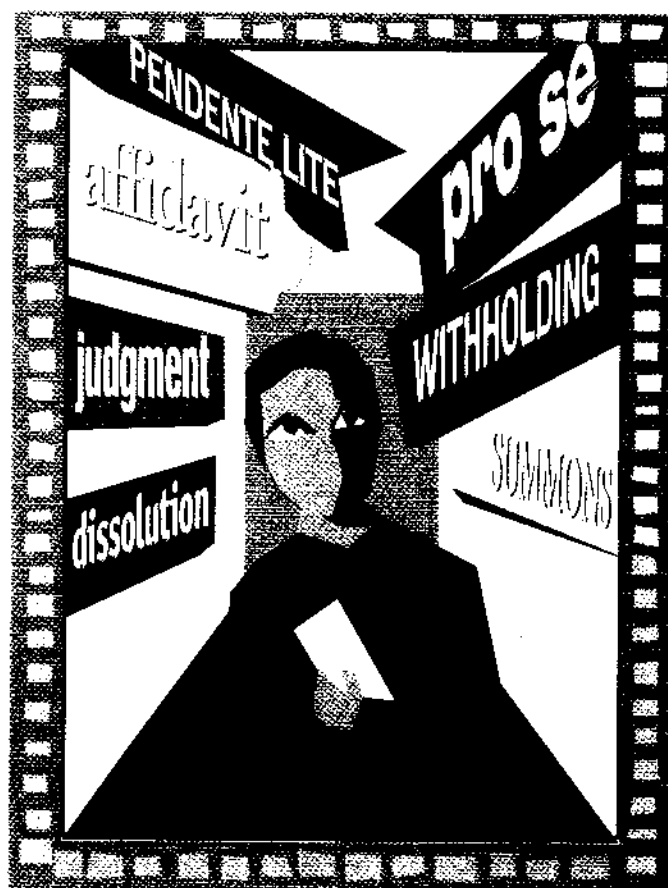




A PUBLICATION OF
THE JUDICIAL BRANCH
STATE OF CONNECTICUT



Do It Yourself DIVORCE GUIDE

"All courts shall be open, and every person, for an injury done to him in his person, property or reputation, shall have remedy by due course of law, and right and justice administered without sale, denial or delay."

Connecticut State Constitution
Article I, Section 10



This "Do It Yourself Divorce Guide" is part of a series designed to help people without formal legal training use Connecticut's state courts. The materials are available at any Superior Court Clerk's Office, Court Information Desks and at regional Court Service Centers. The Court Service Centers Program was launched by Chief Court Administrator Aaron Ment in 1997 to increase public access to court services and information through technology, user-friendly products and staff assistance. The program is funded in part by the State Justice Institute.

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Do It Yourself DIVORCE GUIDE

Judicial Branch
State of Connecticut

Do It Yourself Divorce Guide

(To be used with the Divorce Guide Supplement)

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to help you represent yourself in a divorce. Legal words and court documents can be confusing. The more you know about how to get a divorce, the more comfortable you will be when you complete the necessary court forms and appear in court. This booklet gives you the information you need to start a divorce or respond to divorce papers. All of the court forms you need are in the Divorce Guide Supplement and should be used with this guide. Court staff can answer procedural questions and help you understand the legal process.

The decision to get divorced can be difficult. You may be concerned about money, your children, or finding a place to live. Please check the list of resources beginning on page 42 for the names and telephone numbers of organizations which may be available to help you with the emotional and practical issues of divorce.

Note: If you need more information or assistance after reading this guide, you should either consult an attorney or read the appropriate sections of the Connecticut General Statutes and the Connecticut Practice Book. Divorce in Connecticut is governed by General Statutes Section 46b-40 and the sections that follow, and Practice Book Chapter 25. The General Statutes and Practice Book are available in the Superior Court Law Libraries located throughout the state.

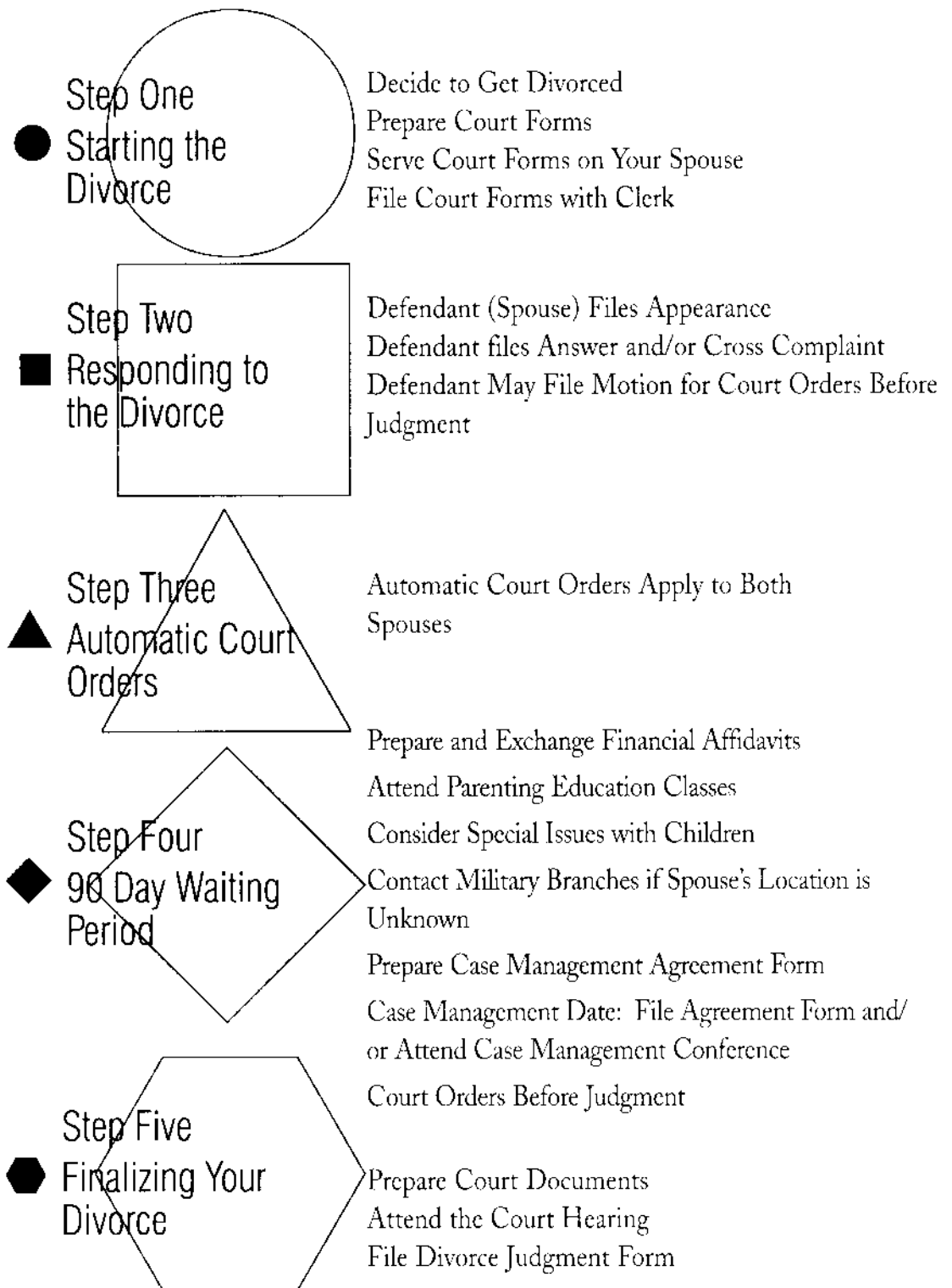
WARNING

FAMILY VIOLENCE

If you are being physically abused or threatened with physical abuse by your spouse, you should contact the police and the family violence program nearest you. Call Infoline at 1-800-203-1234 for information on a family violence program near you. You should speak with an attorney or a family violence program staff person if you are worried that your spouse will become more violent when he or she learns that you are filing for divorce. Family violence program services include: emergency shelter, counseling, 24 hour hot lines, information, support groups, advocacy, and referrals. You can also get a court order called a restraining order to help protect you from physical abuse or the threat of physical abuse. The first step is to fill out an "Application for Relief from Abuse." You may get this form from the court clerk's office. Often family violence programs will have information on how to prepare the Application and a staff person may even come with you to the court hearing.



Call Infoline at
1-800-203-1234
for a family
violence program
near you.



OVERVIEW

Getting divorced is an important decision. Before you decide to get a divorce, you may want to meet with a family counselor. A counselor is someone who can help you identify issues concerning your marriage and your decision to get a divorce.

If you cannot work out your differences, divorce is a way to legally end your marriage. If you decide to end your marriage, this booklet will help you represent yourself. A "Do It Yourself Divorce" is called a *pro se* dissolution. *Pro se* means for yourself. Dissolution is the word Connecticut law uses for divorce.

This booklet contains general information for uncomplicated cases. It should only be used when you and your spouse agree on the basic issues. If you and your spouse disagree about child custody or other important issues, you should seriously consider getting an attorney.

Not everyone can afford an attorney and court staff cannot give you legal advice. If you have a low income, you may be eligible for free legal services. To learn if you qualify for free legal services, you may call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320. The intake workers who answer the telephone speak English and Spanish.

There are many stages of a divorce. When you and your spouse agree on basic issues, it takes approximately four months to complete a divorce. One way to reach an agreement on basic issues is to work with a mediator. A mediator can help you reach an agreement on major issues with your spouse. The court clerk's office has lists of mediators who can help you for free or for a fee. (See Other Resources on page 42.) Family relations counselors, who work for the Family Services Office of the courts, can also mediate divorce cases. Their services are free.

It does not matter who starts the divorce. The judge will listen carefully to you and to your spouse.

The best way to find a marriage counselor is through word of mouth. Get a referral from someone you trust, like a friend, a pastor, or a social worker. You may also look in the yellow pages under any of these headings: Marriage Counselors, Psychologists, Psychotherapists, or Social Workers.

The court forms you and your spouse need to start a divorce or respond to divorce papers are provided in the supplement to this booklet. The Divorce Guide Supplement is available at the Superior Court Clerk's Office in any Judicial District courthouse. Please review the common words and the descriptions of court personnel that you will need to work with. Then, to start a divorce, turn to page 12. To respond to divorce papers, turn to page 18.

- 1 Always write down the date and the name of the person you speak with at court, the sheriff's office or others who give you instructions or explain things to you.
- 2 When you must mail something, send it by "certified mail". Ask for a "return receipt" so you have proof that you mailed it and that it was received.
- 3 Keep all documents, notes and receipts in a file, envelope or binder.
- 4 When you file a document with the court, include the full docket number and case name.
- 5 Always keep a copy of every document for yourself. Do not give away your only copy of a document.

COMMON WORDS IN A DIVORCE



Divorce involves complex laws and procedures. If you are getting divorced, here are some words that you should know.

Alimony	Money a court requires one spouse to pay the other spouse for support before and/or after the divorce is granted. If you do not ask for alimony at the final hearing, you can never get it in the future.
Annulment	A court order declaring that the marriage is invalid.
Arrearages	Money for alimony and/or child support which is overdue and unpaid.
Automatic Court Orders	Court orders that take effect when you start a divorce.
Broken Down Irretrievably	The most common reason for granting a divorce. It means there is no hope of the husband and wife getting back together again.
Child Support	Money paid by a parent to help meet the financial needs of a child.
Complaint	A legal paper that starts your case and tells the court what you want.
Custody	A court order deciding where a child will live and how decisions about the child will be made. Parents may ask for any custody arrangement that they believe is in the best interest of their child.
Defendant	The person who is given divorce papers, also called a respondent.
Dissolution	The legal end of a marriage, also called a divorce.

Docket Number	A unique number the court clerk assigns to a case. It must be used on all future papers filed in the court case.
Filing	Giving the court clerk your legal papers.
Financial Affidavit	A sworn statement of income, expenses, property (called assets) and debts (called liabilities).
Income Withholding Order	A court order to deduct child support or alimony payments from someone's wages. All child support court orders must include an income withholding order unless both parents ask the judge not to.
Judgment File	A permanent court record of a court decision.
No-Fault Divorce	The most common kind of divorce, where no one needs to prove that the husband or wife caused the marriage to end.
Legal Separation	A court order describing the conditions under which two married people will live separately.
Parties	The people who are named as plaintiff and defendant on legal papers.
Paternity	Legal fatherhood.
Pendente Lite Order	A court order made before a divorce is granted.
Plaintiff	The person who starts the divorce, also called a petitioner.

Pro se Divorce	Do it yourself divorce.
Restraining Order	A court order to protect you from physical abuse or the threat of physical abuse.
Return Date	A date on which the 90 day waiting period for a divorce begins. Also the date by which the defendant should file an appearance. Nothing happens in court on the return date and no one needs to go to court on the return date. The return date is always a Tuesday.
Service	The legal method for giving your spouse a copy of the court papers being filed.
Visitation	A court order deciding the amount of time a noncustodial parent may spend with his or her child, also called parenting time, or access.

COURT PERSONNEL



To get a divorce, you will need to speak to many people who work in the court system. You will know better what to expect from them after you review the descriptions below.

Caseflow Coordinator	Keeps track of your case and supervises the scheduling of hearings and trials.
Court Clerk	Maintains the official court record of your case. The court clerk's office receives all court papers and assigns hearing dates.
Court Interpreter	Translates court hearings from English to another language. Provided at state expense for cases enforcing child support orders, if requested. You must provide your own interpreter in a divorce.
Court Monitor	Prepares a written record of the court hearing for a fee, if requested, from audio tapes made during the hearing.
Court Reporter	Types everything said during the court hearing and prepares a written record for a fee, if requested.
Family Relations Counselor	Mediates disagreements and negotiates agreements in divorce cases. At the request of the judge, a family relations counselor may evaluate a family situation by interviewing each parent and the children in the family and writing a report for the judge, making recommendations about custody and visitation. Works in the Family Services Office.

Family Support Magistrate	Decides cases involving child support and paternity. Can also enforce court orders involving paternity, child support and alimony.
Judge	Hears and decides cases for the courts.
Law Librarian	Maintains legal reference and research materials for public use.
Sheriff	Responsible for courthouse security including the metal detectors at the entrance of each courthouse and maintains order in each courtroom. A sheriff can also serve (give copies of) your legal papers to the other people named in your lawsuit.
Support Enforcement Officer	Supervises child support payments and brings parents to court to enforce child support orders. May also file legal papers to modify or change child support orders.

STARTING A DIVORCE

- Decide to Get Divorced
- Prepare Court Forms
- Serve Court Papers on Your Spouse
- File Court Forms with Court Clerk

STARTING A DIVORCE

To start a divorce, you will need three court forms: the Summons, the Complaint, and the Notice of Automatic Court Orders. Once you complete your paperwork, you must take it to the court clerk's office. The court clerk will review your completed forms and return them to you. Your spouse must be given a copy of the divorce papers by a sheriff. Giving your spouse the copy is called "serving the papers." Finally, to start a divorce you need to file at the court clerk's office the completed court forms and the proof that a copy of the forms was served on your spouse. You must also pay the filing fee, unless it is waived. All of the court forms underlined below are listed in the back of this booklet. Ready-to-use court forms are in the Divorce Guide Supplement, available at the Clerk's Office in any Judicial District courthouse.



Prepare Court Forms

- Complete a Summons form (JD-FM-3). (See sample Summons and form in Supplement.) A Summons directs an officer (usually a sheriff) to notify your spouse that you are starting a divorce. A Summons tells your spouse to file an Appearance form (JD-CL-12), so he or she can respond to the lawsuit and receive notices from the court about all future court dates.
- Select the correct Judicial District courthouse and fill it in on the Summons. (See list of Judicial Districts on page 50.)
- Select a Return Date. It should be a Tuesday at least four weeks after the day you bring the papers to the court clerk. Fill in the Return Date on the Summons, the Complaint and any other papers.

Every official court form has a name and a number like JD-FM-100 in the upper left hand corner of the form. In this guide, the number of the form appears in parentheses after the form name the first time the form is mentioned.

You may pick a Judicial District which serves either your town of residence or the town where your spouse lives.

The Automatic Court Orders protect you, your spouse and your children from changes in your life, such as one spouse selling the family home or taking the children out of state.

- Prepare a Complaint (JD-FM-159). A Complaint is an important legal document because it is the way to tell the court and your spouse what you want. In the Complaint you can ask a judge to end your marriage, grant alimony, award child custody, visitation, child support, divide your marital property and debts, or restore a prior name. Be sure and check the box at the top of the form showing that it is a Complaint and not a Cross Complaint (which can be used by the defendant).
- Attach a copy of the Notice of Automatic Court Orders (JD-FM-158). These court orders take effect at the beginning of a divorce and apply to you when you sign the complaint. They apply to your spouse when your spouse is served with a copy. These court orders protect you, your spouse and your children from changes in your life, such as one spouse selling the family home or taking the children out of state. (See Automatic Court Orders on page 23 for more information.) You must fill in the Case Management Date at No. 4 on the Notice of Automatic Court Orders form. The case management date is set by the court and is at least ninety days after your Return date. Select the appropriate date from the Case Management Dates form (JD-FM-165 A, B, or C depending on your court location) or ask the court clerk for the correct case management date.
- If you cannot afford the court fees for a divorce, complete an Application for Waiver of Fees (JD-FM-75). The form asks for information about your income and expenses. This is your chance to show the court why you cannot afford to pay the filing fee, the sheriff's charge, and other costs such as the fee for the parenting education class. Do not sign the form until you are in front of a court clerk, a notary public or someone else who is qualified to hear your promise or oath that what you report about your financial situation is true. A judge will review your application and decide whether or not to grant it.

■ If your spouse lives outside the state and you know his or her address, complete a *Motion for Notice by Publication or Mail* (JD-FM-167) and *Order for Notice by Publication or Mail* (JD-FM-168). After you complete the forms, the court clerk's office will review them and sign the order. You can start the case by having a sheriff send copies of the following documents to your spouse (by certified mail): the Summons; Complaint; Notice of Automatic Court Orders; Motion for Notice by Publication or Mail and the Order for Notice by Publication or Mail.

■ If you do not know your spouse's address, try to find it through friends and relatives. If you cannot find the address, you must get permission from the court to publish a notice about starting the divorce in a newspaper in the area where your spouse last lived. If you do not know the name of a newspaper, a librarian at a public library should be able to help you. Call the newspaper to find out the cost of printing a legal notice. If you cannot afford to pay this amount, include it on your application for waiver of fees. Complete a *Motion for First Order of Notice* and *Order of Notice* and get the order signed by the court clerk.



Take the Forms to the Court Clerk's Office

■ Court clerk signs Summons.

■ Court clerk can witness your sworn signature on your *Application for Waiver of Fees*. The clerk will tell you whether the judge will rule on your application that day, or whether you should leave all of your court forms for the judge to review.

■ The court clerk will return the original Summons, Complaint, and Notice of Automatic Court Orders to you to be served.

■ Get a list of sheriffs for the county where your spouse lives or works from the clerk's office.

How much does a divorce cost?

Court filing fee **\$185**

Sheriff's fee for serving papers **\$ 35**
(approximate cost)

Parenting Education Class **\$100**
(if you have children)

Newspaper publication of legal notice **\$350**
(if you can't find your spouse)
(approximate cost)

Total **\$670**

Service is the legal way to give your spouse a copy of the court papers being filed. You must use a sheriff or another authorized person to serve papers.

Service



- Contact a sheriff in the county where your spouse lives or works. You may get a list of sheriffs from the court clerk.
- Most sheriffs will charge \$35-50 to serve a Summons, Complaint and Notice of Automatic Court Orders. The sheriff may require payment in advance or may be willing to bill you.
- Speak to the sheriff to be sure he or she is available to serve your spouse at least 12 days before the Return Date. Ask the sheriff about payment and arrange to give the sheriff the court papers.
- The sheriff will either return the original papers to you once he or she serves a copy on your spouse or will file them with the court. Find out ahead of time whether you or the sheriff will be filing the original papers with the court.
- The sheriff will prepare a document called a "Return of Service" which is proof that the papers were served. This document must be filed with the court clerk at least six days before the return date. You or the sheriff may file it.
- If you or your spouse ever received public assistance from the State of Connecticut, send a copy of the court forms and sheriff's return of service to: Attorney General's Office, 55 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Complete a *Certification (Public Assistance)* (JD-FM-175) that tells the court that you mailed the papers to the Attorney General.

- If you or your spouse ever received public assistance from a town in Connecticut, send a copy of the court forms and sheriff's return of service to the town clerk located in the town hall of that town. The blue pages of the telephone book will have the address. Complete a *Certification (Public Assistance)* (JD-FM-175) that tells the court that you mailed the papers to the town clerk.



File the Court Forms at the Court Clerk's Office

- Bring or mail the original Summons, Complaint, Notice of Automatic Court Orders, the original sheriff's return of service and the filing fee (or the original Fee Waiver Application if it was granted by the judge) to the court clerk's office. The court clerk must receive it at least six days before the Return Date. Also, if public assistance was received, bring the completed Certification. You will have to pay the filing fee unless it has been waived. The current filing fee is \$185. You may pay by cash, money order, or a personal check made payable to "Clerk, Superior Court." If you are paying by personal check, bring photo identification and make sure your address is printed on the check.

You may pay the court filing fee by cash, money order, or a personal check made payable to "Clerk, Superior Court."

Court Orders Before Your Divorce Judgment

- You may ask the court at any time to enter court orders concerning alimony, child support, custody, visitation, and exclusive possession of property. You do not have to wait until the final divorce hearing. You must file a written request (called a motion) with the court clerk. (See page 34.) The earliest that you may file a motion is with the original Summons, Complaint and Notice of Automatic Court Orders.

RESPONDING TO A DIVORCE

- Defendant (Spouse) Files Appearance Form
- Defendant Files Answer and/or Cross Complaint
- Defendant May File Motion for Court Orders Before Judgment

RESPONDING TO A DIVORCE

You are a defendant in a divorce case if you have been served with a copy of the court forms called a Summons, Complaint, and Notice of Automatic Court Orders. A sheriff may hand them to you or leave them at your home. Read the notice in the middle of the Summons carefully. Read the Notice of Automatic Court Orders attached to the Complaint very carefully. They apply to you when you receive the Summons and Complaint. The Automatic Court Orders also give you a case management date. You and your spouse must complete a Case Management Agreement and file it with the clerk before that date. If you disagree about custody or visitation of your children, you and your spouse must go to court on the Case Management Date.

After you get a copy of the court papers, you may contact an attorney to represent you or follow the steps below to represent yourself. Even if you agree with what your spouse says in the complaint, follow the steps below to participate in your case. If you take no action, the judge will usually order what your spouse requests in the Complaint.

File an Appearance



■ File an *Appearance* (JD-CL-12) to tell the court that you are acting as your own attorney. You may file an Appearance anytime before the final hearing. It is best to file it in person or by mail with the court clerk no more than two days after the Return Date. The Return Date is in the upper right corner of the Summons form. The Return Date is not a trial date. *No one has to go to court on the Return Date.*

■ There are legal consequences to filing an Appearance. Once you file an Appearance you will receive all court calendars and papers filed regarding

The Automatic Court Orders apply to you when you receive the Summons and Complaint, even if they are not handed to you personally by the sheriff.

The Cross Complaint is the same court form as the Complaint. Be sure to check the box at the top of the form showing that you are filing a Cross Complaint.

your case. About two weeks after you file your Appearance, the court will send you notice of the docket number assigned to your case. Once you receive this number, use it on all papers you file with the court.



File an Answer, and/or Cross Complaint

- You do not have to file an Answer (JD-FM-160) to the complaint, but it is a good idea to do so. Your Answer will tell the court whether you agree or disagree with each numbered statement in the Complaint.
- You do not have to file a Cross Complaint (JD-FM-159) but filing a Cross Complaint lets the court know what you want. It also allows the divorce to continue even if your spouse decides to stop or withdraw the case.
- Complete your court papers and file them with the court clerk. Be sure to make a copy for yourself and send a copy to the plaintiff.
- There is no court fee for filing an Answer or a Cross Complaint.

Court Orders Before Your Divorce Judgment

- You may ask the court at any time to enter court orders concerning alimony, child support, custody, visitation, and exclusive possession of property. You do not have to wait until the final divorce hearing. You must file a written request (called a motion) with the court clerk. (See page 34.)

By now, both you and your spouse must comply with the Automatic Court Orders, which are discussed in Step Three of this Guide. The Notice of Automatic Court Orders form is included in the Divorce Guide Supplement and a summary of the automatic court orders is reproduced below.

SUMMARY OF AUTOMATIC COURT ORDERS

The court orders on the reverse side apply to the plaintiff and the defendant in this case, unless there is already a court order which contradicts one of these orders. The automatic court orders apply to the plaintiff when the attached Complaint is signed. They apply to the defendant when a copy of the Complaint and the Notice of Automatic Court Orders are served (delivered to the defendant by an authorized person). The automatic court orders are summarized below, but you are subject to the full text of the orders on the reverse side. If you do not understand the full text of the automatic court orders, you may want to talk to an attorney.

Neither the plaintiff nor the defendant shall:

- Sell, mortgage, or give away any property without written agreement or a court order. (Only applies to divorce, annulment, and legal separation cases.)
- Go into unreasonable debt by borrowing money or using credit cards or cash advances. (Only applies to divorce, annulment, and legal separation cases.)
- Permanently take your children from Connecticut without written agreement or a court order.
- Take each other or your children off any existing medical, hospital, doctor, or dental insurance policy or let any such insurance coverage expire.
- Change the terms or named beneficiaries of any existing insurance policy or let any existing insurance coverage expire, including life, automobile, homeowner's or renter's insurance.
- Deny use of the family home to the other person without a court order, if you are living together on the date the court papers are served.

Both the plaintiff and the defendant shall:

- Complete and exchange sworn financial affidavits within thirty days of the return date. (Only applies to divorce, annulment, and legal separation cases.)
- Participate in a parenting education program within sixty days of the return date (if you share children under 18 years old).
- Attend a case management conference on the date specified on the reverse, unless you both agree on all issues and file a Case Management Agreement form with the court clerk on or before that date.
- Tell the other person in writing within forty-eight hours about your new address or a place where you can receive mail if you move out of the family home (if you share children under 18 years old).
- Help any children you share continue their usual contact with both parents in person, by telephone and in writing.

If you do not obey these orders while your case is pending, you may be punished by being held in contempt of court. If you object to these orders or want them changed, you have a right to a hearing before a judge within a reasonable time, by filing a Motion to Modify these orders with the court clerk.



AUTOMATIC COURT ORDERS

- ▲ Automatic Court Orders Apply to Both Spouses

AUTOMATIC COURT ORDERS

Filing divorce papers triggers certain automatic court orders that protect you, your spouse and your children (if you have any). If you start the divorce, the automatic orders apply to you when you sign the Complaint. If you are responding to a divorce, the automatic orders apply to you when you are served with the Summons and Complaint. (See page 21 for a summary of the automatic court orders.)

Once the automatic orders take effect, you may not go into unreasonable debt, sell your property without your spouse's agreement, change medical or life insurance coverage, or force your spouse to leave your home. If you have children, automatic orders prevent you from moving your children out of state and require you to participate in a parenting education program. The terms of a specific automatic court order do not apply to you if you have an earlier contradictory court order such as a restraining order. See the *Notice of Automatic Court Orders*, (JD-FM-158). If you do not obey the automatic court orders, you can be found in contempt of court.

If you want to change the automatic orders, you may file a motion to modify them using the *Motion for Modification*, (JD-FM-174). Be sure to check the "other" box and state the automatic court order you want changed. Or, you may want to contact an attorney.

THE 90 DAY WAITING PERIOD: WHAT HAPPENS?

- ◆ Prepare and Exchange Financial Affidavits
- ◆ Attend Parenting Education Classes
- ◆ Consider Special Issues with Children
- ◆ Contact Military Branches if Spouse's Location is Unknown
- ◆ Prepare Case Management Agreement Form
- ◆ Case Management Date: File Agreement Form and/or Attend Case Management Conference
- ◆ Court Orders Before Judgment

THE 90 DAY WAITING PERIOD: WHAT HAPPENS?

You must wait a minimum of 90 days after filing your case to get a divorce order. The waiting period starts on the Return Date noted on the Summons and ends on the Case Management Date noted in the Notice of Automatic Court Orders.

During the waiting period, you should try to reach an agreement with your spouse on the financial issues and issues related to your children. A private mediator or a family relations counselor from the Family Services Office may be able to help you reach an agreement. Use the Divorce Agreement form (JD-FM-172) to help you document your agreement.

During the waiting period, you should also complete and file a Case Management Agreement (JD-FM-163). If you and your spouse agree on the issues, or if your spouse has not filed an Answer or an Appearance, your case is called “uncontested.” You may select a date for an uncontested divorce hearing and write it on the Case Management Agreement form, Section II. To select a date for your hearing, use the chart on the Uncontested Divorce Hearings Dates form (JD-FM-166) or check with the court clerk. In some court locations, you may get a final divorce hearing on your case management date, if your case is uncontested.

If you are the plaintiff, you will get a docket number for your case in the mail, about two weeks after filing the Complaint. If you are the defendant, you will get the docket number after you file an Appearance. Use the docket number on all legal papers you file in court. The docket number in all divorce cases begins with FA.

If you decide you do not want a divorce and you are the plaintiff, you may stop the case at any time by withdrawing the case. You must file a Withdrawal form (JD-CV-41) at the clerk's office. However, if your

Remember, you are bound by the Automatic Court Orders when you sign the complaint, if you are the plaintiff; and when you are served with the Summons and Complaint, if you are the defendant. (See page 21.)

You may ask the court, at any time, to enter court orders concerning alimony, child support, custody, visitation and exclusive possession of property. You must file a written request (called a motion) with the court clerk (see page 34).

spouse has filed a cross complaint, the case will continue unless your spouse also files a withdrawal form.

At the end of the waiting period, your case may be scheduled for a final divorce hearing. The schedule depends on how much you and your spouse agree on the issues. If you and your spouse agree on all the issues, your case is “uncontested” and the divorce hearing may be scheduled immediately. If you and your spouse agree on everything except money and property division, your case is called “limited contested.” If you and your spouse disagree on the custody of your children or visitation, your case is called “contested.” Contested and limited contested cases are more complicated than uncontested cases. They also involve more court rules and procedures. They are beyond the scope of this guide. You must tell the court, using the Case Management Agreement, about the status of your case (for example, uncontested) and when you will be ready for the final divorce hearing.

Follow the checklist below during the waiting period to get ready for your divorce hearing:

Prepare and Exchange Financial Affidavits

- Both spouses must complete and exchange with each other a Financial Affidavit (JD-FM-6) within 30 days of the Return Date. Remember, this form must be signed in front of a notary public, an attorney, or a court clerk. Do not file this form with the court clerk’s office.

Attend Parenting Education Classes

- If you have children, you must participate in a court-approved parenting education program. You must do this within 60 days of the Return Date on your Summons. The program application form and a list of court-approved providers are available at the court clerk’s office or in the Family Services Office. (See page 33 for more information.)

Consider Special Issues with Children

■ There are many issues to consider if you and your spouse have children. Use the waiting period to discuss and decide what you want to do about custody, visitation, child support, and health insurance. (See page 30 for more information about children and these important issues.)

Contact Military Branches if Your Spouse's Location is Not Known

■ The court protects people who cannot respond to a Divorce Complaint because they are in the military service. If the defendant does not file an Appearance form, you will need to prove to the court that he is not in the U.S. military service. You must prepare an Affidavit Concerning Military Service (JD-FM-178), swearing that the defendant is not in the military. If you do not know whether the defendant is in the military, you must contact each branch of the military during the waiting period and ask them to verify that the defendant is not currently in that branch of the military. (See page 49 for a list of addresses for each branch of the military.)

Case Management Process

■ Every divorce case filed in Connecticut must have a Case Management Date. This date is at least 90 days after your Return Date and is recorded on the Notice of Automatic Court Orders. This date gives the court and you a chance to review your case and set a schedule for resolving the issues in your case. It is also used to set a date for the final divorce hearing.

■ On or before your Case Management Date, you and your spouse must complete and sign the Case Management Agreement (JD-FM-163) and file it with the court clerk's office. If you file your Case Management Agreement with the clerk, you do not need to go to court on the Case



Management Date, unless you and your spouse disagree about custody or visitation issues.

- If your spouse has not filed an Appearance form, the court will treat your divorce as “uncontested.” You will not need to go to court on the Case Management Date, unless your court location holds uncontested divorce hearings on that date and you have selected that date for your divorce hearing.
- When completing the Case Management Agreement, you will need to think about the following questions. Do you agree with your spouse on all the issues? If not, how will you try to reach agreement? Use the Case Management Agreement to describe the steps you will take to try to reach agreement. Could a mediator (including a court family relations counselor) or a special family master (a volunteer attorney) help you reach agreement? Do you need more information from your spouse before reaching agreement? Asking for more information is called “discovery.” You may use the form to show what information you and your spouse need and when you will give or receive it.
- If your case is uncontested, select a divorce hearing date from the dates shown for your court location on the Uncontested Divorce Hearing Dates chart (JD-FM-166). If you are not sure what date to pick, ask the court clerk or the casflow coordinator. In some court locations, it is possible to have your final divorce hearing on your Case Management Date. Check with the court clerk or casflow coordinator in your court.
- If you are unsure about how to complete the Case Management Agreement, contact the casflow coordinator for your court location or go to court on the Case Management Date.

Court Orders Before the Divorce Judgment

■ You may ask the court at any time to enter court orders concerning alimony, child support, custody, visitation, and exclusive possession of property. You do not have to wait until the final divorce hearing. You must file a written request (called a motion) with the court clerk. (See page 34.)

The earliest that you may file a Motion for Court Orders Before Judgment is along with the original Summons, Complaint, and Notice of Automatic Court Orders.

SPECIAL ISSUES WITH CHILDREN



If you and your spouse have children, it is very important to make a parenting plan to work out parenting responsibilities. Your plan should address custody (who has the legal and physical control of your child) and visitation (parenting time for the noncustodial parent). A judge will decide custody based on what the judge thinks is in the best interest of the child. Usually these orders are the result of agreements between the parents about where the children will live and how much time they will spend with each parent. The amount and type of visitation, or parenting time, may depend on the age of your child and how close you live to the other parent. Visitation may also depend on the kind of relationship you and the other parent have with your child.

Financial support of your child is also important. You and your spouse should try to agree on child support payments, your responsibilities for medical and health insurance, and for unpaid medical bills.

These important issues are discussed below.

Custody

- ***Joint custody*** means that both parents make the major decisions in a child's life together, like the child's education, religious upbringing, or major medical care. Daily decisions like bedtime or what the child will wear are made by the parent who is with the child at the time. Joint custody does not mean that the child must live half the time with one parent and half the time with the other. Instead, physical custody is shared so that the child has meaningful contact with both parents.

Joint custody works best if both parents are able to discuss what is best for their child.

- **Sole custody** means that the child will live primarily with one parent. That parent has the final decision making responsibility for the child and is called the custodial parent. The custodial parent may, however, consult with the noncustodial parent. Usually, the judge will make sure the child has ongoing contact, or visitation, with the noncustodial parent.

Visitation

- **Reasonable visitation** means you and your spouse want to arrange parenting time with your child yourselves. This works well when the parents and the child do not need a fixed schedule, and both parents are flexible and agreeable. Some judges may require you to prepare a written plan.
- **Fixed schedule visitation** means setting definite hours during the week for the child to spend time with the noncustodial parent. Fixed schedules can include sleep overs, weekends, weekday evenings, and sharing holidays, school vacations, and summers.
- **Supervised visitation** means that some other adult must be present when the child is visiting the noncustodial parent. The judge may order supervised visitation if the safety of the child is an issue or a parent-child relationship is being resolved.
- A **no contact order** means that the noncustodial parent may not see the child because the judge has decided contact with the parent is not in the child's best interest.

All child support orders are paid through income withholding orders.

Child Support

- Connecticut has child support guidelines which set the amount of child support to be paid by the noncustodial parent. The guidelines apply to parents whose combined net income is \$1,750 a week or less. For combined net incomes more than \$1,750 per week, the court will award child support on a case-by-case basis. The chart in the guidelines tell you the amount of child support to be paid based on the number of children and the combined net income of both parents. The guidelines also list reasons the judge or family support magistrate can use for not following the guidelines. These are called deviation criteria.

You can get a copy of the child support guidelines from the court clerk's office. Before your court hearing, you will need to fill out the child support guidelines worksheet in the Divorce Guide Supplement. A family relations counselor can help you fill this out in court before your hearing. If you are going to Family Support Magistrate court, a Support Enforcement Officer can help you fill this out. All child support orders are paid through an income withholding order unless both parents ask the judge not to order income withholding and file a written waiver with the court.

Health Insurance for Your Child

- Medical and dental insurance can be just as important to your child as financial support from the other parent. Usually, the noncustodial parent must provide health insurance for your child if it is available through work or another group insurance plan at a reasonable cost. The judge or magistrate decides what is a reasonable cost. The judge or magistrate also decides how uninsured medical and dental expenses will be shared, if you and your spouse cannot reach agreement.

Parenting Education Program

■ You must participate in a court-approved parenting education program if you have children and are getting a divorce. You must do this within sixty days of the return date on your Summons. The goal of the class is to explain how divorce affects children and how you and your spouse can help your child adjust to changes in your family life. You may ask to attend a different class than your spouse. Unless a judge finds that you cannot afford to pay the fee, each parent must pay \$100 per person for the program. The fee is paid directly to the person or agency providing the training. The program application form and pamphlet, including a list of approved providers, are available at the court clerk's office or in the Family Services Office.

If you have children, you must participate in a court approved parenting education program.

Paternity

■ In Connecticut, the law views the husband as the father of any child born to the wife after the date of the marriage. If this is not true in your case, you will need to get a court order for a genetic test to help determine legal fatherhood. (See page 34 on court orders before the divorce judgment.)

ALIMONY



Alimony is the money a judge orders one spouse to pay for the support of the other spouse. There are no formal guidelines for how much alimony to award. The judge decides each case after looking at the facts, including the length of the marriage, the age, health, income, and job skills of each spouse. If there are children, the judge may look at whether the custodial parent works outside the home. If you do not ask for alimony at the final hearing, you can never get it in the future. If you are awarded alimony by the court, you may always change (or modify) the amount in the future. If you want alimony, tell the court how much you want, how long you want to get alimony, and for what reason. For example, you may want alimony because you plan to go to school or because you need it to meet household expenses.

COURT ORDERS BEFORE THE DIVORCE JUDGMENT

At any time during a divorce case you or your spouse may ask the court to order many things, including: custody or visitation of your children; payment of child support or alimony; and who gets to live in the family home. You must make a written request for a court order. The written request is called a “motion”. Your request must be labeled *Motion for Orders Before Judgment*, or Pendente Lite. If you are the plaintiff, you may have this *pendente lite* motion served on the defendant with the Summons, Complaint, and Notice of Automatic Court Orders.

Prepare Motion

- Complete the *Motion for Orders Before Judgment* (JD-FM-176) and sign it.

- Sign the bottom of the form, stating that you will give or mail a copy of the form that day to your spouse or to your spouse's attorney if an Appearance has been filed. If you are the plaintiff, you may ask a sheriff to serve these documents at the same time as the Summons, Complaint, and Notice of Automatic Court Order.
- Attach a completed Financial Affidavit (JD-FM-6) to your motion, if your request for court orders is about money.
- Attach an *Affidavit Concerning Children* (JD-FM-164) to your motion, if your request for court orders is about custody or visitation of children.

File the Motion

- Take or mail the motion to the court clerk's office.
- There is no court entry fee for filing this motion.

The Court Hearing

- Follow the instructions on page 38 for attending your court hearing.

Pendente lite means during the case.



FINALIZING YOUR DIVORCE

- Prepare Court Documents
- Attend Court Hearing
- File Divorce Judgment Form

FINALIZING YOUR DIVORCE

The steps described here only apply to an uncontested divorce—when you and your spouse agree on all the issues or your spouse has not responded to the case by filing an Appearance form. You should make every effort and use every available resource to try to reach agreement so that your case will be uncontested. Consider using the court's free resources: special family masters; family relations counselors; or the court-annexed mediation program. (See Other Resources on page 42.)

Prepare the Court Documents for the Uncontested Hearing



- Both the plaintiff and the defendant must prepare a current Financial Affidavit at least five days and not more than 30 days before your court hearing. Remember, this form must be signed in front of a notary public, an attorney, or a court clerk.
- Use the completed Divorce Agreement form to tell the judge what you want to do about custody, visitation, child support, alimony, life insurance and medical insurance for you and your children, and how you want to divide up your property and debts.
- Prepare an Affidavit Concerning Children (JD-FM-164)
- Prepare a Child Support Guidelines Worksheet (See Divorce Guide Supplement)
- Prepare an Advisement of Rights Re: Income Withholding (JD-FM-71)

All these court forms are included in the Divorce Guide Supplement.

- Prepare an *Affidavit Concerning Military Service* (JD-FM-178) if the defendant has not filed an Appearance form.
- Send a copy of all the completed forms above to your spouse or your spouse's attorney.
- Prepare a *Health Department Form* (VS-63). Fill in Part One in the statistical section at the bottom of the page. This form is for the court's use only. Do not send it to your spouse or your spouse's attorney.

The Court Hearing



- You will get a copy of a court calendar in the mail that tells you when and where a judge will hear your case. The number on the envelope above your name is the number of your case on the calendar. Read the instructions on the top of the calendar notice carefully. The instructions are different for each courthouse. You may be required to call the courthouse or your spouse before the hearing date to tell the court staff that you will be in court for the hearing. This is called marking the case (or the motion) "ready."
- Take the completed forms with you to court on the day of your divorce hearing.
- If you have reached an agreement with your spouse on all the issues, when the judge calls the name of your case, stand up and say "Ready, Your Honor". If you have not reached an agreement with your spouse on all the issues, when the judge calls the name of your

case, stand up and say “Ready, Your Honor” and ask to see a family relations counselor. Family relations counselors are trained mediators and may be able to help you and your spouse work out an agreement. Judges usually require you to meet with a family relations counselor if you have not reached an agreement. Even if you reach an agreement with the help of a family relations counselor, be sure to go back and report it to the judge so that it can become a court order. If you do not reach an agreement, return to the courtroom and the judge will hear your case. The judge, after hearing short matters, will go back to the beginning of the list and take each case in order.

- When your case is called, go to the front of the courtroom with your documents completed. The judge will tell you what to do next. Answer respectfully any questions the judge asks and do not interrupt the judge.

Proof of Your Divorce



■ The court will not prepare a written record of your divorce for you. The plaintiff must complete a *Divorce Judgment* form (JD-FM-177) and file it with the court clerk's office within 30 days. If you are not sure about the exact court orders, you can look at the notes of the court hearing taken by the court clerk. Give the completed Divorce Judgment form to the court clerk. After the judge signs the Judgment, you may get a certified copy of it for your records for \$15.

- If you only need written proof that you are divorced, you may ask for a Certificate of Dissolution from the court clerk's office. There is a \$2 fee.

Go to the courthouse before the time the hearing is scheduled to start. It can take ten to twenty minutes to get into the building because everyone must go through a security station with a metal detector. Go to the assigned courtroom and sit down. If you don't know which courtroom, ask the sheriff at the metal detector or any court staff.

To apply for help enforcing your Court Order, call the Department of Social Services office nearest you or 1-800-228-5437. The \$25 application fee may be waived if you cannot afford it.

ENFORCING YOUR COURT ORDER



Most people are law abiding citizens and follow court orders. Unfortunately, sometimes a court order is ignored. If your ex-spouse disobeys the court order (for example, the orders about custody, visitation, child support payments, health insurance, or selling property), you may ask the court to help enforce the order. You may first want to try to talk to your ex-spouse and work out the problem. You may also ask a family relations counselor at your local court to help you try to mediate or solve the problem.

If you cannot work out the problem, you may ask a judge to enforce a court order by filing a written motion for contempt. A motion is a request in writing. Contempt is a court decision that someone disobeyed a court order on purpose. You may use the Motion for Contempt (JD-FM-173) included in the Divorce Guide Supplement.

This booklet does not explain how to prepare a motion for contempt. Ask the court staff about other booklets or resources which may be helpful.

If your ex-spouse is disobeying the child support, health insurance or alimony part of the court order, you may ask for help from the state agency responsible for enforcing these court orders. The Support Enforcement Division of the court can prepare and file a Motion for Contempt for you if you apply for the state child support services and pay a \$25 fee.

MODIFYING YOUR COURT ORDER

You may need to change a court order because of changes in your life or the lives of your ex-spouse or child. You may want to change child support payments, or the parenting arrangements you have made with your ex-spouse for custody or visitation. Only a judge or a family support magistrate can change a court order. Even if you and your ex-spouse agree to the change, it is important to ask the judge in writing to make the change legal.

Asking a judge in writing to change something in the court order is called making a motion to modify. You may use the Motion for Modification (JD-FM-174) included in the Divorce Guide Supplement.

This booklet does not explain how to prepare a motion to modify. Ask the court staff about other booklets or resources which may be helpful.

The legal standard for granting a modification is whether there has been a substantial change in circumstances.

OTHER RESOURCES

Mediation



A trained mediator can help you and your spouse reach an agreement on major issues, including property division, child custody, child support payments, and a visitation (or parenting time) schedule. You may want to use one of the following resources to find a

divorce mediator in your area:

- *Alternative Dispute Resolution Private Provider Directory* - A list of private mediators who charge a fee is available at the Clerk's Office in every Judicial District courthouse.
- *Court Annexed Mediation Program* - A list of senior judges and judge trial referees who will mediate for free is available at the Clerk's Office in every Judicial District courthouse.
- *Connecticut Council for Divorce Mediation* maintains a list by geographical area of members who mediate for a fee. Their toll free number is 1-888-236-CCDM (2236). They can also be reached at P.O. Box 256, Westport, CT 06881-0919.

Legal Advice or Representation



You are encouraged to review your case with an attorney before you take any court action. Some lawyers only charge a small fee for a consultation or to review court papers. To find an attorney, you may look in the Yellow Pages in the telephone book or call the lawyer referral service of your local county bar association.

If you have a low income, you may qualify for free legal help from one of the many legal services programs in Connecticut. To find out if you

Local bar associations offer lawyer referral programs for a small fee in the following locations:

Fairfield County
1-800-972-9628

Hartford,
Litchfield,
Middlesex, Tolland
and Windham
Counties
860-525-6052

New Haven County
203-562-5750

New London
County
860-889-9384

qualify, call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 (English and Spanish), Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They may be able to match you with a local attorney or legal aid office, tell you about any local workshops or clinics about divorce cases, or review your court papers over the telephone.

If you are an inmate at any Connecticut Department of Correction facility, you can get free legal help from Inmates Legal Assistance, 78 Oak Street, P.O. Box 260237, Hartford, Connecticut 06106, at 860-246-1118. Requests for help are preferred in writing.

Family Violence



If you are being physically abused or threatened with abuse, you are encouraged to contact your local family violence program. They offer emergency shelter, counseling, and support. Call Infoline at 1-800-203-1234, a 24-hour confidential help line (Voice/TDD) to get the telephone number for the family violence program nearest you.

Call Infoline at 1-800-203-1234, a 24-hour confidential help line (Voice/TDD) to get the telephone number for the family violence program nearest you.

Advocacy/Support Groups

If you would like to talk with other people who may share your situation, contact one of the organizations listed below:

Connecticut Women's Education & Legal Fund
135 Broad Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06105
860-566-6090

Divorced Men's Association of Connecticut
P.O. Box 380576
East Hartford, Connecticut 06118
860-568-7742

Parents for the Enforcement of Court-Ordered Support
P.O. Box 2264
Meriden, CT 06450
203-238-7309

Infoline
1-800-203-1234
(Statewide Information and Referral to all Social Service Agencies.)

NO FAULT DIVORCE IN CONNECTICUT

A Guide to Resources in the Law Library

Scope

- Selected bibliographic resources relating to a no fault dissolution of marriage (divorce) commenced after October 1, 1997

Definitions

No fault divorce: “ A decree of dissolution of a marriage...shall be granted upon a finding that one of the following causes has occurred: (1) the marriage has broken down irretrievably; (2) the parties have lived apart by reason of incompatibility for a continuous period of at least the eighteen months immediately prior to the service of the complaint and that there is no reasonable prospect that they will be reconciled....” Conn. Gen. Stat. §46b-40(c)

Statutes

*(General Statutes
of Connecticut,
Title 46b)*

- §46b-40(c) Fault and no fault grounds for divorce or legal separation
- §46b-51 Stipulation of parties and finding of irretrievable breakdown
- §46b-44 Residency requirements
- §46b-45 Service and filing of complaint
- §46b-46 Notice to nonresident party
- §46b-53 Conciliation procedures; privileged communications
- §46b-67(a) 90-day waiting period

Court Rules

*(Connecticut
Practice Book,
Chapter 25)*

Chapter 25. Procedure in Family Matters

- § 25-2 Complaint for dissolution of marriage, legal separation
- § 25-3 Action for custody of minor children
- § 25-5 Automatic orders upon service of complaint
- § 25-7 Order of Pleadings
- § 25-27 Motion for contempt
- § 25-28 Order of notice
- § 25-30 Statements to be filed
- § 25-49 Definitions of uncontested, limited contested and contested matters
- § 25-50 Case management
- § 25-27 Affidavit concerning children
- § 25-58 Reports of dissolution of marriage

Forms

WARNING

This is only a guide to resources available and is provided with the understanding that it represents only a starting point for research.

Court Forms

- JD-FM-3 Summons Family Action
- JD-FM-159 Divorce (dissolution of marriage) Complaint/Cross Complaint
- JD-FM-158 Notice of Automatic Orders
- JD-FM-75 Application for Waiver of Fees/Appointment of Counsel
- JD-FM-167 Motion for Notice by Publication or Mail
- JD-FM-168 Order for Notice by Publication or Mail
- JD-FM-165A-C Case Management Dates
- JD-FM-163 Case Management Agreement
- JD-FM-149 Parenting Education Program - order, certificate and results
- JD-FM-166 Hearing Dates for Uncontested Divorces in Connecticut
- VS-63 Health Department Form
- JD-FM-164 Affidavit Concerning Children
- JD-FM-164A Addendum to Affidavit Concerning Children
- JD-FM-6 Financial Affidavit
- JD-CL-12 Appearance

Handbook of Family Forms for the Connecticut Lawyer

- Motion for custody and support pendite lite, Form VI-C-2, p. 108
- Motion for temporary joint custody and determination of joint custodial rights. Form VI-C-4 p. 110
- Grandparents' motion to intervene, Form VI-C-7, p.114
- Grandparents' motion for visitation, Form VI-C-8, p.115
- Ex parte temporary injunction, Forms VII-A-6a to VII-A-6e, pp. 145-150

Cases

- Eversman v. Eversman, 4 Conn. App. 611 at 614 (1985). "The determination of whether a breakdown of a marriage is irretrievable is a question of fact to be determined by the trial court. . . . The fact that the defendant maintains hope for reconciliation will not support a finding that there are prospects for a reconciliation A difference, to be irreconcilable, need not necessarily be so viewed by both parties."
- Sweet v. Sweet, 190 Conn. 657 at 659-670 (1983). "Section 46b-51 allows the court to avoid specifying fault for the breakdown of the marriage. . . . In contrast with 46b-51, under the statutes governing the assignment of the property of the

parties or the award of alimony in a contested proceeding, the court is required to consider the causes for the dissolution of the marriage.”

• Posada v. Posada, 179 Conn. 568 at 572 (1980). “No-fault divorce does not mean that the causes of a marital breakup are always irrelevant, but it does mean that determining cause is not crucial to the judicial administration of matrimonial matters.”

• Joy v. Joy, 178 Conn. 254 at 256 (1979). *Constitutionality of no fault divorce*

Digests

- West Key Numbers: Divorce #12, 34 and 36
- Connecticut Family Law Citations: “Irretrievable breakdown”

Encyclopedias

- 24 American Jurisprudence 2d Divorce and Separation §§29-31
- 27A Corpus Juris Secundum Divorce §§17-21
- 19 Am Jur Proof of Facts 2d 221 “Dissolution of marriage on statutory ground of incompatibility.”
- 55 ALR3d 581. “Validity, construction, and effect of ‘no-fault’ divorce statute providing for dissolution of marriage upon finding that relationship is no longer viable.”

Texts & Treatises

- Connecticut Practice: Family Law and Practice with Forms by Rutkin, A. et al. (West, 1991). *See especially* §§ 15.2 – 15.5
- Do It Yourself Divorce Guide. State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, 1998.
- Friendly Divorce Guidebook for Connecticut: Planning, Negotiating and Filing Your Divorce by B. Stark et al. Denver, CO: Bradford Pub. Co., 1998. *See especially Chapter 12 “Getting divorced: procedures and paperwork.”*

Law Reviews

- “Connecticut’s new approach to marriage dissolution,” by R. McAnernery and S. Schoommaker III. Connecticut Bar Journal, Vol. 47, pp. 375-415 (1973).

Courthouses are open every weekday from 9 am - 5 pm, except on legal holidays. Some courthouse lobbies open before 9 am, although no business is conducted until 9 am. Clerks' offices are open from 9am-4 pm every weekday.

List of Legal Holidays

Courts are closed on the following state legal holidays:

New Year's Day	Independence Day
Martin Luther King's Day	Labor Day
Lincoln's Birthday	Columbus Day
Washington's Birthday	Veteran's Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas Day

Addresses of the Military Branches

Airforce

AFPC-MFIMDL
550 C Street West, Suite 50
Randolph Air Force Base, TX 78150-4752
210-652-5775
\$5.20 Check Payable to DAO-DE

Army

Army World-Wide Locator
U.S. Army EREC
8899 E. 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-5301
\$3.50 Check Payable to Finance Officer

Coast Guard

Commander-CGPC-adm3
U.S. Coast Guard Personnel Command
2100 Second Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20593-0001
202-267-2321
\$5.20 Check Payable to U.S. Coast Guard

Marine Corps

HQMC MMSB 10
2008 Elliot Road
Room 201
Quantico, VA 22134-5030
\$5.20 Check Payable to
U.S. Treasurer

Navy

Bureau of Navy Personnel
PERS-02116 2 Navy Annex
Washington, D.C. 20370
703-614-3116
\$5.20 Check Payable to
U.S. Treasurer

Send a letter to each military branch requesting a certification that your spouse is not currently in that branch of military service. Unless you have filed an Application for Waiver of Fees and it was granted by the court, you should send the fee indicated along with your request. If your Application was granted, be sure to say that in your request and enclose a copy.

Connecticut Judicial District Courts

You may file a divorce case in the judicial district where you live or where your spouse lives. If your spouse lives out of state, file the case in the judicial district serving your town. There are twelve judicial districts. New Britain will become the thirteenth judicial district in September 1998. Check with the court clerk if you think this may affect where you file your case. Some judicial districts have more than one courthouse; choose the most convenient courthouse for you.

JUDICIAL DISTRICT	TOWNS SERVED
Ansonia-Milford Judicial District 14 West River Street Milford, CT 06460 203-877-4923	Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Milford*, Orange, Oxford, Seymour, Shelton, West Haven*. (<i>* Towns may also use New Haven Judicial District.</i>)
Danbury Judicial District 146 White Street Danbury, CT 06810 203-797-4400	Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield and Sherman.
Fairfield Judicial District 1061 Main Street Bridgeport, CT 06601 203-579-6527	Bridgeport, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull.

Hartford-New Britain Judicial District 95 Washington Street Hartford, CT 06106 860-566-3170 177 Columbus Boulevard New Britain, CT 06051 860-827-7133	Avon, Berlin, Bloomfield, Bristol, Burlington, Canton, East Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor*, Enfield*, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hart- ford, Manchester*, Marlborough, New Britain, Newington, Plainville, Plymouth, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, Southington, South Windsor*, Suffield, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor and Windsor Locks. (<i>*Towns may also use Tolland Judicial District. Plymouth may also use Waterbury Judicial District.</i>)
Litchfield Judicial District 15 West Street Litchfield, CT 06759 860-567-0885	Barkhamsted, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, New Milford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Roxbury, Salisbury, Sharon, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington and Winchester.
Middlesex Judicial District 1 Court Street Middletown, CT 06457-3374 860-343-6400	Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Saybrook, Portland and Westbrook. (<i>Cromwell may also use Hartford-New Britain Judicial District.</i>)
New Haven Judicial District 235 Church Street New Haven, CT 06510 203-789-7908 New Haven Judicial District at Meriden 54 West Main Street Meriden, CT 06450 203-238-6666	Bethany*, Branford, Cheshire, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Madison, Meriden, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Wallingford and Woodbridge*. (<i>*Towns may also use Ansonia-Milford Judicial District.</i>)

New London Judicial District 70 Huntington Street New London, CT 06320 860-443-5363 New London Judicial District at Norwich 1 Courthouse Square Norwich, CT 06360 860-887-3515	Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Lyme, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Old Lyme, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Voluntown and Waterford.
Stamford-Norwalk Judicial District 123 Hoyt Street Stamford, CT 06905 203-965-5307	Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Weston, Westport and Wilton. <i>(All towns may also use Fairfield Judicial District.)</i>
Tolland Judicial District 69 Brooklyn Street Rockville, CT 06066 860-875-6294	Andover, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Ellington, Hebron, Mansfield, Somers, Stafford, Tolland, Union, Vernon and Willington.
Waterbury Judicial District 300 Grand Street Waterbury, CT 06721 203-596-4023	Middlebury, Naugatuck, Prospect, Southbury, Waterbury, Watertown*, Wolcott and Woodbury*. <i>(*Towns may also use Litchfield Judicial District. Southbury may also use Ansonia-Milford Judicial District.)</i>
Windham Judicial District 155 Church Street Putnam, CT 06260 860-928-7749	Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Willimantic, Windham and Woodstock.

Court Forms Discussed in this Guide and Included in the Divorce Guide Supplement

(Also available at all Judicial District Court Clerks' Offices)

FORM NAME (In alphabetical order)	OFFICIAL FORM NUMBER
Addendum to Affidavit Concerning Children	JD-FM-164A
Advisement of Rights Re: Income Withholding	JD-FM-71
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