

## NEW MOTION DOCKETS IN FAMILY COURTS

Connecticut's family courts are adding new dockets for pre-judgment motions in actions for dissolution, legal separation, custody and visitation.

Entitled "Motion Dockets," the new dockets are an addition to the Pathways process implemented in stages over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Pathways, each new case is assigned an early Resolution Plan Date for the parties and their attorneys to meet with a Family Relations Counselor, and to appear before a judge for the consideration of agreements and setting future court dates. The future dates typically include one or more Case Dates, which are interim dates before the final trial. "Pendente lite" motions, or motions seeking temporary orders while the case is pending, may be heard on the assigned Case Dates. Examples of such motions are requests for temporary orders about child support, alimony, custody and parenting, or exclusive possession of the family home.

Sometimes the issues raised by pendente lite motions should be heard sooner than the next Case Date (or final trial date if the Case Dates have passed). Under Pathways there has been a process for requesting an earlier hearing on a time-sensitive motion, but during the pandemic some courts have had limited available hearing time. With improved pandemic conditions now allowing courts to conduct multiple in-person hearings on the same docket, the Motion Dockets have become a feasible way to facilitate the scheduling of earlier hearings as needed.

Each court will have a regular docket for scheduling a group of pendente lite motions in multiple cases for the same time. The court in each district will hold Motion Dockets of such length, and with such frequency, as the local presiding judge determines appropriate for the needs of the court. The judges in each district will determine whether a motion should be placed on a Motion Docket, considering such factors as the nature of the issue and the length of time before the next Case Date or trial date.

Once the court places a motion on the Motion Docket the parties are required to appear, unless a timely request for continuance has been granted, or the motion is withdrawn or resolved by agreement in advance. There will be no need or procedure for parties to mark matters as "ready" or "off." Parties who reach an agreement in advance may file it with a request that it be approved without a hearing; and if so approved, the parties will not need to attend court for the Motion Docket. Otherwise, parties must be prepared to proceed with a hearing on the day of the assigned Motion Docket. However, if the court estimates that a matter before it on the Motion Docket will need more than one hour of hearing time, the court may have to reschedule it for an individually assigned hearing at a later date.

There are two ways for a party to request placement on the Motion Docket. When the parties appear before a judge for their scheduling orders on the Resolution Plan Date,

either party may orally request that, in addition to the Case Date and other dates being scheduled, a particular motion be placed on an upcoming Motion Docket. The second way will be to use the new, streamlined [Caseflow Request \(JD-FM-292\)](#) form's section for requesting placement of a pendente lite motion on a Motion Docket. This form would be used, for example, for a time-sensitive motion filed after the Resolution Plan Date.

The table below lists each court's planned schedule for holding its Motion Docket. Some courts have already begun to hold the dockets. Others plan to start on the dates shown in the table. The Motion Dockets in each court are subject to change in the future, depending on the needs of the court.

<b>COURT</b>	<b>MOTION DOCKET HELD</b>	<b>START DATE</b>
Ansonia-Milford	Tuesday mornings	Already started
Bridgeport	Alternate Friday mornings	8/5/22
Danbury	Fridays	8/5/22
Hartford	Mondays	7/25/22
Litchfield	Two Monday afternoons/month	Already started
Meriden	Fourth Monday each month	6/27/22
Middletown	Monday afternoons	7/11/22
New Britain	Thursday afternoons	7/7/22
New Haven	Fridays	9/9/22 (and selected earlier dates)
Norwich	Two Monday afternoons/month	Already started
Stamford	Mondays	7/11/22
Tolland	Tuesday afternoons	7/12/22
Waterbury	Thursdays, as needed	Already started
Windham	1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of the month	7/20/22