

SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MARYLAND

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

FROM THE CHAMBERS OF WILLIAM D. MISSOURI

CHIEF JUDGE

TO: All Attorneys

FROM: William D. Missouri
Chief Judge

DATE: October 28, 2009

SUBJ: CINA Pre-Adjudication Status Report

Please find attached a CINA Pre-Adjudication Status Form that will be utilized in all CINA merits hearings before Master Stewart Jones and Master Hileman-Adams. As you may know, the CINA/TPR Workgroup's Dependency Scheduling Committee has been considering recommending that the Court implement a procedure to include an order in aid of discovery and a CINA Pre-Adjudication Status Form. The objective of such a procedure would be to enhance and encourage the communication among parties pre-Adjudication. These measures have been discussed in an effort to improve the quality of representation you are able to give to your clients and to decrease the amount of "settlement discussion time" that occurs in the hallway on the day of the merits hearing.

I have approved the Dependency Scheduling Committee's recommendation that use of the attached form be implemented, effective November 1, 2009. The form is to be e-mailed to counsel for the other parties and the Court (Master Jones and Master Hileman-Adams) one week prior to the Adjudicatory Hearing. Utilization of the attached form is in lieu of issuance of formal discovery orders at this time. The masters will encourage parties to exchange documents and witness names and addresses as informal discovery before preparing the form.

It is important to all of us that we exercise our best good faith efforts to permit the court to determine whether use of the CINA Pre-Adjudication Status Form and informal discovery addresses the issues of lack of discovery and lack of pre-trial settlement communication before revisiting the issue of formal discovery orders. If, after a reasonable period of examination, the masters are satisfied that informal discovery, combined with the use of the form, has not positively impacted trial preparedness and has not resulted in meaningful exchange of information for settlement discussions, they will bring the matter to the attention of the Dependency Scheduling Committee for consideration of recommending the adoption of a procedure highlighted by a formal discovery order.