

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTS IN FAMILY COURT

Beginning in October, 2021, but subject to change depending upon developments in COVID-19 pandemic conditions, Family Court will begin to conduct **in person** certain proceedings which have to this point been conducted primarily by remote video. The precise date of commencement of these changes may vary from district to district. **APPLICABLE COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS WILL BE OBSERVED, INCLUDING THE REQUIREMENT THAT ALL PERSONS ENTERING THE COURTHOUSES WEAR MASKS.**

First, the Resolution Plan Dates (RPDs), which have to date been held remotely, will begin to be conducted in person at the courthouse. Holding RPDs in person will promote efficient use of Family Services and court time, enhance parties' ability to obtain and file necessary forms and access other resources available in the courthouse, and facilitate the appearance of parties and counsel before a judge as part of the RPD.

After the change in October, parties and counsel can expect the following:

- An RPD that has already been scheduled as a remote event will remain so scheduled until about two weeks before the event, when notice of a change to an in-person proceeding will be issued, likely to be held on the same date as previously scheduled, but at a different time. (The change in time and place may create scheduling conflicts, particularly for attorneys who may already have another court matter scheduled for that day. Presiding judges will be mindful of this possibility when considering and accommodating continuance requests.) The gradual conversion of RPDs from remote to in-person, rather than changing them all at once, is designed to minimize the need to convert matters back to virtual proceedings if COVID conditions worsen.
- Newly scheduled future RPDs, however, will be scheduled as in-person proceedings, to remain as such unless COVID conditions require the return to virtual proceedings.

In addition to the in-person RPDs, courts will be scheduling regular in-person dockets for brief proceedings. These dockets will enable each court to schedule more brief hearings for which it has granted a party's request for an earlier hearing than the next scheduled court event. The court may also place other short matters on this docket, such as in-person scheduling conferences as needed.

In addition to these upcoming changes, other recent developments should be noted:

1. On July 1, 2021, a revised [Standing Order for Pre-trial and Pre-hearing Compliance](#) was issued, which clarifies and, for certain events, simplifies the compliance required for various types of family court events.
2. On July 1, 2021, a revised [Standing Order Re Discovery Motions](#) was issued.
3. A new [Family Caseflow Request/Request for Earlier Hearing on Motion\(s\) \(form JD-FM-292\)](#) was created, designed specifically for use in family matters. The form incorporates the prior form for requesting an earlier hearing on a motion, and adds other caseflow request options. The form is intended for use not only in the new Pathways process, but also in pre-2021 pending matters in which parties or counsel seek the scheduling of a court event.