

# Superior Court of California, County of Orange Family Law

## SELF-REPRESENTED PARTY CALENDAR

This calendar provides self-represented parties an opportunity to receive assistance reaching a resolution in their family law case. They are provided access to Self-Help Center attorneys, court staff, interpreters, Family Court Services mediators, volunteer attorneys, certified law students and a family law judicial officer who will make decisions regarding any disputed issues. This group of trained and experienced individuals will work together in an effort to provide the parties with a Judgment or Order on the day of their hearing.

### **Selecting Cases for the Calendar:**

- Self-represented cases may be referred by the assigned judicial officer.
  - Uncontested or minor issues such as support, visitation and/or non-complex property issues (if in doubt, refer it).
  - Parties may be referred for assistance reaching Judgment or for resolution of an Order to Show Cause.
- Set from At-Issue Memo when both parties are self-represented.
  - Set directly for trial, using event code 004N
  - Send to each party:
    - Notice of Trial, and
    - Notice to Parties Set on the Self Represented Calendar with attached Forms, "Schedule of Assets and Debts" and "Income and Expense Declaration."
- May be referred by a Self-Help Center attorney upon review of the case.
- Cases not appropriate for this calendar include those that:
  - Have a Domestic Violence Restraining Order or pending Domestic Violence issues.
  - Have complex property issues and/or substantial assets.

To set a case on this calendar, call L66 clerk at x7939 who will ensure that each SRP calendar has no more than 15 cases.

No SRP Calendar will be scheduled on a date in which the hearing officer will be absent from the court. Should there be an unplanned absence, the SRP judicial officers will cover for each other and refer overflow cases from their regular calendar to the department of the supervising judge.

### **Scheduling Volunteer Attorneys:**

- The Temporary Judges' Staff person sends an e-mail to all Temporary Judges on the Family Law List.
- The day of hearing, SHC Attorney facilitates the completion of the Declaration of Temporary Judge and Temporary Judge Evaluation forms, and the on-line Hours Served chart.
- The SHC Attorney coordinates the participation of the volunteer law students through their professors.

### **Calendar Prep:**

- See separate Calendar Preparation Procedures and Checklist.

### **Prior to Calendar Call:**

- All volunteers and persons observing the calendar sign-in.
- Check in parties, filing completed forms and distributing forms that will need to be completed that day.
- Have interpreter assist at check-in to explain forms completion.
- Seat Spanish speaking in one area so the Interpreter can interpret to the group.
- Parties to view a video in which a judicial officer explains to the parties the nature of the calendar and the special resources the court has on standby to assist them through the process.

### **Calendar Call:**

A Self-Help Center attorney meets briefly with each couple and refers parties to the appropriate resource including:

- Volunteer attorneys / Law School Professor
  - Parties without children and parties with a previously established Parenting Agreement are referred to a volunteer attorney or law school professor.
- Family Court Service mediators and investigator
  - Parties with children and no Parenting Agreement are referred to Family Court Services. These cases would have been identified during calendar preparation.

Staff person or volunteer intern will escort parties to the designated resource.

Should only one party appear on the hearing date, notice and service of the Preliminary Declaration of Disclosure is verified before proceeding. If there is no service of the PDD, the party is assisted with completion and the hearing is continued, with the clerk giving notice to the other party of the continuance date.

Parties appearing on an Order to Show Cause may proceed to Judgment if they reach full agreement on all of their issues.

### **Hearing:**

- The judicial officer reviews Stipulated Judgments/Orders with the parties, on record.
- Status for dissolution is taken on record before a judicial officer.

- The Court Clerk will indicate in the Minute Order whether or not the Judgment was reached by stipulation.
- Contested issues are heard by the judicial officer late morning or after the lunch hour.
- Once all other issues are disposed, the Court may refer the case to the Department of Child Support Services support staff on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Lamoreaux Justice Center for assistance with child support establishment and/or enforcement.

Should it become evident that a case is not proper for the SRP Calendar, the Court Clerk will call the assigned department for direction as to when to reschedule the trial (or refer the parties the same day). This might occur under the following circumstances:

- One of the parties has retained an attorney or represents to the Court that they intend to retain an attorney.
- The Court discovers that the issues in dispute will most likely result in a lengthy contested hearing.

#### **After Court:**

- The Court Clerk will complete the processing of the Judgment, including any orders made by the judicial officer.
- The Court Clerk completes calendar statistics.
- Periodically, surveys are distributed to the parties in order to monitor the program.

#### **Resources:**

***Family Court Services:*** Mediators are on standby to receive referrals. The Self-Help attorney will refer cases prior to calendar call, if possible, to make good use of FCS time. Upon completion of mediation, parties are referred back to the courtroom and all agreements are typed in a format that may be attached to the Judgment or Order.

***Volunteer Attorneys:*** Attorneys will staff the tables in the public hallway, acting as settlement officers to assist parties to reach stipulation or partial stipulation. Certified law students will listen and observe and will complete the judgment, disclosure forms, or other forms based on the stipulation reached.

- CARE package: Self-Help Center will supply attorneys with necessary forms, form packages, and supplies in a plastic crate for use in completing Judgments/Orders. The crate should not be left in the public hallway during the lunch hour, and may be stored in the courtroom or in the FL/Probate Receptionist office.

***Certified Law Students:*** Students are supervised by their law school professor. They sit in on settlement discussions, and will complete the appropriate documents to present to the judicial officer. Forms/supplies will be provided by the Self-Help Center.

***Interpreter Interns:*** California State University, Fullerton students of the Interpreter Program participating in a court internship assist Spanish-speaking litigants, under the supervision of a certified court interpreter. Two interpreter interns assist at each calendar. They may provide interpretation of court forms, assist in the settlement conference and/or during the court hearing.

***Department of Child Support Services:*** If parties already have an open DCSS case, they will be escorted to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor DCSS office so DCSS attorney can facilitate a stipulated

support order, and also sign off on any stipulation, judgment/order reached. If parties do not have an open DCSS case and do not agree on a support amount, the SRP judicial officer will hear the case and set support.