FOR JUDGE KATARINA COOK'S COURT

DISSOLUTION CHECKLIST

1. General Information

The information provided below does not constitute legal advice.
The Court strongly encourages parties to consult with an attorney- especially in cases where there are any assets: inheritances, real estate, pensions, retirement accounts, and financial accounts that need to be divided.

The Court must hold the final dissolution hearing within ninety (90) days of the *Petition for Dissolution* filing. It is important that parties complete all requirements and call the Court to schedule a hearing as soon as possible.

If your Dissolution is with children, you **must** complete the Remember the Children program and then call the bailiff to schedule your hearing.

Getting a dissolution is a complicated legal matter. It is highly recommended that you consult with an attorney.

Review the Summit County Court of Common Pleas- Domestic Relations Division's Local Rules for important instructions and information.

- The Local Rules can be found at
  - Drcourt.org;
  - Select the "Resources" tab;
  - Select "Rules" from the dropdown menu;
  - Click the link titled "CLICK HERE FOR LOCAL RULES"

If you cannot afford the filing fee, you may want to consider filing a *Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis* asking the Court to proceed without paying for the filing fees.

- The *Motion to Proceed in Forma Pauperis* as well as the Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis-*Financial Disclosure Affidavit* are available at:
  - Drcourt.org;
  - Select the "Forms" tab;
  - Select the "All Forms" section;
- Filing a *Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis* does **not** mean that your filing and other fees will be free, it means you do not have to pay the initial deposit, but at the conclusion of the case, you will be able to pay the court costs on a payment plan.

- For further information, please refer to Local Rule 40(N) – *Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis.*
- If you have retained an attorney or intend to, the Court will only communicate with your lawyer.

2. <u>Options to Consult with an Attorney:</u>

- The Akron Bar Association's (ABA) Lawyer Referral Service can match you with an attorney specialized in your case type. You will receive up to a 30-minute consultation with an attorney for a non-refundable $30 fee. For more information about ABA's Lawyer Referral Service, please visit their website at https://www.akronbar.org/?pg=LRS or call (330) 253-5038.
- If your case involves domestic violence, you may be eligible to receive legal assistance from Community Legal Aid.
- You may be eligible through Community Legal Aid for a free or reduced fee attorney. Visit https://www.communitylegalaid.org/ or call (330) 535-4191.

3. <u>If You Decide to Represent Yourself (Which is Called Proceeding *Pro Se*):</u>

- Visit Ohio Legal Help's website at https://www.ohiolegalhelp.org/ for guidance in preparing your documents.
- "Ask an Attorney" is a community outreach program offered by the Akron Bar Association. Members of the community may call to receive free answers to brief legal questions. The program is scheduled on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Call (330) 253-5007 for more information.
- In addition, the primary way the Court will communicate with you is via email. Please provide the Clerk of Courts with your email address and check your email regularly. Keep in mind, if you are representing yourself, you will be held to the same standard as an attorney and are responsible for completing the necessary paperwork and appearing for your final hearing.

4. <u>For All Dissolution Types</u>

- Review Local Rule 7 –Dissolutions.
- You must complete an *Affidavit of Income and Expenses* as well as an *Affidavit of Property* to accompany your Petition.
- After you file a *Petition* and receive a case number, it is your responsibility to contact the Court to schedule your hearing. Final dissolution hearings must occur within ninety (90) days of the *Petition's* filing. Please contact the Court as soon as possible to ensure your hearing is held within the ninety (90) day deadline.

- If your case is assigned to Judge Cook, call (330) 643-2357
- If your case is assigned to Judge Hightower, call (330) 643-2080

5. Bankruptcy

- If either or both parties have filed for bankruptcy, you must provide documentation demonstrating the bankruptcy case has been closed or that there has been a *Relief from Stay* that will have to be filed with the Court. In order to accomplish this, contact the attorney that filed the bankruptcy.
  - To obtain these documents, you may also contact the United States Bankruptcy Court, Northern District of Ohio, located in the John F. Seiberling Federal Building
    - Address: 2 South Main St., Akron, OH 44308
    - Phone number: (330) 252-6100
    - Public office hours are Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
    - For more information, please visit https://www.ohnb.uscourts.gov/content/akron
  - To access case information online:
    - Bankruptcy case information is stored using the PACER computer program.
    - For access to the PACER program, please contact The Support Center at 1-800-676-6856
  - To obtain information about your case over the phone, case information is also available 24/7 by calling the Multi-Court Voice Case Informational System toll free at 1-866-222-8029
  - To find records for a closed bankruptcy case:
    - Go to https://www.ohnb.uscourts.gov/content/akron
    - From the dropdown menu, ECF and Case Info
    - Select Archived Case Search
- If you do not know your case number or you do not have internet access, contact the Northern District of Ohio United States Bankruptcy Court's Clerk's Office during business hours at (330) 252-6100.

6. Documents Required for your Final Hearing

- Before your hearing, you will also need to complete the *Judgment Entry – Decree of Dissolution of Marriage ("Judgment Entry")*- https://drcourt.org/wp/download/2017/
  - You must submit one copy of the *Judgment Entry* signed by both parties to the Court. The *Judgment Entry* is **not** the same documentation as the *Petition* that is filed to open your case. The *Judgment Entry* is the form that has a signature line for the Judge on the last page. The *Judgment Entry* must be completed and emailed

to the bailiff before 1:00 p.m. on the hearing date in order for the Judge to sign the *Judgment Entry* at the hearing.
    - You may also provide a copy of the *Judgment Entry* to the Court by dropping it off with the Security Bailiff on the fourth floor of the Domestic Relations Court.
- Click the link provided above to access the *Judgment Entry*
- All of these documents are also available on the Court's website:
    - Go to www.drcourt.org;
    - Select the "Forms" tab;
    - Select the "Dissolution" section.

7. Making Changes to Filed Documents

- If you need to make any changes to the documents you have already filed with the Clerk's Office, please complete and file a document with those changes and title it "Amended" (name of document being amended). For example, if you previously filed a Shared Parenting Plan but would like to change something in that plan, complete a new Shared Parenting Plan with those changes and file it as an "Amended Shared Parenting Plan."

8. Final Instructions

- The Court will provide a reminder email with additional instructions a few days before your hearing.
- **Failure to complete the necessary paperwork or to appear at your final hearing may result in your hearing being continued and/or your case being dismissed.**

9. In Addition, If Your Dissolution is With Children

- In addition to the above section, the following is also required:

Remember the Children Program

- Before scheduling your Dissolution, you **MUST** complete the **Remember the Children** program, pursuant to Local Rule 32.01.
    - This program is available on the Court's website and can be taken in increments at your convenience.
        - Go to www.drcourt.org, select the "Remember the Children" tab.
- After you have completed the program and receive your certificate, please contact the bailiff to schedule your final hearing.

Additional Documents Required for your Hearing

- Because your **Dissolution is with Children**, you also need to consider how parenting time and responsibilities will be divided. The following documents should already have been filed with your Petition and must be completed and filed before your hearing:
    - ***Either*** a ***Shared Parenting Plan-*** **https://drcourt.org/wp/download/2109/**;

- or a ***Parenting Plan-*** **https://drcourt.org/wp/download/2114/**;
- ***Parenting Time Schedule-*** **see Instruction Sheet- https://drcourt.org/wp/download/2047/**;
- ***Judgment Entry –Decree of Dissolution of Marriage with Children-*** **https://drcourt.org/wp/download/2017/.**

- In addition, you will also need to provide an Administrative Order from the Child Support Enforcement Agency, ("CSEA") which includes your SETS number, any arrearages, and health insurance information.
- The ***Child Support Worksheet*** should already have been filed with your Petition and must be completed and filed before your hearing:
- To obtain the required CSEA documentation:
  - Go to the Summit County Prosecuting Attorney's website, https://prosecutor.summitoh.net/home/Home.html
    - Go to the Division's tab;
    - Select "Child Support;"
    - Select the tab "CSEA Forms and Information;"
    - Complete an Application for Child Support Services.
    - Contact Summit County CSEA with any questions at (330) 643-2765.

11. What to Expect at Your Hearing

- Review Local Rule 36 – *Court Decorum*. While the hearing will be via Zoom, the Court's expectations are that you are to be properly attired, and will terminate the Zoom hearing for any non-compliance.
- You must provide the Court with your *Judgment Entry –Decree of Dissolution of Marriage with/without Children* before your hearing.

12. Zoom Information

- Click on the Zoom link provided by the bailiff. Zoom links are also available on the Court's website.
  - Go to drcourt.org
    - Click on the "Zoom Hearing Attendance" tab;
    - Click on the link under the "Zoom connection" heading that corresponds to the Judge to whom your case is assigned;
- For detailed instructions for your Zoom hearing:
  - Go to drcourt.org
    - Select the "Zoom Hearing Attendance" Tab
    - Follow the instructions provided under the heading "Zoom Instructions"
- If given the option, please enter your full name as your "username."
- Remain in the Zoom "waiting room" until you are admitted into the hearing.

13. <u>After Your Hearing</u>

- If all goes accordingly, the Judge will sign your *Judgment Entry* which will be sent to the Clerk's Office for filing.
- It is then the Clerk's responsibility to correctly process and timestamp the *Judgment Entry.*
    - It may take anywhere from two (2) to five (5) business days for the Clerk's Office to process your paperwork. Please contact the bailiff if you do not see a time-stamped *Judgment Entry* on the docket within five (5) business days.
        - For Judge Cook's bailiff, call (330) 643-2357
        - For Judge Hightower's bailiff, call (330) 643-2080
    - Once the *Judgment Entry* has been timestamped, a copy will be sent to you in the mail.
    - If you cannot wait for your copy to be sent in the mail or you would like to receive a copy of the *Judgment Entry* in a different manner, please contact the Clerk's Office at (330) 643-2202.

14. Note: These procedures are for Judge Cook's Court only. If you have questions about a Judge Hightower case, please call Judge Hightower's bailiff, at (330) 643-2080.