

RULE L1915.4-3. NON-RECORD PROCEEDINGS.

(1) Custody Conference. Conference Officer.

The initial proceeding in all custody cases shall be non-record before the County custody conference officer, in conformity with Pa.R.Civ.P. 1915-4-3(a). A conference officer shall be appointed by the President Judge in all cases where the County's conference officer is unable to serve. Custody conferences shall be held at Level 4 of the Judicial Center except as otherwise directed by the conference officer.

Every party who 1) initiates a custody action by the filing of a custody complaint, 2) includes a custody count in filing a divorce action, or 3) petitions for modification of custody, shall, in addition to any filing fee assessed by the Prothonotary, pay to the Prothonotary a custody conference fee in an amount to be set from time to time by administrative order of court.

(2) Custody Questionnaire.

Each party shall complete and bring to the custody conference a questionnaire in the form provided by the District Court Administrator and posted on the County website, which shall be sent to the parties by the conference officer along with a notice of the conference.

(3) Purpose.

The parties, with the aid and assistance of the conference officer, shall make a good faith effort to resolve the issues and reach an agreement that meets the best interest of the child(ren).

(4) Conference Officer's Report. Court Order.

If the parties reached an agreement, the conference officer shall submit a conference report to the court, along with a proposed order which sets forth the terms of the parties' agreement. Copies of the conference report and proposed order shall be promptly provided to the parties. The court shall issue a custody order in conformity with the proposed order, within twenty days of which custody order, any party may file a request for trial *de novo*.

If no agreement was reached by the parties, the conference officer shall submit a conference report and proposed order to the parties and to the District Court Administrator, who shall schedule a pretrial conference before the court, at which the presiding judge will issue an interim order pending a trial. Upon the unexcused absence of a party at the pretrial conference, the court may issue a custody order in conformity with the proposed order, and cancel the trial if already scheduled.