

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT
JACKSON COUNTY GA

IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS
PIEDMONT JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF GEORGIA

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CAMIE W THOMAS, CLERK

STANDING ORDER IN DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES

A. AFFECTED ACTIONS

Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2 (hereinafter USCR), *as amended*, provides that courts may continue to maintain standing orders regarding certain "internal processes" and other specified matters. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 19-1-1(b) and O.C.G.A. § 9-11-65(e), the Court hereby orders that this Order shall apply to all domestic relations actions, as defined in O.C.G.A. § 19-1-1(a), upon filing and shall, upon notice, bind the parties, their agents, servants, employees, and all other persons acting in concert with such parties. The aforesaid code section defines "domestic relations actions to include "any action for divorce, alimony, equitable division of assets and liabilities, child custody, child support, legitimation, annulment, determination of paternity, any contempt proceeding relating to enforcement of a domestic relations decree or order, a petition in respect to modification of a decree or order, and an action on a foreign judgment based on alimony or child support." This order shall apply to all such actions.

B. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SERVICE OF STANDING ORDER

When domestic relations actions are filed requiring service by the sheriff or by publication, the party filing the action (or their counsel) shall attach copies of the filed Standing Order to the original and service copies of the action. The Clerk of Superior Court shall provide litigants and their counsel with copies of the order for this purpose. The Entry of Service shall reflect that the Order was served with the Complaint, Petition, or Motion.

Unless otherwise approved by the presiding judge, service must be attempted by the local Sheriff's Department before an order for a process server will be granted.

When domestic relations actions are filed with an acknowledgment of service, the party filing the action (or their counsel) shall attach a copy of the filed Standing Order to the original complaint, give or mail a copy of the filed Standing Order to the defendant, and file a Certificate of Service stating the method of service. In the alternative, the acknowledgment of service may reflect receipt of this Order.

This Standing Order binds the parties in the above-styled action, their agents, servants, employees and all other persons acting in concert with such parties. This Order shall apply to all actions filed on or after the 1st day of September, 2025.

C. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF STANDING ORDER

Mutual Restraint

Absent the express written agreement of the parties to the contrary, each party is hereby enjoined and restrained from unilaterally causing or permitting the minor child(ren) of the parties to be removed from the jurisdiction of this Court (the State of Georgia) for a period of more than a total of eight consecutive or non-consecutive days without permission of the Court, except in

an emergency affecting the health, safety, or welfare of the child(ren). The Court encourages the parties to work together so as not to interfere with planned trips with the child(ren). At any time that the minor child(ren) are outside of the jurisdiction overnight, the other parent shall be entitled to notice of the location where the child(ren) will be during any such time. It being the purpose hereof to preserve the status quo pending a hearing, neither party shall, without the Court's permission, remove the minor child(ren) from the school in which they were enrolled immediately prior to the filing of the action. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply where an order providing for custody/visitation is in effect prior to the filing of the action subject to this order.

Each party is hereby enjoined and restrained from doing, or attempting to do, or threatening to do, any act which injures, maltreats, vilifies, molests, or harasses, or which may, upon judicial determination, constitute threats, harassment, or stalking the adverse party or the child(ren) of the parties.

Unless by mutual agreement documented in writing, when an action for divorce or separate maintenance is pending, neither party shall sell, mortgage, create a lien upon, increase the amount of debt secured by, encumber, trade, damage, destroy, contract to sell, or otherwise dispose of or remove from the jurisdiction of this court any property or pets in which either party has an interest, or make any substantial change in the assets of either party. The foregoing is not intended to prohibit transactions in the ordinary course of business affairs for fair value, for example, payment of routine household expenses, mortgage payments, payments for attorney's fees, etc. Neither party shall disconnect or have disconnected cell phone service or any utility providing service to the home of the other party. Neither party shall change, have changed, cancel or have canceled any motor vehicle, property, health, life or other insurance presently in effect which protects the parties or child(ren) or property. Neither party shall interfere with the mail of the other party or any mail of any child(ren) of the other party.

USCR 24.2 Financial Data Required; Scheduling and Notice of Temporary Hearing

Except as noted below, at least five days before any temporary or final hearing in any action for temporary or permanent child support, alimony, equitable division of property, modification of child support or alimony or attorney's fees, all parties shall serve upon the opposing party the affidavit specifying his or her financial circumstances in the form of a Domestic Relations Financial Affidavit (USCR 24.2). In cases involving child support, the worksheet(s) and schedules required by OCGA § 19-6-15 and only as promulgated by the Georgia Child Support Commission shall be completed and served upon the opposing party contemporaneously with the filing of the affidavit required above. In emergency actions, the affidavit, worksheet(s) and schedules may be served on or before the date of the hearing or at any other time as the Court orders.

In cases filed with complete settlement agreements or consent orders resolving all issues but the issue of divorce, the parties are not required to serve financial affidavits, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. In cases involving child support, the parties must attach to the proposed final judgment a completed worksheet or worksheets and any applicable schedules. The Office of Child Support Services is exempt from filing financial affidavits.

Notice of the date of any temporary hearing shall be served upon the adverse party at least fifteen days before the date of the hearing or within five business days of securing the court date from the Judge's office, whichever first occurs.

The parties shall serve upon each other the affidavit and worksheet(s) and schedules (where applicable) at least five days prior to any mediation or other alternative dispute resolution proceeding.

In any case in which a party has previously served the affidavit, worksheet(s), and schedules and thereafter amends the affidavit or worksheet(s) and schedules, any such amendments shall be served upon the opposing party at least five days prior to a final hearing or trial.

On the request of either party, and upon good cause shown to the Court, the affidavits, worksheets, schedules, and any other financial information may be sealed, upon order of the Court.

Social security numbers, tax identification numbers, or financial account numbers shall not be included in any document served or filed with the Court pursuant to this rule. No birth date should be included, only the year of birth. See also OCGA § 9-11-7.1.

A Certificate of Service shall be filed with the Clerk of Court certifying proper service of the affidavit required above and worksheet(s) and schedules (where applicable). Each party shall submit to the Court the original affidavit and worksheet(s) and schedules (where applicable) at the time of a hearing or trial.

Failure of any party to furnish the above financial information may subject the offending party, in the discretion of the Court, to the penalties of contempt and may result in a continuance of the hearing until the required financial information is furnished and may result in other sanctions or remedies deemed appropriate in the Court's discretion.

Notwithstanding the time limits contained in this rule, the Court may decide a matter without strict adherence to a time limitation, if the financial information was known or reasonably available to the other party, or if a continuance would result in a manifest injustice to a party.

Parenting Plans

All parties filing actions involving permanent custody or custody modification (except when a parent seeks emergency relief for family violence) must comply with USCR 24.10 and O.C.G.A. § 19-9-1.

The Judges in this circuit, in their discretion, do not require a Parenting Plan prior to the temporary hearing. If the parties are not contesting custody, a joint parenting plan shall be filed at the time of the final hearing and presented to the Judge along with all other required documents, child support forms and orders prior to the granting of a divorce.

The parenting plan must provide the required information as to the specific dates and times for weekend, summer, and holiday visitation, the location for exchange of the child(ren), and the party designated as having final decision-making authority. True joint physical custody arrangements must specify the manner in which the parties shall share joint physical custody (i.e. the general parenting time schedule), including the specific dates and times that each party will have the child(ren) in their custody during holiday and vacation periods.

Seminar for Divorcing Parents

Unless excused by the Court, in all cases involving minor children (under the age of 18) in divorce, separate maintenance, paternity, change of custody, visitation, legitimation, and other domestic relations actions as may be otherwise ordered by the Court, excluding domestic violence actions, U.R.E.S.A. cases, uncontested visitation modifications, child support modifications, and contempt cases, all parties shall successfully complete the program entitled

"Seminar for Divorcing Parents" prior to the final hearing or within 90 days of service of the original complaint, whichever first occurs. Upon any party's failure to successfully complete the seminar pursuant to this Order, the assigned Judge may take appropriate action, including but not limited to sanctions for contempt or suspension of visitation. Such failure may also delay any temporary hearings or mediation sessions and may, in the discretion of the judge, delay the granting of a final decree of divorce.

This four-hour educational seminar focuses on the developmental needs of children, with emphasis on fostering the child's emotional health during periods of stress. The program is informative, supportive, and directs those individuals who seek additional information or help to appropriate resources.

Participants shall pay the fee by cash, due at the beginning of each seminar, to cover the total cost of the seminar including the presenter's fee, handouts, applications, and program administration. The fee may be waived if a party presents a verified affidavit of poverty and it appears upon investigation that the party otherwise meets the Court's guidelines of indigence.

A party residing in a distant geographic locale such that attendance is impractical may substitute any seminar approved by the presiding judge. Additionally, parties may attend any four-hour Superior Court approved in-person parenting seminar in the State of Georgia and, upon proof of attendance, substitute attendance to this seminar. A certificate of attendance is valid for three years. Further, for good cause shown, the assigned Judge may waive the requirement of this program in individual cases. A schedule of seminar dates and the amount of fees may be obtained from the Clerk's Office.

Requirements for Orders and Decrees Providing for Child Support

With regard to a Final Judgment and Decree of Divorce or any other temporary or final order providing for the payment of support, no particular form is mandated, provided that the requirements of O.C.G.A. §§ 19-5-12, 19-6-15, 19-6-29, and 19-6-30, and the Uniform Superior Court Rules are met. Therefore, the parties may, but are not required to, submit a Child Support Addendum as may be utilized in other circuits, so long as the decree or order includes all of the findings required by law. Specifically, the following must be included:

- a. In cases involving child support, the paragraph concerning continuing garnishment must be inserted in the final judgment and decree. *See* O.C.G.A. § 19-6-30. Also, language concerning whether or not an Income Deduction Order will be entered must be included. *See* O.C.G.A. § 19-6-32. If an Income Deduction Order is entered, the party preparing the decree shall be responsible for the submission to the Court, filing, and subsequent service of the required Notice to Employer and Statement of Obligors Rights.
- b. The availability of accident and sickness insurance coverage to either party should be discussed and language included concerning how the medical needs of the child(ren) will be paid. *See* O.C.G.A. § 19-6-29. If an Income Deduction Order is used, please include all necessary language in the Child Support Addendum. If the action is contested, the Court shall complete the Child Support Order Addendum at the conclusion of the final hearing or direct the prevailing party to prepare said Addendum and attach it to the final order.
- c. Any order providing for the payment of support must, as required by O.C.G.A. § 19-6-15, include findings of:

1. The gross and adjusted gross income of each parent;
2. The amount of parenting time for each parent;
3. The "presumptive" support due pursuant to the guidelines;
4. Whether one or more deviations are applicable and, if so, the reason for the deviation and the reason that the presumptive amount of support would be unjust or inappropriate;
5. Specify a sum certain and identify the party responsible for the payment of support;
6. Specify the first date that support is due, the frequency of payments (i.e. weekly, monthly) and the duration of the support payments (i.e. until age 18); and
7. The percentage of uncovered healthcare expenses incurred on behalf of the child(ren) that each party shall pay.

The amount of support must be stated consistently in the Worksheet, Schedules, Decree, Agreement, and Support Addendum (if any).

In the event that a pro-se party is utilizing forms provided to them by a third-party, including attorneys or their staff, government website, or artificial intelligence, the source of the forms shall be disclosed, in writing, and made a part of the record.

General Requirements for All Orders

If a written agreement is entered into by the parties, it must be filed with the Court and incorporated by reference into an order or decree of the Court. A final judgment of divorce shall be prepared so as to conform to the pleadings and the evidence and may restore a maiden or prior name, if requested. *See* O.C.G.A. § 19-5-12. If a party wishes restoration of a maiden or prior name, an appropriate provision must be included in the final judgment and decree of divorce. *See* O.C.G.A. § 19-5-16. The Court may allow an uncontested final order to be entered upon the filing of a Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings, the party's affidavit supporting the Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings, the presentation of a Settlement Agreement, Proposed Order or Consent Order and all attachments (Child Support Worksheet, Addendum, and Parenting Plan if applicable). If the Court designates counsel for one of the parties to reduce the oral ruling to a written order, counsel shall submit it to the opposing party within ten (10) days of the oral ruling. If counsel for the parties cannot agree as to the form of the order, they are obligated to notify the Court in writing within twenty days of the oral ruling. Failure to abide by the provisions may subject counsel to contempt of court. **All orders and agreements with signatures must be presented to the Court in blue ink.** The attorney submitting an order for signature by the Court, shall include on the final page of that order the following: the attorney's name, party represented, and counsel's contact information.

Ex Parte Orders

Requests for ex parte relief (particularly relating to the issue of child custody) are discouraged, except with regard to petitions for relief under the Family Violence Act. A copy of such petition and any other material provided to the court shall be served upon the opposing party along with the ex parte order. The judge may require that an affidavit(s) be filed contemporaneously with the filing of the ex parte motion.

Counsel are reminded of the provisions of section 3.3, subsection (d) of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct which provides: "In an ex parte proceeding... a lawyer shall inform

the tribunal of all material facts known to the lawyer that the lawyer reasonably believes are necessary to enable the tribunal to make an informed decision, whether or not the facts are adverse." [Emphasis added]. Counsel (and unrepresented parties) should, therefore, disclose to the court in connection with an application for ex parte relief all information necessary to permit the court to make an informed decision. For example, with regard to an application for an ex parte order regarding custody of minor children, the court should be made aware of the applicant's prior history of domestic violence, mental illness, pending TPO's/Protective Orders, or substance abuse, as well as any serious criminal record.

It is the responsibility of the parties to comply with all applicable state statutes, Uniform Superior Court Rules, and Standing Orders of the Piedmont Judicial Circuit concerning the filing of Domestic Relations actions.

Mandatory Mediation

Mediation, or participation in a Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference, shall be required in all unresolved actions for divorce, separate maintenance, legitimation, and modification of custody/visitation and/or child support (except Child Support Enforcement Actions and actions for contempt), and alimony filed after September 1, 2025, within this circuit. The parties are not permitted to appear for a final contested hearing until the parties have participated in a mediation or Judicially Hosted Settlement Conference. Once mediation is scheduled, the parties may contact the Court to reserve a final hearing date in the event mediation is unsuccessful. For good cause shown, the Court has the discretion to waive this mediation requirement. The parties may select a mediator from those approved by the Piedmont Circuit Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office, or they may, if they choose, use the services of any mediator registered by the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution. If the parties cannot agree on a mediator, the Court will assign one from the Piedmont Circuit ADR list.

Counsel for the parties, or pro se litigants where applicable, shall confer with one another no later than ten days following the close of the discovery period and each shall propose available dates to attend mediation. Mediation shall be attended within 60 days following the close of the discovery period. Counsel shall reasonably cooperate with one another to select a mediator and date for mediation. Dilatory tactics to delay mediation may subject the offending counsel/party to contempt of court. Nothing in this paragraph prevents parties from attending mediation by mutual agreement prior to the deadline contained herein.

The Piedmont Circuit ADR Office may be contacted at:
Attn: Tarla Atwell
5000 Jackson Parkway, Suite 330, Jefferson, GA 30549
706.387.6400, tsatwell@jacksoncountygov.com

Parties may request financial assistance with the cost for up to two hours of mediation. Request for financial assistance shall be made to the Piedmont Circuit ADR Office.

Mediation shall not be required in cases seeking a finding of contempt solely as to child support or alimony in a Motion for Contempt. Waivers for mediation may be granted in the presiding judge's discretion. A Motion to Waive Mediation Attendance, stating the reasons therefore must be in writing, filed with the Clerk of Superior Court and a copy delivered to the Judge's office and the opposing party.

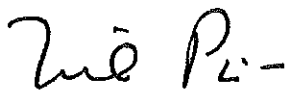
Where one party has been arrested for domestic violence against the other party,

mediation should be assigned by the court to a qualified domestic violence mediator. The mediator and counsel for the parties are required to notify the Piedmont Circuit ADR office whether mediation was successful or not.

If a party has a legal question, the party should seek the advice of a lawyer, who will be familiar not only with domestic relations law, but will also be familiar with the requirements specified in this Order, as the Judges are prohibited from giving advice or answering legal questions.

The Clerk of Court shall place a copy of this order upon the minutes.

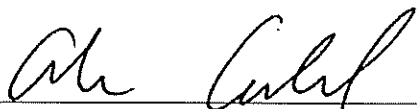
IT IS SO ORDERED this 8th day of August, 2025.




HON. NICHOLAS PRIMM
Chief Judge of Superior Courts
Piedmont Judicial Circuit



HON. SARAH GRIFFIE
Judge of Superior Courts
Piedmont Judicial Circuit



HON. ANDREW CRAWFORD
Judge of Superior Courts
Piedmont Judicial Circuit



HON. BEN GREEN
Judge of Superior Courts
Piedmont Judicial Circuit