

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING CUSTODY FORMS

This packet includes all the forms necessary to file for custody in Crawford County. This is with the understanding that there is CURRENTLY NO CUSTODY ORDER IN PLACE.

Also attached is a Petition to Proceed in Forma Pauperis (IFP). This form is to be completed if you feel that you cannot afford the \$200 mediation fee combined with the \$107.00 Custody action filing Fee for a total of \$307.00. If the Judge agrees that you CANNOT afford this \$200 mediation fee and \$107.00 filing fee, based on the answers provided on the IFP, then the County will pay the fee for you. If the Judge feels you CAN pay the \$200 mediation fee and \$107.00 Custody action filing fee, you may file the Custody Complaint along with the \$307.00 total fee to the Prothonotary's Office in the Courthouse.

1. Fill out these forms to the best of your abilities, completing every line that applies. Leave NO BLANK LINES. Use "None" or "0" if necessary - not dashes or "NA."
2. Be sure the top heading is completed EXACTLY THE SAME on all forms. In other words, be sure the Plaintiff is shown as the same and the Defendant is shown as the same on every form.
3. DO NOT USE N/A anywhere on the form. Everything is applicable, even if the answer is "none" or "0." Put something on each line, particularly on the "Affidavit in Support of Petition to Proceed Informa Pauperis." Also on the IFP, be very specific about your income and what is paid out each month - be sure you indicate if these are "per month" or "per year," etc. Pay close attention to page 3, (f) Debts and obligations where it says "Other." Be sure you list all household expenses including utilities, food, medical bills, insurances, child care expenses, etc. We need a true income to debt ratio.
4. Sign the forms where it asks for a signature from "Petitioner/Plaintiff." Do not sign any line where there is a blank line with a "J" underneath. That is where the judge signs.
5. Once you have completed this packet, return it to the Prothonotary's Office, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Crawford County Courthouse, 903 Diamond Park, Meadville, PA 16335. It will be delivered to the Court Administrator and ultimately to a judge who will consent or object based on the information given. It will come back to the Court Administrator's office for a mediator to be assigned if everything has been approved. Then the papers go back down to the Prothonotary's office and they will distribute copies to you and to the Defendant as well as the mediator. You will be hearing from the mediator sometime after that to set up your mediation appointment.