

District Seven Settlement Conference Procedures

Pursuant to the Supreme Court's administrative order of July 9, 2020, all judicial districts shall implement mandatory mediation procedures or mandatory judicial settlement conferences in all family law cases where at least one party is represented by an attorney. The Supreme Court of Iowa has provided a waiver to Judicial District 7 to continue the Judge-Led Settlement Conferences prior to trial in lieu of mediation.

Procedures for scheduling and conducting a Judge-Led Settlement Conference:

- 1) At the scheduled trial setting conference the parties will be assigned a date and time for a settlement conference to be scheduled no less than fourteen (14) days prior to trial.
- 2) The parties and their counsel, including any counsel for the children, must attend the settlement conference. For settlement conference requirements, see Rule 4.3, Local Guidelines of Practice and Administration, 7th Judicial District, available on the Judicial Branch website, www.iowacourts.gov.
- 3) At the settlement conference, the parties shall:
 1. Conduct good faith settlement negotiations;
 2. Identify and stipulate both the disputed and undisputed issues and file a written statement thereof before trial;
 3. Prepare and file a joint statement of assets and liabilities, which shall include a legal description of any real property in issue; pursuant to Administrative Order 2021-03 attorneys representing parties must have the Family Law Mediation Report prepared as much as possible and may utilize this

document in lieu of a joint statement; 4. Consider other matters that may aid, expedite or simplify the trial.

- 4) Where division of assets and liabilities or support of parties or children are at issue, the parties shall file amended financial statements as required by Local Guidelines of Practice and Administration 4.3(A) and 598.13, Iowa Code.
- 5) If minor children are at issue in the pending family law matter, both parties shall have completed the approved children in the middle course.
- 6) Within seven (7) days of completing the settlement conference attorneys representing parties must complete and file a Family Law Mediation Report. If both parties are self-represented the Judge conducting the settlement conference will complete and file a Family Law Mediation Report.
- 7) If any issues are resolved during the settlement conference, within 30 days of such settlement conference, the parties shall file a Stipulation reporting the resolved issues.
- 8) Sanctions may be imposed by the Court for failure to comply with any orders.

Introduction to Family Law Settlement Conference:

Parties will be directed to read the “Introduction to Family Law Settlement Conference” (Attachment A), which will be attached to the Order Scheduling Settlement Conference and Trial as well as made available on the D7 Family Law webpage. Family Law Settlement Conference may be a new concept to some attorneys and parties; and the Introduction or similar information may substantially assist parties and increase the likelihood of success if parties familiarize themselves with the process prior to participating.

Mediation Report:

Within seven (7) days of completion of settlement conference, an attorney or party shall file a Family Law Mediation Report (Form B) as prescribed by the Supreme Court of Iowa. Case Coordinators will monitor cases looking for this filing. If all issues are resolved, case coordinators will monitor for the filing of the Stipulation. If a Family Law Mediation Report is not filed timely, the matter will be referred to the Court for review and possible dismissal.

Stipulation:

If any issues are resolved in the settlement conference an attorney or party shall file a Stipulation within 30 days of settlement conference being completed reporting all resolved issues. If the Family Law Mediation Report indicates that some issues were resolved and a subsequent Stipulation is not filed within the appropriate time frame, the matter will be referred to the Court for review and possible dismissal.

Sanctions:

Violation of any Orders, including failure to abide by the deadlines, may result in the imposition of sanctions by the Court, which may include but are not limited to: a dismissal of the case; entry of a default granting the relief requested by the opposing party; an award of attorney fees; a fine; or a jail sentence.

Forms:

The following forms or documents are required in the District 7 Settlement Conference Plan.

The Forms will be available from each Clerk of Court office and on the District 7 Family Law webpage.

Attachment A – Introduction to Family Law Settlement Conference

Form B – Family Law Mediation Report (Supreme Court Form)