

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 2020
FOR MASTERS ROTHEY, NEWSOM, AND OBARA
AND
FOR ALL REMOTE CONCILIATIONS/HEARINGS**

**Equitable Distribution Conciliations proceeding via Teleconference or
Microsoft Teams**

Effective immediately, Conciliations will continue to be held remotely via teleconference or Microsoft TEAMS until further notice.

Prior to any Equitable Distribution conciliation proceeding with a Master via teleconference or Teams, each counsel/party **SHALL** submit a Marital Asset and Liability Summary (or updated MALS) via email to the assigned Master, and copied to the opposing counsel/party, no later than five (5) days prior to the conciliation date. Since the Masters will **NOT** have access to the DCR file, the MALS **SHALL** contain a brief narrative which includes, but is not limited to, the following background and procedural information:

- * Date of Marriage;
- * Date of Separation;
- * Ages/Dates of Birth of parties;
- * Educational Background of parties;
- * Number of Children (minor and emancipated) and Ages/Dates of Birth;
- * Employment of the parties and General Income Information;
- * Any Prior Marriages of the parties;
- * Existence of any executed Agreements between the parties (Pre-nup/Post-nup);
- * Budget information, if relevant;
- * Date of filing and service of Complaint in Divorce;
- * Date of filing and service of any Answer/Counterclaim or Petition Raising Claims;
- * Listing of all Counts raised/pending;
- * Date(s) and amount(s) of any support Order(s);
- * Date(s) and terms of any custody Orders;
- * Identify any claims(s) that may have been consolidated with ED, such as support, discovery matters, other issues raised through Motions.

**Important: Conciliations will be canceled,
if the MALS are not timely submitted.**

Hearings proceeding via Microsoft Teams

- (1) Beginning June 1, 2020, hearings will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams until further notice. To facilitate this process, all of the following must occur:
 - (a) If requested by counsel, a brief (30 minute) pretrial conference, at no additional charge, will be held with the Master and counsel only, approximately one week prior to the hearing.
 - (b) Counsel **MUST** provide the Master with email addresses for all parties and witnesses at least five days prior to the date of the hearing.
 - (c) Counsel **MUST** provide the Master with written Stipulations at least five days prior to the date of the hearing. Counsel should endeavor to stipulate to the date of marriage, date of separation, birthdates for the parties and the children, addresses of the parties, relevant procedural history (i.e., date of Complaint, date and amount of support order, etc.); custody status (if applicable), claims pending, and if support is consolidated with ED, the date of retroactivity. In addition, in an effort to reduce the number of necessary exhibits, Counsel should stipulate to the value of as many assets and liabilities as possible, along with the parties' current employers and incomes. Matters to which the parties have stipulated should not be addressed during testimony of a witness.
 - (d) Counsel **MUST** provide the Master with a written list of disputed issues at least five days prior to the date of the hearing.
 - (e) Counsel may summarize the testimony of his/her client or may use a hybrid of summary and question/answer.
 - (f) Counsel **MUST** be prepared to summarize the testimony of all collateral witnesses. If credibility is critical, summary, and partial question/answer will be permitted.
 - (g) With regard to Pretrial Statements, as a supplement to the existing Pretrial Order:
 - (i) The original, **without Exhibits attached**, shall be timely filed with the Department of Court Records.
 - (ii) Copies shall be served on the Master and opposing counsel/party with all Exhibits

attached (and numbered for identification purposes), preferably in a trial binder. Care should be taken by counsel in preparing their Exhibits to mark them, as best they can, in the order of presentation. Note that, at the option of the Master, the Exhibits may be renumbered (Plaintiff) or relettered (Defendant) in order as they are introduced at the hearing.

- (iii) Service on the Masters shall be via hand delivery or U.S. Mail to 437 Grant Street, 17th Floor Frick Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

New Matters Referred to Masters

Effective June 1, 2020, if a Judge of the Family Division refers a matter to a Master for either conciliation or hearing, counsel/parties shall follow the following procedures:

A copy of the Order of Court, along with contact information (including email addresses) for all counsel or unrepresented parties, referring the matter to the Master shall be mailed to the following address:

Docket Clerk
440 Ross Street, Room 3024.2
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

If a check for the entire fee accompanies the Order, which is the preferable practice, the Docket Clerk will contact counsel/unrepresented party via telephone to schedule the date.

If only part of the fee accompanies the Order, the Docket Clerk will wait until the fee is paid in full to contact counsel/unrepresented party via telephone to schedule the date.

Family Division Masters:

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