

## WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE RESOLUTION PLAN DATE IN YOUR DIVORCE, CUSTODY OR VISITATION CASE

As of January, 2021, Connecticut has a new process for custody, visitation, dissolution of marriage, and legal separation cases. It was developed with the help of the National Center for State Courts based on research and experience in other states. The process is designed to encourage parties to concentrate on resolving their cases by agreement, instead of engaging in lengthy litigation. It seeks to give each case the level of court resources it needs sooner than was possible under the old process, and reduce the number of necessary court appearances.

### The Resolution Plan Date

After your case has been filed, it will be scheduled for a “Resolution Plan Date.” **If your case involves financial issues like child support, alimony, or dividing marital property, you should complete and file a Financial Affidavit before your Resolution Plan Date. Forms and instructions for financial affidavits may be found on the [Family Forms Page](#).**

On this date, you will learn how the court process works and have an opportunity to ask questions. A Family Relations Counselor, who is an employee of the court trained in family matters, will review your case with you and the other party (and your attorneys, if you have them) to identify:

- the areas where you agree and disagree,
- how likely you are to reach an agreement on any disputed issues, and
- the kind of help you need to resolve your case as a whole.

The Family Relations Counselor will then recommend an action plan to the court based on the level of help your case needs to come to a conclusion. The plan will include any recommended services to support your resolution of the outstanding issues. Possible services include information-gathering or evaluations by Family Services, mediation with a Family Relations Counselor, court hearing time, or the assignment of a designated Family Relations Counselor or judge to your case for its duration.

After you meet with a Family Relations Counselor, a judge will make a scheduling order that fits the action plan, including future court dates and what you are expected to do in between them. **The Resolution Plan Date is not the time for a contested hearing or trial before a judge. However, if you agree on all of the issues in your case, a judge may be able to hear your case that day and approve your agreement, finishing the case.** You may also appear before a judge that day to address issues about future scheduling or whether certain services are appropriate in your case.

If you are the plaintiff or applicant and you do not appear for your Resolution Plan Date (either by remote video or in person, depending on how the event is scheduled), your case may be dismissed. If you are the defendant or the respondent and you do not appear, court orders or a final judgment may be entered against you.

### After the Resolution Plan Date

If your case is not completely resolved on the Resolution Plan Date, the court will enter a scheduling order that sets out the important events for the rest of the case. The schedule may include one or more Case Dates, a date for a pretrial settlement conference, and a date for a trial if the parties prove unable to reach a full agreement.

A Case Date is a hearing before a judge to address matters like motions for temporary orders on custody, child support, or other subjects, to be in effect while your case is pending. The judge may also hear reports on the progress of services that have been ordered in your case. Under the old process, each time a motion was filed in a case it was scheduled for a hearing on a “short calendar,” when motions in dozens of other cases were also scheduled for the same time. This required parties to appear in court repeatedly as each motion was filed in their case. Because of the number of cases scheduled on a short calendar, there was often insufficient time to devote to each one. Under the new process, a Case Date will afford a longer dedicated period of time to address all of the pending issues in the case, rather than dealing with them piecemeal at a series of short calendars.

Case Dates are not for the final trial of your case. They are intended as checkpoints along the way to final resolution, to keep your case on track and to conduct brief hearings on issues that need orders in place before there is a final agreement or trial. There will likely be one or two Case Dates scheduled in your matter. The number and length of the Case Dates in your case will depend on the level of services determined to be appropriate on your Resolution Plan Date. Of course, if the parties have reached a full and final agreement at a Case Date, the agreement may be considered and approved by the judge, finishing the case at that time.