



# **WASHINGTON COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS PRO SE CENTER CUSTODY PACKET**

## **NOTICE**

**ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN LITIGATION ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL LEGAL ADVICE FROM AN ATTORNEY. Court staff cannot offer any legal advice. The information in this packet is not a substitute for professional legal advice. The Court assumes no responsibility and accepts no liability for actions taken by users of these documents, including reliance on their contents.**

**If you desire to speak with an attorney and do not know one, you should call the Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service (LRS) at (724)225-6710 to schedule a half-hour consultation with a licensed, insured attorney who has experience in the area of law related to your legal matter. The initial half-hour consultation with the attorney is \$25; any fees beyond the first half-hour should be discussed and agreed upon by you and the lawyer.**

**If you meet certain income and other qualifications, you may be able to secure an attorney through Southwestern PA Legal Services, at (724) 225-6170.**

**If you have questions about domestic violence or believe that you may be the victim of domestic violence, we strongly recommend that you contact the *Washington County Women's Shelter* at 724.223.8349.**

**If you suspect child abuse, please contact *CHILDLINE* at 1.800.932.0313. You can report suspected child abuse 24 hours per day and remain anonymous.**

## CONFERENCE ROOM/COURTROOM CONDUCT

### Before you come:

1. If not typed, forms should be filled out in INK, not pencil. Signatures on original documents should be in blue ink.
2. DO NOT write on the BACK of any paper that you present to the Court.
3. If you are presenting an Emergency or Continuance, you MUST have given the other party 7 business-days notice- that means you sent them or gave them the "Notice of Presentation" ALONG WITH COPIES of the documents that you will present to the Judge. If it is a **true emergency**, you **MUST** have given them at least 24 hours notice.
4. If the other party has an attorney of record, the ATTORNEY must be served notice, not the party. See Custody FAQs # 10 for more information.
5. If you have an existing Custody Order, you MUST write your CUSTODY CASE NUMBER on your documents in the designated spot- example: No. 2008-1234. If you do not know your case number, you will need to request it in the Prothonotary's Office.
6. You must fill out all papers with the same caption (top section where the name of the Plaintiff and Defendant is) as your existing Custody Order. That means that if you are the Defendant on your Custody Order, you will ALWAYS be the Defendant when you fill out custody papers.

### In the Conference Room/Courtroom:

7. Do not bring your children into the courtroom.
8. In Judge DiSalle's Courtroom remember to sign in on the motions sheet.
9. Completely turn OFF all cell phones.
10. To present a Motion on your own behalf, you must step INSIDE of the courtroom. Be seated and wait until all of the attorneys have presented their motions and then you will be called up in the order in which you arrived. Do not leave the courtroom.
11. Please do not talk while others are presenting their Motions.
12. Properly dispose of your chewing gum before entering the Courtroom. Do not place your personal items on the bar.
13. You must be DRESSED APPROPRIATELY for Court. You can be turned away if you are not dressed appropriately. It is within the Court Staff's discretion to determine whether your attire is appropriate. Generally, YOU CANNOT WEAR:

Tank tops	Halter tops	Strapless tops	Shorts
Flip flops	Sweatpants	Baseball caps	Ripped clothing
14. Once the Judge calls you to the bar, speak into the microphone. Address the judge as Your Honor. Speak to the Judge and **not** the opposing party.
15. Be respectful to the courtroom staff.