

NOTICE TO THE BAR & PUBLIC

INITIAL SUPREME COURT ACTION ON THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE NON-DISSOLUTION DOCKET

The Supreme Court has considered and acted on the [report and recommendations](#) of its Special Committee on the Non-Dissolution Docket as previously published for comment. This notice memorializes the Court's approval, with some refinements, of all but one of the Special Committee's recommendations. As recommended by the Special Committee, proposed amendments to certain Court Rules are in development and will be published for review and public comment, subject to authorization by the Court to do so.

Background

The Family non-dissolution docket consists of cases involving support and parenting arrangements for children, support for people in a marriage, civil union or domestic partnership who do not intend to file for divorce or dissolution, as well as applications for name changes, special immigrant juvenile status, and certain other matters.

Following through on a commitment in its 2021 Action Plan for Ensuring Equal Justice, the Court established the Special Committee with members of the bench and bar, along with advocates and community representatives, to review non-dissolution practices and strategize ways to address potential systemic disparities. The Special Committee in its report made thirteen recommendations to improve the non-dissolution docket for the benefit of children and families.

Court Action on Recommendations

The Court has approved without modification the Special Committee's recommendations to develop non-dissolution materials and forms in high-demand languages as well as Hindi, to provide educational materials for non-dissolution litigants and parallel materials for judges, to develop sample

custody and parenting time interrogatories for optional use, and to amend the Court Rules to require distribution of the child support guidelines with all child support orders.

In addition, the Court also approved the following recommendations, some with refinements as noted:


- to develop potential amendments to Court Rules so as to allow the non-filing party to file a responsive pleading,
- to require the Judiciary to provide a copy of filings to the filing party when filing is done with staff assistance,
- to explore options for parties to use “Email Service” for the exchange of documents beyond initial service,
- to require eligible non-dissolution litigants (excluding parties in Special Immigrant Juvenile Status matters, consistent with Directive #02-20) to participate in the Non-Dissolution Education Program and a subsequent consent conference before their first hearing before a judge,
- to revise the non-dissolution complex case management order as recommended by the Special Committee,
- to provisionally relieve cases designated as complex from the 90-day resolution expectation while additional data is collected,
- to revise the financial statement for summary support actions, and
- to create a process for a party seeking a modification of support to file a current Family Part Case Information Statement (CIS) along with the prior CIS.

The Court did not approve the Special Committee’s recommendation to add three questions regarding domestic violence to the non-dissolution verified complaint form: (1) Is there a history of domestic violence between you and the other party named in this complaint? (2) Have you ever filed for a temporary restraining order and/or filed a domestic violence criminal complaint against the other person named in this complaint? (3) Do you have an existing/active temporary or final restraining order against the other person named in this complaint?

Next Steps and Questions

The plan is for a future notice to the bar to request public comment on proposed amendments to certain Rules of Court as recommended by the Special Committee once those proposed amendments have been developed.

Questions regarding this notice may be directed to Joanne M. Dietrich, Assistant Director for Family Practice, at Joanne.Dietrich@njcourts.gov.



Glenn A. Grant
Administrative Director of the Courts

Dated: August 9, 2023