. If a party requests an SFRC or trial, the matter will be scheduled for an SFRC in the assigned department.

CASE RESOLUTION INFORMATION & LOCAL RESOURCES

- **Summary of Case Process.** The Judicial Council form, Legal Steps for a Divorce or Legal Separation (JC Form #FL-107-INFO), provides an overview of the legal steps for a divorce, important notices, statewide resources, and services available at all California courts. The form is available online or in any of the court's business offices.
- **Legal Advice.** If you want to consult with or hire an attorney but do not know anyone, you can contact the San Diego County Bar Lawyer Referral Service at www.sdcba.org or (800) 464-1529. If you would like to be represented by an attorney but cannot afford one, you can contact the Legal Aid Society at www.lassd.org or (877) 534-2524, or the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program at www.sdvlp.org or (619) 235-5656, to inquire into your eligibility for low cost or free legal services.
- **Procedural Assistance.** If you do not have an attorney, FLF can provide you with general legal information, help fill out court forms, and explain procedures. FLF is located at every division of the court. Both one-on-one services and group workshops are offered. The services are free but available on a first-come, first-served basis. Detailed information about locations, days and hours of service, and types of services available is on the court's website.
- **Settlement Opportunities.**
 - **Child Custody.** Before any court order can be made on a disputed child custody or visitation issue, the parties must participate in a child custody recommending counseling session with a court counselor from Family Court Services (FCS) or stipulate to private mediation at the parties' expense. For additional information, view the FCS Orientation video on the court's website.
 - **Mandatory Settlement Conference (MSC).** Before any trial, parties with attorneys will participate in an MSC. The purpose of the MSC is to informally discuss the disputed issues and facts in the case with a qualified family law attorney appointed by the court to act as a neutral third party. The goal is to reach a signed settlement agreement on some or all of the disputed issues without going through a time-consuming and expensive trial. There is no charge for the settlement conference. Cases where both parties are SRLs do not participate in an MSC. Settlement opportunities are at the CSC, discussed above.
 - **Private Resources.** Mediation, collaborative law, and other types of settlement resolutions are also available from any number of private businesses at the parties' own cost. The court does not provide a list of these outside resources nor endorse any private business.
- **Domestic Violence (DV) Services.** DV clinics are located in each division of the court. The downtown clinic is in the Central Courthouse located at 1100 Union Street. The clinics provide free assistance in preparing court forms to obtain or respond to a request for a DV restraining order. Comprehensive information about DV, including forms and local shelters, is on the court's website. The domestic violence hotline number is (800) 799-SAFE (7233).
- **Personal Contact Information.** Every party is obligated to keep the court advised of their current mailing address and other contact information. Do this by completing and filing the Notice of Change of Address or Other Contact Information form (JC Form #MC-040), available in any of the court's business offices or online at www.courts.ca.gov/forms.

NOTE: This form is intended to provide only general information. It is not legal advice, and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice from an attorney licensed by the State Bar of California. If you have any questions about your legal rights, you should talk to an attorney. Also, the San Diego Superior Court does not control or maintain the websites on this form, other than its own, and cannot be responsible for the accuracy of the information or content they contain. In addition, the content of a website may change, and the court would not necessarily be aware of the change. When you access one of these websites, you are subject to the terms of use and privacy policies of that website.

CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE COURTROOM. PLEASE ARRANGE FOR CHILDCARE.