

**AMENDED ORDER GOVERNING PROCEDURES FOR SELF-REPRESENTED
LITIGANTS IN THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION, ORANGE COUNTY**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article V, section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution and section 43.26, Florida Statutes, the chief judge of each judicial circuit is charged with the authority and the power to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the chief judge's constitutional and statutory responsibility for administrative supervision of the courts within the circuit and to create and maintain an organization capable of effecting the efficient, prompt, and proper administration of justice for the citizens of this State, the chief judge is required to exercise direction, *see* Fla. R. Jud. Admin. 2.215(b)(2), (b)(3); and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Court in Orange County is concerned with the effective and proper administration of domestic relations cases filed by self-represented litigants in the Domestic Relations Division; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that a Family Court Case Management (FCCM) Department is necessary to assist self-represented litigants who file domestic relations cases in the Domestic Relations Division; and

WHEREAS, such assistance by the FCCM Department will expedite domestic relations cases filed by self-represented litigants, thereby providing greater convenience to these self-represented litigants;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Donald A. Myers, Jr., in order to facilitate the efficient operation of the administration of justice, and pursuant to the authority vested in me as Chief

Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit of Florida under Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215, hereby order the following, **effective January 1, 2020, for all self-represented litigants who file a new dissolution of marriage, name change, paternity, or temporary/concurrent custody by extended family member case**, to continue until further order and superseding any provisions in prior Administrative Orders which may be inconsistent:

The following procedures are adopted for all self-represented litigants filing a new dissolution of marriage case, a name change case, a paternity case, or a temporary/concurrent custody by extended family member case in the Domestic Relations Division.

1. Initial Filing and Case Management Process:

- a. All self-represented litigants filing a new dissolution of marriage, name change, paternity, or temporary/concurrent custody by an extended family member case in the Domestic Relations Division, must file in Orange County Clerk of Court Self-Help Center.
- b. A thorough review will be conducted by the Orange County Clerk of Court Self-Help Center personnel to ensure accuracy and completeness of all required documents according to the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court approved New Case Intake Checklist.
- c. Pursuant to this Administrative Order, all new filings for dissolution of marriage, name change, paternity, or temporary/concurrent custody by an extended family member case will be reviewed and case managed by the FCCM Department after the case is filed with the Clerk of Court.
- d. The Orange County Clerk of Court Self-Help Center personnel and the FCCM Department will provide limited assistance to self-represented litigants within the bounds of Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.750.

2. Scheduling of Uncontested Final Hearings:

- a. All final hearings for uncontested dissolution of marriage, name change, paternity, or temporary/concurrent custody by extended family member cases in the Domestic Relations Division, for which both litigants, or at minimum the petitioner is representing himself/herself, will be coordinated by the FCCM Department case managers.
- b. Upon belief by the self-represented litigant that the case is ready to be set for final hearing, the self-represented litigant must notify the FCCM Department by

submitting an online inquiry to request a final hearing. Upon such notification, the case manager will perform a case review prior to scheduling the final hearing.

- c. All required documents must be filed with the Orange County Clerk of Court Self-Help Center before any hearing will be scheduled.

3. Referring to Mediation:

- a. All contested dissolution of marriage, paternity, and temporary/concurrent custody by extended family cases in which all litigants are representing themselves and their disagreement involves distribution of property, alimony, and/or primary parental responsibility, or visitation and/or support of the minor child(ren), must be referred to the court-annexed Dispute Resolution Services family mediation prior to setting a final hearing or trial.
- b. The parties may not be referred to mediation if there is a history of domestic violence except by court order.

4. Vacating Administrative Order:

- a. Administrative Order 2017-08 is vacated and set aside except to the extent that it has been incorporated and/or amended herein. Vacating an Administrative Order that vacates a prior Order does not revive the prior Order.

DONE AND ORDERED at Orlando, Florida, this 18th day of December, 2019.

_____/s/_____
Donald A. Myers, Jr.
Chief Judge

Copies provided to:

Clerk of Courts, Orange County
Clerk of Courts, Osceola County
General E-Mail Distribution List
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