

DIVORCE

ANSWER PACKET

*** IMPORTANT INFORMATION ***

YOUR RIGHTS MAY BE BETTER PROTECTED WITH THE HELP OF AN ATTORNEY.

You can obtain a divorce without the assistance of an attorney, but if minor children will be involved in your divorce, if you and your spouse own a home or business, or if you or your spouse have a pension or retirement plan, your custody, property, and support rights may be better protected with the help of an attorney.

The staffs of the Circuit Clerk's Office and the Family Court are prohibited by law from providing legal advice.

TIME DEADLINES !

In a divorce case, the parties must meet certain deadlines, such as filing papers and documents by a specific date. The failure to meet deadlines can result in the Court imposing penalties. For example, if the parties are required to file information by a deadline, and one does, and the other doesn't, the Court can rely solely on the information filed on time. **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH DEADLINES CAN HURT YOUR CASE!** These Instructions contain information on deadlines. Read the instructions carefully, and pay attention to the deadlines.

As the Respondent, the **FIRST DEADLINE** you must meet is the deadline for filing your Answer. You have **20 DAYS** from the date you were served with the divorce petition to serve your answer on the Petitioner; or **30 DAYS** if you were served by publication.

If you require any special arrangements to fully participate in court proceedings, for example, a language interpreter, hearing or visual aids, or accommodations for physical access, please notify the Circuit Clerk's Office by marking the appropriate space on the Case Information Statement.

Instructions for Divorce Answer Packet

The Divorce Answer Packet contains forms and instructions you will need to answer a Divorce Petition, and represent yourself in your divorce case, without an attorney. Your spouse, who filed the divorce, is the Petitioner. You are the Respondent. The meanings of these terms and others are explained in the Definitions of Legal Terms at the end of these instructions. You should take a few minutes to read these definitions before you continue with these instructions.

The first part of your Answer Packet contains the instructions you are now reading. The forms follow the instructions. Please read these instructions carefully, and please write clearly when you fill in the forms. The forms are very important to your case. If required forms are not properly completed, and filed on time, your case may be harmed, or delayed. You will file all of your forms and all other required documents in the Circuit Clerk's Office. Unless otherwise indicated, for every form and document you file, you will need an original that will be filed with the Circuit Clerk, a copy that will be served on the opposing party, and a copy for yourself. If the BCSE is a party, you will need a copy that will be served on that agency.

The forms in this packet require you to provide your name, address, and telephone number. **If you believe your safety, liberty, or health, or the safety, liberty, or health of your children would be put a risk by the disclosure of this information, you may file an affidavit to have the information withheld from all persons except court employees who require the information to carry out their duties.** The affidavit you need to file is the "Affidavit for Withholding Identifying Information." This affidavit is not included in the Answer Packet. If you need this affidavit, you can obtain one at the Circuit Clerk's Office. You can file this affidavit in the Circuit Clerk's Office at any time, or you can ask the Court to enter an order allowing you to withhold the information. If your identifying information is withheld, the Petitioner's court papers will be served through the Family Court, and not directly on you.

TO BEGIN, study the following list of forms included in your packet. The list contains the names of the forms, and important information about the forms and how they will be used in your case. The forms on the list are divided into three groups: Forms Required in All Divorces; Forms Required in Divorces Involving Minor Children; Other Forms You May Need. **Read the list of forms carefully to determine the forms you need to complete.**

Forms Required In: ALL DIVORCES.

1. ANSWER: The Answer is the Respondent's reply to the Petitioner's Divorce Petition. In the Answer, the Respondent replies to the Petitioner's allegations of the reasons the divorce should be granted, (the grounds), and to the Petitioner's requests on matters such as spousal support, allocation of custodial responsibility for the children, child support, and the division of property.
2. CIVIL CASE INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES: This form gives the Court important information about the case and the parties. When you file your Answer in the Circuit Clerk's Office, you also must file three copies of a completed Case Information Statement.
3. FINANCIAL STATEMENT: You and the Petitioner will use this form to list income, assets,

and liabilities. Each of you will complete one of these forms. In cases involving minor children and / or spousal support, each of you must file the additional information discussed in Step 1. **You and the Petitioner must file your completed Financial Statements and all additional information in the Circuit Clerk's Office no later than 5 days before the first hearing in your case. If one party files the financial information on time, and the other party doesn't, the Court can proceed without the missing financial information, can refuse to grant requested relief to the party who didn't file the information, and can base a decision solely on the information that was filed on time.**

Forms Required In: DIVORCES INVOLVING MINOR CHILDREN.

1. APPLICATION FOR CHILD SUPPORT AND INCOME WITHHOLDING SERVICES FROM THE BUREAU FOR CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT: If minor children are involved in the divorce, or spousal support is being requested by either party, you must complete this form, and file it in the Circuit Clerk's Office when you file your Answer. The Petitioner will have completed this form, and filed it in the Circuit Clerk's Office with the Divorce Petition.
2. PROPOSED PARENTING PLAN: If minor children are involved in the divorce, you and the Petitioner must attempt to agree on a Joint Proposed Parenting Plan. A Joint Proposed Parenting Plan tells the Court in detail how the parents think the responsibilities for raising the children should be shared after the divorce. If you and the Petitioner cannot agree on a Joint Plan, each of you must file Individual Proposed Parenting Plans. **In either event, the Joint or Individual plans should be filed prior to the first hearing / conference in the case. If one party files an Individual Plan on time, and the other party doesn't, the Court can go ahead without the missing plan, and rely solely on the plan that was filed on time.**
3. PARENT EDUCATION NOTICE: The notice explains that each parent must pay a \$25 Parent Education Fee, unless fees have been waived, and must complete a Parent Education Class conducted by specially trained persons approved by the Courts.

OTHER FORMS YOU MAY NEED.

1. SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' RELIEF ACT WAIVER: The Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act permits persons serving in the armed forces to delay court cases. A party serving in the armed forces who signs this form agrees to allow the divorce to proceed despite the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act.

Now that you've reviewed the list of forms, you next need to determine the correct forms for your case, and learn the deadlines for serving and filing those forms. These things are explained in Step 1.

**STEP 1. WHAT ARE THE CORRECT FORMS FOR YOUR CASE?
WHAT ARE THE DEADLINES FOR FILING THE FORMS?**

A. EVERYONE who files an Answer **MUST** complete the following forms:

Answer - Deadlines: Must be filed in the Circuit Clerk's Office and served on the Petitioner within 20 days of the date the Answer was served, or within 30 days if service was by publication.

Civil Case Information Statement - Deadline: Must be filed with the Answer.

Financial Statement - Deadline: Must be served on the other party, or parties, and filed in the Circuit Clerk's office no later than 5 days before the first hearing or conference. AND, in cases involving minor children, and / or spousal support, the Financial Statement must be accompanied by the additional information explained in items B and C immediately below.

B. If MINOR CHILDREN are involved in the divorce, IN ADDITION to the forms in Group 1, you MUST also complete and file the following forms:

Application for Child Support Enforcement and Income Withholding Services - Deadline: Must be filed with the Answer.

Proposed Parenting Plan - Deadline: Before the first hearing.

AND

You MUST also file the following information WITH your Financial Statement:

1. A copy of your most recent wage or salary stub showing gross pay, deductions for taxes and other items, and net pay for a normal pay period, and for the year-to-date;
2. Copies of your and your spouse's complete income tax returns for the two years immediately preceding the date the petition was filed, together with copies of the federal Form W-2 for those years; and a copy of the Form W-2 for the most recent year for which that form is available, even if a tax return has not yet been filed for that year;
3. For self-employed persons and business owners, a copy of a current financial statement showing gross income, expenses, and net income;
4. Copies of any invoices or receipts showing the cost of any extraordinary medical expenses for the party or the children, of any child care expenses, and of any expenses necessitated by the special needs of the children.

AND

You MUST also complete a Parent Education Class. Deadlines: You must pay a Parent Education fee when you file your Answer, unless your fees have been waived. You should complete Parent Education before the first hearing. If you do not, your case may be delayed.

C. If you are requesting SPOUSAL SUPPORT; IN ADDITION to the Group 1 forms you MUST also complete and file:

Application for Child Support Enforcement and Income Withholding Services - Deadline: Must be filed with the Petition.

AND

You MUST file WITH your Financial Statement the additional information listed in

items B. 1 - 4 immediately above.

Now that you've determined the forms required for your divorce, go to Step 2 to learn about how to fill out the Answer form, and other required forms.

STEP 2. HOW TO FILL OUT THE ANSWER AND OTHER FORMS.

First, an Important Reminder: You have 20 DAYS from the date you were served with the Divorce Petition to serve the Petitioner with your Answer; or 30 DAYS if you were served by publication!

Before you begin, you may want to make several copies of each blank form. You can use the copies to practice on, and you'll have extra blank forms if you make an error completing a form.

Filling out the Answer form is a matter of checking the right boxes, and filling in blanks. How you complete your Answer depends on the particularities of your case, such as the grounds for divorce claimed in the Divorce Petition. Read the last section in this step for information about the grounds for divorce. The form is self-explanatory, but make certain you read everything carefully, and fully understand what you're doing when you check a box or fill in a blank. Complete the Answer form down to the Verification. Don't complete and sign the Verification until you are before a Notary Public. Deputy Circuit Clerks can also notarize your Verification. Don't fill in the Certificate of Service until you are ready to mail the Answer to your spouse.

Next, take a look at the other forms you must fill out. If necessary, return to Step 1 and review the list of forms to make certain you fill out all of the required forms. Some forms have a set of instructions accompanying them, the Parenting Plan, for example. Other forms have instructions built into the form. Read the instructions and forms carefully, and make certain you understand what you're doing when you check a box or fill in a blank.

Grounds for Divorce

The Divorce Petition form included in the Petitioner's Divorce Packet lists three common grounds for divorce. The most common ground is Irreconcilable Differences. This ground is Item 19 in the Divorce Petition. Item 19 does not require a check mark. In other words, when a person files the form Divorce Petition, Irreconcilable Differences is automatically claimed as a ground, unless the person filing the Petition cross it out. The other two grounds listed in the form Petition, Items 20 and 21 must be checked to be claimed. The grounds of Irreconcilable Differences and One Year Separation are briefly explained in the next two paragraphs.

Irreconcilable Differences

To obtain a divorce on the ground of Irreconcilable Differences:

1. The Divorce Petition must claim Irreconcilable Differences as a ground. Irreconcilable Differences is automatically claimed by filing the form Divorce Petition included with the Petitioner's Divorce Packet.
2. The Respondent must file an Answer, **and** the Answer must admit Irreconcilable Differences.

3. At least one of the parties to the divorce must attend the final hearing.

One Year Separation

To obtain a divorce on the ground of One Year Separation:

1. The Petitioner must check Item 20 on the Divorce Petition.
2. At least one witness must testify to the 1 year separation. (Neither of the parties count as this one witness.)
3. At least one of the parties to the divorce must attend the final hearing.

Now that you've gotten underway by completing your Answer and other required forms, go to Steps 3 to learn about how to serve your Answer on the Petitioner.

STEP 3. SERVING YOUR ANSWER AND OTHER PAPERS ON THE PETITIONER.

You have 20 DAYS from the date you were served with the Divorce Petition to serve the Petitioner with your Answer; or 30 DAYS if you were served by publication! It is your responsibility to serve your Answer on the Petitioner.

During the course of the case, depending on the nature of your case, you will be required to serve other papers on the Petitioner, and on the BCSE, if that agency is a party; for example, Financial Statement and accompanying records, Proposed Parenting Plan, and various motions. The most convenient and inexpensive way to serve these papers is by First Class United States Mail. When you serve these papers by first class mail, you will complete a Certificate of Service form to verify you served the papers on the date indicated. Some forms, such as motion forms, have a Certificate of Service built into the form, and your packet also contains a separate, generic Certificate of Service form. You should make several copies of this blank form.

Your Answer, and every other paper you are required to serve must be filed in the Circuit Clerk's Office. You are required to file these documents in the Clerk's Office within a reasonable time after you have served them. It's best to file them quickly so your court file is always up to date and contains timely documentation that you have served the papers required. Step 4 discusses filing papers in the Circuit Clerk's Office, and fees and court costs.

STEP 4. FILING PAPERS IN THE CIRCUIT CLERK'S OFFICE. FEES AND COURT COSTS.

You will file your Answer and all other papers you serve in the Circuit Clerk's Office in the county in which the divorce was filed.

When you file your Answer, you are also required to file three copies of a completed Case Information Statement, and a completed Application and Income Withholding Form from the West Virginia Bureau For Child Support Enforcement. **Everyone who files an Answer MUST file these forms.**

Important Note. - The law prohibits the Circuit Clerk and Deputy Clerks from providing legal advice. This means they cannot assist you in completing your forms, or “check” your forms to see if you’ve completed them correctly.

Fees and Court Costs.

You are not required to pay a fee to file an Answer. The Petitioner paid a \$135 filing fee when the Divorce Petition was filed, and paid a \$20 fee if the Petition was served on you by the Sheriff’s Department. After examining the financial circumstances of you and the Petitioner, the Court may require the two of you to share these fees, and other costs, or may require one of you to pay the entire amounts. Fees and costs are **not refundable** if you and the Petitioner change your minds about your divorce.

If you believe you cannot afford to pay fees and court costs, you should ask a Deputy Circuit Clerk for an affidavit to waive fees and costs. You can fill out the affidavit in the Clerk’s office. The affidavit requires you to list some basic information about your financial situation. A Deputy Clerk will review your completed affidavit, and tell you if you meet the legal requirements to have your fees and costs waived. If you meet these requirements, you will not have to pay fees and costs. If you don’t meet these requirements, you must pay fees and costs, but you can ask the Court to review your affidavit later.

After you have served the Petitioner with your Answer, and filed the Answer and the required forms in the Circuit Clerk’s Office, the Court will schedule a hearing or conference in your case. Step 5 explains how the hearings and conferences in your case will be conducted.

STEP 5. CONFERENCES & HEARINGS: WHAT TO EXPECT.

In Step 5, you’ll learn how the conferences and hearings in your case will be conducted. In Step 6, you’ll learn what you need to do to prepare for your first conference or hearing. Conferences are conducted by the Family Court’s Case Coordinator. Hearings are conducted by the Family Court Judge.

In Family Court, all hearings and conferences are set by Scheduling Orders. **It is very important that you attend all hearings, show up on time, and come prepared.** You risk hurting your case if you fail to attend hearings, show up late, or come unprepared. Find out where the hearings will be held and allow plenty of time to get there on time.

If you receive a Scheduling Order notifying you of a hearing or conference, and you will not be able to attend, you must send the Family Court a written request to reschedule, and you must state the reason you cannot attend the originally scheduled hearing. The Family Court must receive your request to reschedule not less than 7 days before the date of the hearing you want rescheduled.

Family Court hearings are not open to the public. Only the parties, attorneys for parties, and witnesses are allowed to attend hearings. All hearings are recorded on audio tape. Everyone who testifies must swear or affirm to tell the truth. Everyone is expected to behave in a

courteous and dignified manner. Courts will not tolerate improper conduct. The Rules of Court prohibit photographs, video taping, and sound recording in the courtroom, and in all public areas associated with the courtroom.

Some Family Court Judges question the parties and their witnesses. Others want the attorneys and self-represented parties to present evidence and question witnesses. If you are representing yourself, you will be expected to present your evidence and question witnesses. Ask a member of the Family Court staff how the judge will conduct your hearing.

Not all hearings produce an immediate decision. Sometimes, the issues in dispute just aren't ready for a decision. For instance, the judge may decide more evidence is needed on an issue. Sometimes, the judge will want to think things over before making a decision. Sometimes, the judge will announce a decision at the conclusion of a hearing. Whatever the circumstances, once made, all decisions are written down in the form of Orders, and filed in the Circuit Clerk's Office. If there's an attorney in the case, the judge may ask the attorney to draft an Order which will be sent to the judge and the other party for review. If neither party has an attorney, the judge will prepare the Orders.

Now that you've learned some things about the way hearings are conducted, move to Step 6, and learn what you need to do to prepare for the first hearing or conference in your case.

STEP 6. PREPARING FOR THE FIRST HEARING OR CONFERENCE.

In Step 6, we'll discuss what will happen at the first hearing or conference in your case, and what you need to do to prepare. To begin, review the following list of important reminders of things that must be done before the first hearing or conference.

THINGS YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE THE FIRST HEARING OR CONFERENCE.

Financial Statements: You and the Petitioner must file your completed Financial Statements and all additional information with the Circuit Clerk no later than 5 days before the first hearing / conference.

Parent Education: If minor children are involved in the divorce, both parents must complete an approved Parent Education Class, and file a Class Completion Certificate in the Circuit Clerk's Office. You need to complete Parent Education Class before the first conference / hearing. If you do not, your case may be delayed.

Proposed Parenting Plan: If minor children are involved in the divorce, before the first hearing / conference you and the other parent need to file a Joint Proposed Parenting Plan together, or each of you need to file Individual Proposed Parenting Plans.

Witness Subpoenas: If you think you will need witnesses to testify at a hearing, you need to make certain those witnesses will attend. If you are not certain a witness will show up, you need to obtain a subpoena. To arrange for a subpoena, go to the Circuit Clerk's office. You should do this at least 10 days before the hearing. To obtain witness subpoenas, you need to

provide the Deputy Clerk with the names and addresses of the witnesses, and pay a Clerk's Fee of 50¢ per subpoena, and a service fee of \$20 per subpoena, unless your fees have been waived.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE OR HEARING: WHAT TO EXPECT.

If a party makes a written motion for temporary relief, and the judge grants the motion, the first hearing may be a hearing on temporary relief. Temporary relief hearings deal with matters such as allocation of custodial responsibility, child support, medical support, spousal support, and possession of the marital residence.

This first hearing is called a case management conference / hearing. You will receive a Scheduling Order telling you the date, time, and place, and whether the proceeding will be a conference conducted by the Case Coordinator, or a hearing conducted by the Family Court Judge. The Scheduling Order also will tell you if you need to complete and file any additional forms, file any additional information, or take care of any other matters before you come to the hearing.

One of the purposes of the case management conference / hearing is to determine what issues are disputed in your case, and how many hearings and how much time your case will require. If your case has no disputed issues, the first hearing may be the only hearing necessary, and the Court may suggest making the first hearing the final hearing. This can only be done if there is a good reason to do it, all necessary papers have been filed, and you and the Petitioner agree to it.

In cases involving minor children, the most important subject discussed at the first conference / hearing will be the development of a Parenting Plan. Read the Parenting Plan Instructions to learn the things you need to know about Parenting Plans.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR HEARINGS.

The issues that will be the subject of hearings in your case depend on the nature of your case and the particular issues in dispute between you and the Petitioner. Issues frequently in dispute in divorce cases include, but are not limited to, allocation of custodial responsibility, child support, division and possession of marital property, spousal support, and the division of marital assets and debts. To prepare for a hearing, the first thing you need to do is make sure you understand what issues will be addressed at that hearing. The second thing you need to do is decide how you can prove your case on these issues. You can prove your case by your testimony, by documents, or by the testimony of witnesses. The opposing party will be given the same opportunities to testify and present evidence. Make a plan for how you will present your case. It's best to write things down. List the things you want to prove, and for each thing you want to prove, list how you will prove it, by witness testimony, or a document, for example.

As you have learned, in some cases the first hearing may be the only hearing necessary. In other cases, a number of hearings may be required before the case reaches a final hearing. What happens after the final hearing is discussed in Step 7.

STEP 7. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FINAL HEARING?

The final hearing will result in a Final Order concluding the case and settling all issues in dispute. Both parties will receive copies of the Final Order. **You are NOT legally divorced**

until a Final Order has been signed by the Family Court Judge!

Any party may file a Motion for Reconsideration of a Final Order for one of the five types of reasons specified in chapter 51, article 2A, section 10 of the West Virginia Code. A Motion for Reconsideration can be filed only for one of these reasons. A Motion for Reconsideration is made to the Family Court, and must be filed with the Circuit Clerk within a reasonable time after the Final Order was entered, or within one year, depending on the reason for which the motion is filed.

Any party may appeal a Final Order of Family Court to the Circuit Court. An appeal to the Circuit Court is made by filing a Petition for Appeal with the Circuit Clerk. A Petition for Appeal must be filed within 30 days after the date the Final Order was entered. The Circuit Court may refuse to consider a Petition for Appeal. The other parties have a right to file a Reply to a Petition for Appeal, and file a Cross Petition; and the party filing the Petition for Appeal has a right to file a Reply to a Cross Petition. If the Circuit Court does not rule on the petition within the time required, all parties will receive a notice the appeal will be automatically transferred to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals unless all parties file written objections to the transfer. If an appeal is transferred to the Supreme Court, the parties are not required to file any additional papers.

If the Circuit Court refuses to consider a Petition for Appeal, or if a party disagrees with the Circuit Court’s ruling on a Petition for Appeal, an appeal may be made to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Under some circumstances, a Final Order of Family Court may be appealed directly to the Supreme Court of Appeals. This may be done if all parties, together or separately, file a Notice of Intent to Appeal Directly to the Supreme Court. Filing this Notice requires a waiver of the right to file a Petition for Appeal to the Circuit Court. The Notice must be filed within 14 days after the date the Final Order was entered.

A party filing an appeal to the Circuit Court or Supreme Court may make a Motion for a Stay. A Motion for a Stay asks that the terms of a Final Order not be carried out until the appeal has been resolved. A Motion for a Stay is made in the Family Court. If the Family Court denies the motion, the motion may be made in the Circuit Court. The payment of spousal support and child support cannot be stayed. The payment of past due child support may be stayed.

Forms and instructions for appeals to the Circuit Court and Supreme Court are available in Family Court and Circuit Clerk offices.

DEFINITIONS OF LEGAL TERMS

Affidavit

A written statement of facts sworn to before a Notary Public.

Alimony

Money paid by a divorced person for the support of the ex-spouse. Alimony is now called “spousal support.” Alimony is not the same as child support.

Allocation of custodial responsibility

The allocation of custodial responsibility determines how the parents will share custody of the children after the divorce. Formerly referred to as “child custody.”

Answer

The Respondent’s written response to the Petition for Divorce.

Application For Child Support Enforcement And Income Withholding Services

In cases involving minor children, both parents must fill out this form to request or decline child support enforcement and income withholding services from the Bureau For Child Support Enforcement.

Bureau For Child Support Enforcement (BCSE)

The state agency that enforces parents’ child support obligations and helps collect child support payments.

Case Coordinator

The Family Court staff person who keeps track of cases, and holds conferences with the parties.

Child support

The money paid by a divorced parent to help pay the expenses of raising the children. The Family Court Judge sets the amount of support by using West Virginia's child support formula.

Circuit Clerk

The court official who keeps all court files and documents. All papers filed in a court case are filed in the Circuit Clerk’s Office. Most service of process is arranged through the Circuit Clerk’s Office.

Circuit Court

The court of general jurisdiction for a county, or for several counties grouped together as a circuit.

Civil Case Information Statement

A form filed in the Circuit Clerk’s Office by all parties to all court cases at the beginning of the case to provide the Court with information about the case.

Divorce

The termination of a marriage by a Court based on proof provided by the parties.

Family Court

The Court that handles divorces, paternity cases, and other types of family cases.

Financial Statement

Forms that provide the Court with financial information about the income, assets, and liabilities of the parties.

Grounds

The reasons for a divorce. Two common grounds for divorce in West Virginia are irreconcilable differences and one year separation.

Irreconcilable differences

One of the grounds for a divorce. Irreconcilable differences means the parties cannot get along with each other, and don't think they ever will.

Mediation

A way of settling Parenting Plan disagreements. A neutral third party, the Mediator, helps the parties agree on a Parenting Plan.

Mediator

A person trained to help persons settle disagreements.

Order

A written document recording a Court decision.

Parent Education Class.

A class designed to help divorcing parents understand the negative effects of divorce and child custody disputes on children, and to teach parents ways to lessen those negative effects. Parent Education Classes are taught by specially trained persons approved by the Courts.

Parenting Plan

A document which states in detail how divorcing parents will share the responsibilities for raising their children after the divorce.

Party

In a divorce, the Petitioner is one party, and the Respondent is the other party.

Petition for Divorce

The Petition for Divorce is filed by the party who begins the divorce case, the Petitioner. The Petition states the grounds for divorce, and states what actions the Petitioner wants the Court to take on matters such as the allocation of custodial responsibility for children, child support, spousal support, and the division of marital property.

Petitioner

The person who begins the divorce by filing a Petition for Divorce.

Premediation Screening

In divorce cases involving minor children, a process in which a trained Premediation Screener meets separately with both parties to determine if a Mediator can help the parties agree on a Joint Parenting Plan.

Relief

What a party to a court case requests from the Court. For example, spousal support would be one type of relief a party might request.

Respondent

The person on the other side of the divorce case from the Petitioner.

Self-represented party

A person who acts as her / his own attorney in a court case. Persons who represent themselves are also referred to as *pro se* litigants, pronounced “pro say.”

Separation

In divorce cases, a situation in which husband and wife live in separate households and no longer have marital relations.

Service

The delivery by authorized methods of a court document.

Shared parenting

The sharing by divorced parents of their responsibilities for raising their children.

Spousal support

Money paid by a divorced person to the ex-spouse. Formerly called “alimony.”

Spouse

Husband or wife.

Summons

The court document that notifies the Respondent of the filing of the Petitioner’s case, and states the amount of time the Respondent has to serve an Answer.

The End

IN THE FAMILY COURT OF _____ COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA.

In Re:

The Marriage / Children of:

Civil Action No. _____

_____, and

Petitioner

_____.

Respondent

Social Security Number

Social Security Number

Address

Address

Daytime phone

Daytime phone

ANSWER TO DIVORCE PETITION

Are you currently a party to a domestic violence proceeding? [] Yes [] No

In answer to the Petition for Divorce, the Respondent says the following:

1. The Respondent admits irreconcilable differences exist between the Petitioner and the Respondent.

2. The Respondent admits all of the allegations in the Petition except the matters contained in the items numbered: _____.

3. The Petitioner and Respondent are the parents of:

[] No children born during this marriage, and none are expected.

[] _____ children, whose names, dates of birth, and social security numbers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Of Birth</u>	<u>Social Security No.</u>
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_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

In the rest of this Answer, "the children" always means the children whose names you just listed.

A child is currently expected, and the estimated date of delivery is _____

4. The children currently live with:

Mother Father

Another person, or persons, whose name(s) and address(es) are: _____

5. During the last five years, if any of the children have lived at addresses other than their current address, use the following space to list where they lived, and for how long. *If there is not enough room in the following space, use an additional sheet of paper.* I have attached ____ additional sheet(s).

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Dates of Residence</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

6. Who provides health insurance for the children?

Mother Father Medicaid WV CHIP

Another person, whose name and address are: _____
_____.

The children DO NOT have health insurance coverage.

The West Virginia Children's Health Insurance Program (WV CHIP) can help parents obtain free or low cost health care for their children. For more information, call 1-877-982-2447, or ask the Family Court Staff about WV CHIP.

7. Answer all of the following questions.

- a. Has the Respondent been a party or witness in any other proceeding, in any state, concerning the allocation of custodial responsibility for the children? Yes No
- b. Is the Respondent aware of any other proceeding, past or present, in any state, concerning allocation of custodial responsibility for the children? Yes No
- c. Is the Respondent aware of any person, other than the Petitioner and Respondent, who has

physical custody of, or claims any custodial right concerning the children?

Yes No

THEREFORE, the Respondent asks that the Court grant a divorce, and to grant such other relief as the Court considers proper, including the matters specifically stated below:

- Approve the Proposed Parenting Plan filed by the Respondent.
- Order the Petitioner to pay support for the minor children.
- Order the Petitioner to maintain health insurance coverage on the children, if reasonably available, and to assist with reasonable health care expenses not covered by insurance or by a government medical card.
- Order the Petitioner to pay spousal support.
- Make a fair and equitable division of marital property.
- Award _____ the exclusive use and possession of the marital home located at _____.
- Award _____ the exclusive use and possession of the following motor vehicles: _____.
- Award _____ the exclusive use and possession of the furniture, furnishings and appliances located in the marital home.
- Award the Respondent the exclusive use, possession and ownership of the following marital property:

Description of Property

Estimated Value

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Order that the Respondent be held solely responsible for the following debts:

Description of Debt

Amount Owed

_____	_____
_____	_____

[] Order that the Petitioner be held solely responsible for the following debts:

Description of Debt

Amount Owed

[] Prohibit the Petitioner from conveying or otherwise disposing of any marital property prior to the time the Court divides the property.

[] Grant Respondent the right to resume using the previous name _____.

[] Prohibit the Petitioner from annoying, abusing, threatening, or interfering with the personal liberty and safety of the Respondent.

[] Grant this other relief:

Respondent's Signature

Date

You must sign the Verification on the next page before a Notary Public or Deputy Circuit Clerk.

VERIFICATION

I, _____, after making an oath or affirmation to tell the truth, say that the facts I have stated in this Petition are true of my personal knowledge; and if I have set forth matters upon information given to me by others, I believe that information to be true.

Signature

Date

This Verification was sworn to or affirmed before me on the ____ day of _____,
2_____.

Notary Public / Other official

My commission expires:_____.

CERTIFICATE of SERVICE

State of West Virginia

County of _____

I, _____, state that I mailed my Answer to Divorce Petition by first class United States Mail, postage paid, to _____, at the address of _____, on the ____ day of _____,
2_____.

Signature

Date

**CIVIL CASE INFORMATION STATEMENT
DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES**

IN THE FAMILY COURT OF _____ COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

I. CASE STYLE:

**IN RE
THE MARRIAGE/CHILDREN OF:**

PETITIONER

CASE No. _____

Judge _____

Street

City **State** **Zip**

Phone Number : () _____

Social Security #: _____

and

RESPONDENT

**Days to
Answer**

Type of Service

Street

City **State** **Zip**

Phone Number : () _____

Social Security #: _____

Original and _____ copies of petition enclosed/attached.

PETITIONER: RESPONDENT:	CASE NUMBER:
--	---------------------

- I. PLEASE CHECK HERE IF EITHER PARTY SEEKS CHILD SUPPORT OR ALIMONY.
- II. PLEASE CHECK IF A FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDER IS NOW IN EFFECT.
- III. TYPE OF CASE OR RELIEF: (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce w/o children <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce w/ children	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent Visitation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annulment <input type="checkbox"/> Separate Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Paternity
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Support only	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Custody w/o Divorce	

IV. DO YOU OR ANY OF YOUR CLIENTS OR WITNESSES IN THIS CASE REQUIRE SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO A DISABILITY? YES NO

- IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY:*
- Wheelchair accessible hearing room and other facilities
 - Interpreter or other auxiliary aid for the hearing impaired
 - Reader or other auxiliary aid for the visually impaired
 - Spokesperson or other auxiliary aid for the speech impaired
 - Other: _____

V. LIST ALL MINOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY THIS ACTION:

Name	Date of Birth	SSN
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Attorney Name: _____ Representing: Petitioner Respondent

Firm: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Dated: _____

Proceeding Without An Attorney _____
Signature

IN THE FAMILY COURT OF _____ COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA.

In Re:

The Marriage / Children of:

Civil Action No. _____

_____,
Petitioner

and

_____.
Respondent

Address

Address

Daytime phone

Daytime phone

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

This form MUST be completed in ALL DIVORCE, CHILD SUPPORT, AND PATERNITY CASES.

The Petitioner and the Respondent must each complete one of these forms.

The completed form MUST be filed in the Circuit Clerk’s Office and served on the opposing party AT LEAST 5 DAYS BEFORE THE FIRST HEARING. If the Bureau For Child Support Enforcement is a party, the completed form must also be served on their local office.

If your case involves minor children, or either party requests spousal support, you MUST file the following information WITH your completed Financial Statement.

1. A copy of your most recent wage or salary stub showing gross pay, deductions for taxes and other items, and net pay for a normal pay period, and for the year-to-date;
2. Copies of the your and your spouse’s complete income tax returns for the two years immediately preceding the date the petition was filed, together with copies of the federal Form W-2 for those years; and a copy of the Form W-2 for the most recent year for which that form is available, even if a tax return has not yet been filed for that year;
3. For self-employed persons and business owners, a copy of a current financial statement showing gross income, expenses, and net income;
4. Copies of any invoices or receipts showing the cost of any extraordinary medical expenses for the party or the children, of any child care expenses, and of any expenses necessitated by the special needs of the children.

If the information you provide in this form, or file with this form changes after you file the form, you MUST immediately provide the new information.

The information you provide on this form is ONLY for the use in the judicial system, and is required by law and court rule to be kept CONFIDENTIAL.

Read each question carefully. Provide all requested information. Write or print clearly. After you have completed the form, you MUST sign the Verification on the last page before a Notary Public.

Full Name: _____ Social Security No: _____

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Any physical or mental disability: _____

Age: _____ Education: _____

Employer: _____ Type of work: _____

Employment Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Date Employed: _____ Gross pay per pay period: _____

Paid: ___ Weekly ___ Every two weeks ___ Twice a Month ___ Monthly

Do you receive TANF benefits? _____ If "Yes," list monthly amount: _____

YOUR INCOME: You MUST attach written documentation for all income. For wage earning employees who work fluctuating hours and/or overtime, provide wage history of at least six months, or length of most recent employment, whichever is less. Wage / salary history MUST be documented by W-2 forms, and/or year-to-date figures on the most recent pay stubs. For self-employed individuals, income MUST be verified by documents which show gross income and expenses.

Income Source	Monthly Amount
1. Salary	
2. Wages	
3. Commissions	
4. Bonuses	
5. Tips	
6. Payments from a pension plan	
7. Social Security, SSI	
8. Other: <u>explain</u>	

PROPERTY

List ALL property in which you, and / or your spouse have an interest. In the "Who owns?" column, put "M" for marital property; "H" if separate property of husband; "W" if separate property of wife.

Property Description	Market Value	Amount Owed	Who owns?
Marital Home	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Other Real Estate	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Mobile Home	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Motor Vehicles	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Household Goods	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Checking Accts.	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Savings Accts. / CDs	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Money Market Certificates	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Stocks	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Credit Union Accts.	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Profit Sharing Plans	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Trusts	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Stocks / Mutual Funds	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Bonds	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Pension Plans	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
IRA / SEP Accts.	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Severance Pay; Unemployment	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Worker's Comp.	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Whole life Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____

Property Description	Market Value	Amount Owed	Who owns?
Annuities	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Guns	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Tools	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Jewelry	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Personal Property not located in Marital Home	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
Other*; _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____
_____	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____

*Other includes, but is not limited to: coin collections; art; state and federal tax refunds; money owed to you or your spouse; business interests; money expected from a lawsuit or settlement; education benefits; patents; copyrights; royalties; contents of safe deposit boxes; and anything else of value.

PROPERTY CONVEYED TO OTHERS

List all real or personal property with a value of \$500.00 or more that was sold, given away, or otherwise transferred by you and / or your spouse within the last 5 years. Describe each such item; list market value when transferred; list type of transfer; provide name of the person to whom property was transferred; list amount received.

DEBTS

List all debts owed by you, and / or your spouse. In the "Whose debt?" column, put "M" for marital debt; "H" if separate debt of husband; "W" if separate debt of wife.

Owed to Whom?	Amount Owed	For what?	Secured by?	Whose debt?
1 _____	\$ _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	\$ _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	\$ _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	\$ _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	\$ _____	_____	_____	_____

Total owed: \$ _____ **Total of all monthly payments: \$ _____**

CHILDREN

List the names; ages; birth dates; and social security numbers of all minor children involved in this case. Then, answer the list of questions about the children.

Do your children receive social security benefits? ____ If "Yes," list amount per month: \$ _____

Do your children receive income or wages? ____ If "Yes," list amount per month: \$ _____

Do your children have any special needs that result in extraordinary expenses that should be taken into account when the court sets the amount of child support? ____ If "Yes," explain:

Are child care expenses currently being paid so that the parent who takes care of the children can work or seek work? ____ If "Yes," how much per month? \$ _____ You MUST attach receipts.

Are you the parent of minor children OTHER than the minor children involved in this case? ____

Do you provide support for any disabled adult children? ____ If "Yes," list these children's names, ages, the nature of their disability, and the amount of support you provide each month. You must attach receipts or other documentation for the support you provide.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Is health insurance available to you through your employment? ____ If you answered "No," you MUST provide written verification from your employer that health insurance is not available to you. If you have health insurance from ANY source, you MUST complete the following table.

Insurance company name	
Address	
Policy number	

Group number	
Any other ID numbers	
Persons covered	
Restrictions	
Amount of children's portion of premium	
Deductibles	

Do you have recurring, out of pocket health expenses for yourself or your children that are not covered by insurance? _____ If "Yes," you MUST attach documents that verify these expenses.

CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Do you currently pay court ordered child support payments for any children OTHER than the children involved in this case? _____ If "Yes," you MUST attach a copy of the Support Order, and records showing your payment history; and you must list the following information for each child: full name; birth date; social security number; monthly payment for that child.

SPOUSAL SUPPORT

If **you** are requesting spousal support, you MUST complete the following list of monthly expenses. These are the amounts you now pay if you are living separate from you spouse. If you have not yet separated, list the amounts you estimate you will have to pay when you do separate.

MONTHLY EXPENSES

Credit card payments; other payments on unsecured debts: \$ _____ Car payments: \$ _____
 Rent or mortgage: \$ _____ Electric: \$ _____ Gas: \$ _____ Water / Sewer: \$ _____
 Trash: \$ _____ Telephone: \$ _____ TV Cable: \$ _____ Food: \$ _____
 Clothing: \$ _____ Gasoline: \$ _____ Car repairs: \$ _____ Car insurance: \$ _____

Health insurance: \$ _____ Other insurance: \$ _____ Explain: _____
Home repair and maintenance: \$ _____ Child care: \$ _____
Entertainment & recreation: \$ _____
Medical & health not covered by insurance: \$ _____ Explain: _____
Other: \$ _____ Explain: _____

TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES: \$ _____

IF EITHER YOU OR YOUR SPOUSE IS REQUESTING SPOUSAL SUPPORT, YOU MUST COMPLETE THE REST OF THIS FORM.

Wife's Education

Graduate from high school? ____ If "Yes," what year? ____ If "No," receive a GED? ____ If GED, year? _____

Graduate from technical or trade school? ____ If "Yes," list type of training or degree and year received. _____.

Graduate from college? ____ If "Yes," list degree and year received. _____

Receive a post-graduate degree? ____ If "Yes," list degree and year received. _____

Wife's Employment History

List last four jobs. List employer; position held; dates employment began and ended; monthly salary.

Husband's Education

Graduate from high school? ____ If "Yes," what year? ____ If "No," receive a GED? ____ If GED, year? _____

Graduate from technical or trade school? ____ If "Yes," list type of training or degree and year received. _____.

Graduate from college? ____ If "Yes," list degree and year received. _____

Receive a post-graduate degree? ____ If "Yes," list degree and year received. _____

Husband's Employment History

List last four jobs. List employer; position held; dates employment began and ended; monthly salary.

Wife's Health

Wife's age: _____

Wife's physical health is: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Poor If "Poor," explain: _____

Wife's mental and emotional health is: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Poor If "Poor," explain:

Husband's Health

Husband's age: _____

Husband's physical health is: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Poor If "Poor," explain: _____

Husband's mental and emotional health is: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Poor If "Poor," explain: _____

Obtaining Additional Education or Training

Would additional training and / or education help the party seeking spousal support to increase earning ability within a reasonable time? _____ If "Yes," explain what type of training or education; the estimated yearly cost of such training or education; and the length of time it would take to complete this training or education: _____

Additional Information

Explain why you think spousal support should be awarded, or denied: _____

VERIFICATION

I, _____, after making an oath of affirmation to tell the truth, say that the facts I have stated in this Financial Statement are true of my personal knowledge; and if I provided information from other persons, I believe that information to be true. **I understand that deliberately failing to provide complete disclosure, and knowingly providing incorrect information constitute the crime of false swearing.**

Signature

This Verification was sworn to or affirmed before me on the ____ day of _____,
_____.

Notary Public / Other Official

My commission expires:_____.

CERTIFICATE of SERVICE

State of West Virginia
County of _____

I, _____, the person completing this Financial Statement, mailed copies the Financial Statement and all attached documents, by first class mail, postage paid, to:
_____, at the address of _____
_____, at the address of _____
on the ____ day of _____, _____.

Signature

Date

IN THE FAMILY COURT OF MONROE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

In Re:

The Marriage/Children of:

Civil Action No. _____

_____,
Petitioner

and

Respondent

Address

Address

Daytime Phone

Daytime Phone

PROPERTY AGREEMENT

The Petitioner and Respondent agree to the following division of all of their marital property, separate property, and debts.

The Petitioner, _____, shall receive the following property and debts:

The Respondent, _____, shall receive the following property and debts:

By signing this agreement I am representing to the court that:

1. I have entered into the agreement voluntarily.
2. I have full and complete knowledge of all property and debts my spouse and I required during our marriage and all separate property owned by each of us during the marriage.
3. I understand this agreement and believe it to be fair and in my best interest.

Petitioner

Date

Respondent

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

State of West Virginia
County of _____

I, _____, a Notary Public in the county and state aforesaid do certify that _____, whose name is signed to the writing above has acknowledged the same before me in the aforesaid county and state on _____

Notary Public

My commission expires: _____

State of West Virginia
County of _____

I, _____, a Notary Public in the county and state aforesaid do hereby certify that _____, whose name is signed to the writing above has acknowledged the same before me in the aforesaid county and state on _____.

Notary Public

My commission expires: _____

IN THE FAMILY COURT OF MONROE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

PETITIONER

VS: CIVIL ACTION NUMBER _____

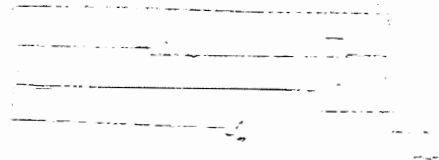
RESPONDENT

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO: _____
Name

Address

City State Zip Code



You are hereby given notice that the undersigned will bring the above-styled action on for final hearing before the FAMILY COURT JUDGE. The hearing will be on the _____ day of _____, 2011, at _____ a.m./p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Hearings before the Family Law Master shall be held at the following location: THE FAMILY COURT HEARING ROOM, FIRE HALL BASEMENT, GREEN HILL ROAD, UNION, WEST VIRGINIA .
You may be present to protect your interest.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, _____, Petitioner/Respondent in the foregoing action hereby certify that I have sent a copy of this Notice of Hearing to the Petitioner/Respondent at the above address by depositing a true copy of the same in the U. S. Mail, postage prepaid, this the _____ day of _____, 2011.

Form 8