**Santa Barbara County Superior Court**

**Office of the Family Law Facilitator**

**HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY HEARING?**

**FOR SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS:**

***You might be either the party making a request to the court or the party responding to a request. Your preparation will be the same in either case.***

1. Read over your court documents, looking for checked boxes on the **Request for Order FL-300** form. A checked box means that the court will review that issue at the hearing. Be familiar with what is being requested and what the opposing party is saying in response. Only the issues indicated by the boxes checked on the forms will be discussed. Other issues will need to be discussed at a future court date with new legal paperwork.

2. Create an outline showing each request and the reasons for each request. Then add to the outline what responses have been made to each request and the reasons for each response.

3. Pay particular attention to summarizing your side's point of view showing why each request should or should not be granted

4. This will become your “cheat sheet” to look at in court in case you go “blank” in front of the judicial officer. If you get nervous in court, you can look at your outline and know what you need to tell the judge or commissioner.

**What Do I Do on the Day of Court Even if I am Appearing on Zoom?**

1. Dress nicely, as for an interview or a special occasion. Dress appropriately: men need to have a shirt on; men and women: no crop tops; women: no extremely short skirts or no low-cut blouses. Do not wear shirts that have offensive writing on the front or back. If you wear a hat, remove it in the courtroom. Do not chew gum.

2. Have handy **all** your court papers, including any financial documents that the court may want to see. Have handy your Issue Chart (“cheat sheet”) so that you can refer to this as you talk to the judicial officer.

3. Be early or on time for court. Start logging on to Zoom at least 15” before the scheduled time for your appearance. If you have trouble logging on, immediately call the Family Law Facilitator’s Office at 805-882-4660. Know in advance which department you need to log onto with Zoom in the courthouse. Here is a link to get the proper information regarding your Zoom hearing: <https://www.santabarbara.courts.ca.gov/general-information/remote-appearance-zoom-information> .

4. If you are the one who requested the court hearing, you are allowed to speak to the judicial officer first. You will need to say **briefly** what you want and why. You can assume that the judicial officer has read your papers if you filed them well in advance of the hearing. Remember: the judicial officer does not want to hear you take a lot of time. **Your goal is: (1) to identify the issues you want the court to address, (2) to tell the court what decision you want on each of those issues and (3) to explain why. Then stop talking.** Give the other side a chance to speak.

5. Listen carefully to what is being discussed in your case. **Do not interrupt the other party or the judicial officer.** Answer politely when spoken to by the judge or the other party. Address your answers to the judicial officer.

6. At the end of your hearing (which may take just a few minutes or longer, depending on the complexity of the issues), the judicial officer will make an order or orders. If you are the one who has requested orders, make sure that the judge or commissioner in court makes an order regarding each item that is requested. **Do not rely on the judge or commissioner to remember all the orders you have requested.** **Look at your outline so you can remind the judicial officer if something has been overlooked.** Be assertive but polite in requesting that the court consider an issue that has been forgotten. **Have paper and a pen handy so that you can take notes while the session is going on and at the end when the judicial officer gives their final orders.**

7. If you asked for the hearing, you may be responsible for putting in writing the final order of the court. Listen carefully to what the judge says. Ask for clarification if you do not understand. If you need to write an order, contact your Family Law Facilitator for assistance.

**NOTE**: **Judge Anderle of Department SB3 (Anacapa Division) issues a tentative decision for all his cases before a hearing. You can read the tentative decision after 3:00 p.m. on the day preceding the date of the hearing. Go to the court’s website at** [**https://www.santabarbara.courts.ca.gov/online-services/tentative-rulings**](https://www.santabarbara.courts.ca.gov/online-services/tentative-rulings) **to view.**