

Minutes
Uniformity Subcommittee on Family

Law Offices of Thomas A. Esposito
Welty, Esposito & Wieler
385 Orange Street
New Haven, CT

April 7, 2009
8:30 AM

Members in attendance: Atty. Barry Armata, Hon. Bernadette Conway, Atty. Leo Diana, Atty. Thomas Anthony Esposito, Atty. Lisa A. Faccadio, Atty Michael Fasano, Mr. David M. Iaccarino, Hon. Lynda B. Munro, Atty. Norman A. Roberts, and Hon. Marylouise Schofield (chair).

The meeting was called to order at 8:37 AM.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes of Meeting of February 24, 2009 – Upon motion and second, the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. Topics for discussion –
 - Citations on short calendar - The subcommittee reviewed the proposed language for inclusion on the family calendars regarding the handling of short calendar matters with citations. After discussion, the members unanimously agreed to the following language:

If a party is served by a Marshal pursuant to a citation which was issued by the judge and the party served is ordered to appear by the Court, the parties should not contact the court to mark the matter READY or OFF: all such matters are READY and will go forward on that date unless specifically granted a continuance by the judge.

Judge Munro will take the language to the chief court administrator and then to legal services.
 - Issues with the Calendar Call and Access to Family Relations – There was extensive discussion about the benefits and disadvantages of a calendar call, the issues that arise with respect to access to family relations, ways to make the short calendar process more effective and more equitable, and whether uniformity is possible or desirable. The subcommittee discussed the possibility of having Court Service Centers assist people with financial affidavits prior to their signing up to see the family relations officers, requiring parties to obtain a pass from the court service center staff prior to

signing up to see a family relations officer, directing all custody matters to a specific family relations officer, allowing lawyers who do pro bono work or function as special masters to be seen first, establishing mechanisms to identify those volunteer attorneys for the court, utilizing law students to assist with paperwork for self-represented parties, or having a clerk, caseflow coordinator, court service center staff member, or family relations officer function as a gatekeeper in the courtroom to direct people and ensure that cases are ready. The Branch must make the short calendar process and procedures more efficient to continue to provide effective service to an expanded number of litigants while dealing with limited judicial resources. Discussion also ensued as to how to disseminate any proposed procedures to the bar and self-represented parties, including providing information on the website, on the calendars, and at the call.

The subcommittee discussed the differences in the various judicial districts statewide and discussed the possibility that uniformity may not be achievable entirely. However, information about the areas where a particular district has different procedures should be provided so that parties and attorneys would be aware of variations prior to coming to the court.

Members of the subcommittee will continue to discuss these suggestions. Judge Munro will be meeting with the family judges later this month and will talk to them as well. These suggestions will be revisited at the next meeting.

- Issues in connection with status conferences, pretrials and trials – The subcommittee then discussed trial management orders, pretrials (court and special masters), and status conferences and the ways these events and filings are handled. The subcommittee agreed that a uniform trial management order and process could be helpful to the bar.
 - Uniformity in matters on the court’s docket and simultaneously on the magistrate’s docket – This matter will be discussed at the next meeting.
3. The subcommittee agreed to form a work group to review and develop uniform trial management orders and processes statewide, look at the documents needed for status conferences and pretrials, and the number and type of pretrials held. Attorneys Armata, Diana, Esposito, Faccadio, and Fasano and Judge Munro will be the members of the work group. The work group will meet on Friday May 8, 2009 at 12:00 noon at First & Last Restaurant, 220 Main Street, Middletown, CT.
 4. The next meeting of the subcommittee will be on Friday, May 29, 2009 at 8:30 AM at the Atty. Esposito’s office, 385 Orange Street, New Haven.