

THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY



*Chambers of
Catherine Woods
Magistrate*

*County Courts Building
Towson, Maryland 21204
410-887-8611*

Helpful Hints

- 1) If you believe that it only makes sense to have a contempt and a custody/visitation modification heard together, write in to the Court and request that the contempt and modification be heard together. You must have service on the SCO and summons/complaint before sending in the request;
- 2) You must write in (within ten days of Settlement/Scheduling Conference) for more than a half day for a PL hearing!
- 3) Look out for the new DCM plan when it is finally approved by the AOC and read it carefully for changes/additions to procedure;
- 4) If there is a substantial delay in having your Motion for BIA/Privilege Attorney/Child Advocate considered, contact Magistrate Woods' assistant (410.887.8611) with the case name, case number and when you believe the Motion was ripe for consideration. We will pull the file and get it moving;
- 5) If your client's case has been stagnant (for example, because there was service on the summons/complaint but no Answer because the parties are engaging in outside mediation), be aware that after a certain point, the case will be set in for a Status Conference and you and your client (if the Plaintiff) will be required to appear in person. However, if a proper Request for Order of Default or Answer is filed before the Status Conference, it can generally be removed

from the docket. Contact the Magistrate who the Status Conference is scheduled before to follow up;

- 6) If your case is coming up for a hearing and you still have discovery motions that are ripe to be ruled upon, contact Alicia Aybar (410.887.7807) in the Civil Clerk's Office to ask if the file can be sent up for consideration BEFORE the scheduled hearing;
- 7) DO NOT combine a "regular" complaint with an "emergency" hearing request (i.e., no "Motion for Emergency Modification of Visitation"). A pleading that asserts an emergency should always be filed separately from the underlying pleading;
- 8) If there is any chance that you will be requesting a Child Access Evaluation, Home Investigation or Court Psychiatric Evaluation at any point, make sure that the matter is screened by Family Support Services at the initial Settlement/Scheduling Conference. If it is not screened at that time, it is extraordinarily difficult to have any of these services ordered later in the proceedings;
- 9) If you are filing a request for a paternity test, include specifics in your proposed Order as to where the test should be administered; the time deadline for the test; who is paying and/or whether there will be any reimbursement by a party if the test is negative/positive for paternity. An Order just mandating the test is fairly useless;
- 10) Make sure that you are pleading "Mutual Consent" grounds properly. It is not the former "mutual and voluntary" grounds without the words "mutual and voluntary" and "separated for more than one year." The newly revised Pro Se Form contains the following language, for example: "My spouse and I do not have any minor children in common. My spouse and I have a written settlement agreement resolving all issues relating to alimony and property and we will both appear before the court for an absolute divorce hearing." Do NOT forget to attach the Agreement.

Applies to Magistrate Woods only:

- 11) If you fully settle your case AND both counsel or parties (if one party is unrepresented) sign the Consent Order, you may fax the Consent Order to my chambers up until 8:30 AM (NO LATER) the day of the hearing with any request to avoid having to appear in Court in order to keep litigation costs down. Be sure to follow up with the office to ensure that the case has been removed from the docket;
- 12) If I provide you with my email address for the purpose of sending the proposed Consent Order or for any other reason, please do not use it as a time to argue with opposing counsel while I am copied on the communication or forward me records that I have not asked for following a hearing. Use the email address only for the specific purpose for which it was intended when it was provided.

