FAMILY LAW MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT IS A MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE (MSC)? A MSC is an opportunity for the parties to make an agreement instead of having a trial. Normally, there is a MSC before every trial date (except in Domestic Violence cases), but the judge might order an MSC earlier, at a Family Centered Case Resolution Conference. At the MSC, there will usually be two experienced family law attorneys who will act as a "Settlement Judge." These "Settlement Judges" help the parties in their efforts to reach an agreement. The MSC is not a trial or hearing. The parties don't present evidence or call witnesses or testify, and the Settlement Judges do not make orders. Instead, the Settlement Judges can offer a neutral legal perspective on the issues the parties disagree on, and can suggest solutions and ways to compromise. You might settle the whole case, or only part of the case.

WHO ATTENDS? All parties, and their attorneys, must attend in person unless a party has prior judicial approval to appear telephonically. (See information on telephonic hearings at https://www.placer.courts.ca.gov/online-services/remote-appearance-system

IS THERE ANYTHING I NEED TO DO BEFORE THE MSC? Each party must prepare a Statement of Issues and Contentions. It must be filed with the court and served on the other party. At the Trial Assignment Conference, the judge may tell you when the deadline is for filing and serving this document or you can refer to the local rule (Local Rule 30.16). The Statement of Issues and Contentions helps the judge and both parties understand everyone's issues and concerns. If you do not have an attorney, you may want to talk to an attorney (but it is not required) for advice about trial and settlement. This can make it easier for you to understand the "give and take" of settlement discussions and give you ideas about the pros and cons of different settlement options. For more information, see the information sheet on preparing for trial and the resources below.

CASE RESOLUTION INFORMATION & RESOURCES

- *Legal Advice and Procedural Assistance:* The self-help center will not provide legal advice or advocate for either side, but they can help you to understand process and procedure. Parties always have the right to consult with an attorney. You can contact the Placer County Bar Association for names of attorneys who practice family law at http://placerbar.org.
- You can find more information about Family Law cases at the California Judicial Council's website at http://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm. You will find answers to frequently asked questions, terms and definitions used in family law cases, forms with step-by-step instructions, links to local and state rules of court, and information on where to find help.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT? If the parties are represented by attorneys, the attorneys will prepare formal settlement (judgment) documents. If there are no attorneys in the case, the Self-Help Center will assist in preparing the settlement (judgment) documents.

NOTE: All information in this document is subject to different orders in individual cases. This form is intended to provide only general information. It is not legal advice.