## NOTICE TO THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC

# PROTOCOL FOR ALL FAMILY MATTERS ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE

## **491 STEELES AVENUE EAST, MILTON**

# August 24, 2020

- 1. Effective September 1, 2020, this Notice and Local Practice Direction shall replace those issued by the Milton Family Court, Ontario Court of Justice dated March 31, 2020, May 19, 2020 and June 23, 2020.
- 2. This Notice and Local Practice Direction should be read in conjunction with:
  - (a) COVID-19: Scheduling of Family Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice (August 10, 2020) found at <a href="https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/covid-19/covid-19-family-matters/">https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/covid-19/covid-19-family-matters/</a>;
  - (b) Notice to the Legal Profession and the Public regarding the process of electronically submitting documents at the Ontario Court of Justice (updated August 6, 2020) at <a href="https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/covid-19/emailing-urgent-documents/">https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/covid-19/emailing-urgent-documents/</a>;
  - (c) Protocol and Practices for Remote Hearings Milton Ontario Court of Justice, May 25, 2020, found at <a href="https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/">https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/</a>; and,
  - (d) Halton OCJ Family Practice Directive Adjournments by 17F (Amended November 12, 2019 to include 17F) found at <a href="https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/">https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/</a>
- This Notice and Local Practice Direction is intended to provide an update with respect to the scope of matters that will or may proceed in the Milton Family Court, Ontario Court of Justice, to alert parties and counsel to new protocols and new methods of filing court documents, and to give additional direction with respect to matters that will or may proceed.
- This Direction is subject to change from time to time as may be necessary and is intended to address issues only at the Milton Family Court, Ontario Court of Justice.

### ATTENDING THE COURTHOUSE AND APPEARANCES BEFORE A FAMILY JUDGE

5. Except where a judge has ordered otherwise, attendances before a family judge of the Ontario Court of Justice in Milton will continue to be held virtually (primarily by teleconference and in limited instances, by videoconference using the Zoom platform). This is due to the fact that while Milton Ontario Court of Justice has the capacity to hear in-person matters, a limited number of courtrooms have been refurbished to meet the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. In-person attendances, unless a judge orders otherwise, are limited in family and child welfare proceedings to the conduct of trials and *CYFSA* summary judgment motions that the court schedules to proceed.

- 6. In order to protect the health and safety of all court users and to help contain the spread of COVID-19, we continue to ask members of the legal profession and the public to NOT attend courthouses in person at this time unless a court has ordered that parties attend in person, or if you are unable to electronically file family court documents relating to a scheduled family law matter.
- 7. Under no circumstances should you come into a courthouse if you have been advised by public health officials, your doctor or the Ontario Ministry of Health (MOH) website (<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/paqe/2019-novel-coronavirus">https://www.ontario.ca/paqe/2019-novel-coronavirus</a>) to self-isolate. If you are required to attend court in person but are unable to come to court because you have been told to self-isolate, contact the courthouse by email to <a href="mailto:Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca">Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca</a> or by telephone 905-878-7281.
- 8. For domestic matters only and unless the Court notifies you otherwise, the dial in instructions for teleconferences with the Court are as follows:
  - a) For domestic matters proceeding before Justice Susan Sullivan:

Dial: 1 (866) 633-0848

Enter Conference ID 6820098#

Follow the prompts

b) For domestic matters proceeding before Justice Victoria Starr:

Dial: 1 (866) 633-0848

Enter Conference ID: 6749054#

Follow the prompts

9. For <u>all</u> child welfare (CAS) matters regardless of which judge will be presiding, the dial in instructions are as follows:

Dial: 1 866 633-1033

Enter conference ID: 1658969#

Follow the prompts

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE COURT / A FAMILY JUDGE IN THE OCJ

10. Do not attempt to communicate (directly or indirectly) with a family judge by way of letter, email, fax, or other form of communication, except on explicit invitation from the Court, or as may be directly by order of a family judge.

# TRIALS, FOCUSED TRIALS / HEARINGS, UNCONTESTED TRIALS, AND CYFSA SUMMARY JUDGMENT MOTIONS

11. The Court will continue to review its inventory of trials, focused trials/ hearings, uncontested trials, and *CYFSA* summary judgment motions, and deal with the backlog. The Court will notify parties to the matters that are identified as proceeding and will arrange for the matter to be spoken to.

#### **URGENT MATTERS**

- 12. These matters are eligible for an urgent virtual hearing:
  - (a) Urgent Child Protection matters:
  - Child, Youth and Family Services Act. place of safety hearings (s. 90), temporary care and custody hearings (s. 94), restraining orders (s. 137), status review hearings (s. 113), and secure treatment orders (s. 161);
  - (b) Urgent domestic matters:
  - Domestic matters: urgent custody/access motions, motions for restraining orders, Hague applications and non-Hague abduction cases, and dire support issues; and
  - Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act: refraining motions (s. 35).

#### CHILD PROTECTION: URGENT MATTERS

- 13. Place of safety hearings shall be brought within five (5) days after the removal of a child (on either Tuesday or Thursday) without the need for prior approval. If a temporary care hearing is sought, the matter will be organized and scheduled by that judge.
- 14. New Protection Applications and Status Review Applications will be filed and spoken to by a virtual hearing on the regular Thursday child protection list.

15. Wherever possible for new Child Protection Applications and Status Review Applications where, in prior proceedings the matter was concluded without a trial or by way of summary judgment motion, the case management judge who presided over the prior proceedings shall be the case management judge in the new related proceedings. If a decision in the prior proceeding was made following a trial or hearing of a summary judgment motion, then the judge who made that final decision shall be the case management judge for the new but related proceedings. The Society shall ensure that when a new application is made the proper case management judge is identified to Court Staff.

## **CHILD PROTECTION: ALL OTHER MATTERS**

- 16. All other child protection matters currently scheduled in the month of September 2020 shall proceed. To ensure that there is no overlap and that everyone gets reached, these attendances will generally be limited to 30 minutes and shall start at a specified time. It may be necessary to change your start time as a result and if this is the case, the Society will let you know the time when your matter is to start as soon as possible.
- 17. Even if your matter is proceeding, you are <u>not</u> to come to court on the court date as the attendance will be conducted by teleconference. To participate, dial in on the date and time specified in the documents the Society gives you or as directed above under the heading "Attending the Courthouse and Appearances Before a Family Judge".
- 18. If you do not have a phone or access to a phone and cannot participate via telephone at the appointed time and date by teleconference, you should let the Society know well in advance of the scheduled court date so that arrangements can be made for you to have access to a phone, or, contact the Court Office to make arrangements to have access to a phone within the courthouse. You may contact the courthouse by email to <a href="Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca">Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca</a> or by telephone 905-878-7281, Ext .3413.
- 19. Duty Counsel should be available on dates that child protection matters are heard to help those who are eligible for such assistance. To access duty counsel, please call **1-800-668-8258**.
- 20. The Children's Aid Society will provide self-represented parties with the dial-in instructions for all hearings and as well, with the contact information for Duty Counsel.
- 21. For matters not scheduled to be before the Court in September 2020, parties shall continue to be at liberty to request a priority case conference, a 'To Be Spoken To' appearance, or leave to bring an urgent motion. Such requests must be made by way of 14B Motion. In that event, the Moving party shall:

- (a) Serve and file a 14B Motion form (filing shall be by way of Family Submissions Online portal or by email to <a href="mailto:Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca">Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca</a>).
- (b) In the 14B Motion form, the Moving party is to succinctly summarize the facts which give rise to the need for the attendance at this time. The 14B Motion form shall not exceed 2 pages. No affidavit or other attachments are to accompany the 14B Motion form, other than an affidavit of service (which shall be filed along with the 14B request) and a copy of the last order / endorsement made.
- 22. If any party does not agree with the Moving party's request, they shall have four (4) business days to respond from the date of service of the Moving party's 14B Motion. The Responding party's response shall be subject to the same filing requirements as set above (in paragraph 21 (b)). Responses should be set out in a 14B Motion form; however, the document must clearly identify that the form is being filed as a "Response to 14B Motion".
- 23. No Reply is permitted.
- 24. If no Response is filed within four (4) days, the request shall be deemed to be unopposed and the court shall deal with it accordingly.

#### DOMESTIC MATTERS: REQUESTS FOR URGENT MOTIONS

- 25. To request an urgent motion in a domestic matter, the Moving party shall serve and file the following four (4) documents by filing with the Family Submissions Online portal or by email to Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca:
  - (a) 14B Motion form.
  - (b) An affidavit in support of the request for an urgent motion. The affidavit shall not exceed ten (10) pages, inclusive of exhibits, but not inclusive of orders and endorsements, unless authorized by a judge, in advance, by way of separate 14B Motion. The affidavit shall succinctly summarize the relevant facts which give rise to the urgency of the issue.
  - (c) A copy of the last two (2) endorsements, and any other prior order or endorsement that is relevant to the urgent matter that is before the court.
  - (d) An affidavit of Service of the 14B Motion form and supporting affidavit, if the test in Rule 14(12) to proceed without notice cannot be met.
- 26. The Responding party shall have four (4) business days to respond from the date of service of the Moving party's 14B Motion and supporting affidavit. The Responding

- party's response shall be subject to the same filing requirements as set above (in paragraph 25(b) to (d)).
- 27. No Reply is permitted.
- 28. If no Response is filed within four (4) days, the request shall be deemed to be unopposed and the court shall deal with it accordingly.
- 29. We urge any party considering bringing an urgent motion request to give due consideration to requesting a priority case conference first and instead, as many issues can be resolved through that less costly process.

## DOMESTIC MATTERS: REQUESTS FOR PRIORITY CASE CONFERENCES

- 30. We will continue to hold priority case conferences during the month of September in domestic matters, but only if an appearance in the matter is not already scheduled to proceed in September 2020. Priority case conferences will only be considered to deal with up to two issues in matters which do not necessarily meet the stringent test of urgency, if there is a possibility of resolution, or if there are pressing issues that require a conference on a priority basis.
- 31. To request a priority case conference appearance in domestic matters after September 1, 2020, the Moving party shall:
  - (a) First seek out the opposing party's consent to a priority case conference being held.
  - (b) Serve and file a 14B Motion form (filing shall be by way of the Family Submissions Online portal or by email to <a href="Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca">Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca</a>).
  - (c) In the 14B Motion form, the Moving party is to indicate whether the other party has agreed / consented to the convening of a priority case conference, succinctly summarize the up to two issues identified as priorities and provide sufficient facts to indicate the nature of the priority.
  - (d) In the 14B Motion form, the Moving party shall also provide three (3) mutually agreed to dates within the upcoming three (3) weeks for which both parties (and counsel if represented) are available to attend. If both parties (and counsel if represented) cannot mutually agree on three (3) available dates, the Moving party shall provide a list of all the dates within the upcoming three (3) weeks they are available to attend a conference.
  - (e) It is the court's expectation that the parties shall make reasonable efforts to communicate prior to commencing a 14B Motion for a priority case conference to attempt to resolve the issues, and if not, narrow the issues for the

- conference, and agree on the three (3) mutually convenient dates to attend for a priority case conference. The 14B Motion form is to provide an overview of efforts made to do so, and if none have been made, explain why not.
- (f) The 14B Motion shall not exceed two (2) pages. No affidavit or other attachments are to accompany the 14B Motion, other than an affidavit of service (which shall be filed along with the 14B request) and a copy of the last two endorsements and any relevant orders previously made.
- 32. If the Responding party does not agree with the Moving party's request, they shall have four (4) business days to respond from the date of service of the Moving party's 14B Motion. The Responding party's response shall be subject to the same requirements as set out above (in paragraphs 31(b) to (e)), including the requirement to provide a list of all dates within the upcoming three (3) weeks they are available to attend a conference and an overview of efforts made to resolve or narrow the issues. Responses should be set out in a 14B Motion form; however, the document must clearly identify that the form is being filed as a "Response to 14B Motion".
- 33. No Reply is permitted.
- 34. If no Response is filed within four (4) days the request shall be deemed to be unopposed and the court shall deal with it accordingly.
- 35. In the event the case management judge does not consider the matter to be urgent or a priority in the current COVID-19 climate, the matter will be dealt with at a later date, once the court returns to normal business functioning.

# DOMESTIC MATTERS: MATTERS PRESENTLY SCHEDULED TO PROCEED IN THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2020

- 36. Unless the parties to a matter or their counsel are notified otherwise by Court Staff or the Court, starting September 1, 2020 and concluding on September 30, 2020, all appearances currently set for September 2020 return dates shall proceed as either a case conference, or in the case where a matter is already scheduled as such, for a "to be spoken to", settlement conference, or, trial management conference.
- 37. With respect to all domestic matters scheduled to proceed in September 2020, the following applies:
  - (a) For matters scheduled on September 1, 2, 3 and 4, 2020 the timeline for the service and filing of Briefs is shortened as follows: Applicant/Moving party shall serve and file their Briefs no less than three (3) business days prior to the conference and the Respondent/Responding party shall serve and file their Briefs by noon the day before the attendance. Confirmations shall also be served and filed by 2:00 p.m. on the day before the attendance;

- (b) The attendance date and time will be as set out in the endorsement that adjourned your matter to a September court date. There will, however, be some matters that will need to be rescheduled to a different date and / or time in September. The Judicial Secretary or other Court staff will contact you if this is the case for your matter to arrange a different date and/or time;
- (c) The attendance will not exceed 30 minutes, unless the presiding judge permits otherwise:
- (d) Prior to the attendance, you must contact the opposing lawyer or party if the opposing party is unrepresented to discuss, in a meaningful way, the issues to be addressed at the court attendance;
- (e) Each party must serve and file any material that would ordinarily be required to be served and filed within the applicable timelines and as directed either in the court's last endorsement in your matter, or, as required under the *Family Law Rules* for the particular type of attendance;
- (f) Each party must serve and file a Form 17F Confirmation as per the timelines set out in the Family Law Rules. If no 17F Confirmation is sent in, your matter will not proceed on the date it is scheduled and will be administratively adjourned. If only one party files a 17F Confirmation, the conference shall proceed and only deal with the issues raised in the brief of the party who served and filed their 17F;
- (g) If your matter was scheduled for the hearing of a motion, unless a judge has explicitly ordered otherwise since normal court operations ceased, the September court attendance will all be converted to a case conference;
- (h) If both parties consent to an adjournment of the September court date, then the protocol set out in the Halton OCJ Family Practice Directive - Adjournments by 17F (Amended November 12, 2019 to include 17F) found at <a href="https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/">https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/</a> shall be followed in order to obtain a new date and time. Remember, a date and time will not be held for the parties unless they have confirmed the date and time agreed upon and received an email from court staff confirming that the date and time is being held; and
- (i) If a party does not wish for the matter to proceed as scheduled and/or the parties cannot agree on a date and time, then the only way to reschedule the attendance is to bring a 14B Motion in writing requesting an adjournment.
- 38. The Court's decision to preside over matters scheduled in the month of September 2020, is a test run. Unless a further practice Direction issues advising otherwise, you should assume that all matters scheduled from October 1, 2020 and onwards, and unless a judge orders otherwise, will be administratively adjourned.

# MATTERS THAT MAY BE DEALT WITH BY A JUDGE IN CHAMBERS, WITHOUT AN ORAL HEARING

39. These matters and requests may also continue to be submitted by way of Form 14B Motion made in writing:

- (a) Procedural issues (such as service, disclosure);
- (b) In-chambers adoption orders in applications that were filed pre-COVID-19; and
- (c) Any consent matters. The material filed for a consent matter shall include a draft of the order requested in Word Format, however, if the consent is with respect to support, a completed Support Deduction Information Form, a draft Support Deduction Order, and a draft Order must also be submitted.

## **NEW FILING OPTIONS**

- 40. As set out in the two notices referred to above issued by the Chief of the Ontario Court of Justice on August 10, 2020, effective August 6, 2020, documents and requests may be submitted in three ways:
  - electronically using the Family Submissions Online portal, (however, please check <u>www.ontario.ca/familyclaims</u> to ensure that your documents may be filed using the portal);
  - 2. electronically using the email address: Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca; or
  - 3. in-person at the courthouse.
- 41. To support physical distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the number of people who can attend in a courthouse remains limited. To reduce the need for inperson attendances at the courthouse to file documents, it is preferred that court filings be submitted electronically.
- 42. If you are unable to file documents electronically you should contact the Milton courthouse before coming to the courthouse, either by email to <a href="Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca">Milton.OCJ.courts@ontario.ca</a> or by telephone 905-878-7281, ext .3413 to find out about other options that are available or information about attending the courthouse. Note that entry into the courthouse will be controlled and court counters are only open between 9 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## PROCEDURAL, FILING, AND DOCUMENT NAMING PROTOCOLS

43. Subject to the discretion of the judge hearing the matter, all documents filed must conform to the page number restrictions set out herein and to the formatting and filing and naming protocols and procedures set out below under this heading. If these are not followed, your material will not be accepted for filing and will not be brought to the attention of a family judge.

- 44. The formatting and filing protocols that must be followed include the following:
  - (a) In both child protection matters and domestic matters, Respondents shall serve their Answers, Response to Motion to Change, along with sworn 35.1 Affidavits and sworn financial statements where applicable, as required by the *Family Law Rules*. However, subject to the discretion of the case management judge, no party shall file their responding documents with the Court until the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on the filing office are eased;
  - (b) Parties should assume that the judge does not have access to the court file as the judge is likely working remotely;
  - (c) All documents shall be in 12-point font. Spacing shall be 1.5 lines. Normal margins shall be used;
  - (d) The documents to be filed by each party are to be attached to one email only;
  - (e) All documents shall be in PDF format;
  - (f) Each document shall be in a separate PDF attachment to the party's email;
  - (g) Any references to case law or statutes can be made by hyperlink to CanLII;
  - (h) Affidavits shall be limited to ten (10) pages total, including exhibits but excluding endorsements and orders;
  - (i) Case conference briefs shall be limited to (10) pages in total including all attachments but excluding copies of any prior endorsements and orders;
  - (j) Where a judge has granted leave to proceed with an urgent motion or a priority case conference, or your matter is otherwise scheduled to proceed, Confirmations (17F or 14C as applicable) shall be strictly required. If neither party serves or files a Confirmation, your matter will not proceed on the date it is scheduled and will be administratively adjourned. If only one party files a Confirmation, the appearance shall proceed and deal only with the issues raised in the material filed by the party who served and filed their Confirmation. The Confirmation form shall include an itemized list of the documents that have been filed and which the judge is to read, by identifying the name of the document, the author's name and the date of the document (i.e. Affidavit of Respondent John Smith, sworn May 26, 2020);
  - (k) If it becomes evident at any time during a Conference that the parties have not made reasonable, diligent efforts to meaningfully discuss the issues prior to the Conference being held, the presiding judge may discontinue the Conference;

- (I) You must ensure that each party's and counsel's current email address and the name of the case management judge is listed on any 14B Motion Form, Form 17F, Form 14C and in the body of the filing email as directed below; and
- (m)Where service is required by order of the Court or pursuant to the *Family Law Rules*, you must attach an affidavit of service with respect to each document served and filed.
- 45. Additionally, in order to ensure your request is received and processed by the appropriate court office, the subject line should include the following information:
  - 1. LEVEL OF COURT (OCJ)
  - 2. TYPE OF MATTER (Family, CYFSA)
  - 3. FILE NUMBER (Indicate NEW if no court file number exists)
  - 4. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (14B Motion, Case Conference, Settlement Conference, Trial Management Conference, Focused Hearing, Urgent Motion, Urgent Application, Trial, Other Request)
- 46. Further, the body of the email should include the following information if applicable:
  - i. court file number (if it is an existing file)
  - ii. short title of proceeding
  - iii. list of documents attached (note: attachments cannot exceed 35MB)
  - iv. type of request
  - v. confirmation that all parties have been served and that the affidavit(s) of service is attached to the email.
  - vi. name, role (i.e. legal representative, party, etc.,) and contact information of person submitting the request (email and phone number).
  - vii. The Case Management Judge if one has already been assigned or managing the current proceedings;
- 47. Also, the following naming protocol is to be used for each and every document to be filed with the court electronically regardless of the method used to file it:
  - (a) Start with the date and use the date the document was signed or sworn and use this format to reflect the date: 2020 07 15 (no dashes, periods, or hyphens, just space);
  - (b) Next, insert the name of document. For example, "Affidavit", "Affidavit of Service", Case conference Brief", "Confirmation", or "14B Motion", etc.;
  - (c) Next, insert the initial and surname of affiant if it is an affidavit (i.e. J Doe) or if it is not an affidavit then the party filing the document (i.e. "Respondent" or "Applicant"); and
  - (d) Finally state the Form number (ie.17F, 14B, 14A, etc.)

- 48. If the required naming protocol is followed, then the name of each document will look something like this, depending on the type of document being filed:
  - 2020 08 17 Affidavit of G. Smith 14B
  - 2020 08 13 14B Motion form Respondent 14A
  - 2020 08 14 Confirmation Applicant 17F
- 49. Finally, when a document has been filed electronically, it is not necessary to file a paper copy at this time. However, originals of all documents filed electronically must be retained so that a paper copy can be filed with the court when ordinary court operations resume.

## **NEW APPLICATIONS AND NEW MOTIONS TO CHANGE**

50. New applications and motions to change, unless deemed urgent, will not be heard at this time.

#### FIRST APPEARANCE COURT

51. First appearance court will continue to be administratively adjourned.

# FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE (FRO) MATTERS

- 52. Almost all matters involving the Director (Family Responsibility Office), except for motions for refraining orders, will be automatically adjourned to a date in October 2020 and onwards. Bench warrants for non-attendance will be normally made on a discretionary basis only and will not be enforced unless the support payor fails to attend on the next court date. The FRO will advise you of the new court date and whether your matter will proceed or be adjourned.
- 53. Motions for refraining orders are considered urgent family matters and will proceed via teleconference on the date and time set out in the notice of motion. The moving party must serve FRO. Pursuant to O.Reg. 76-20, all service of documents on FRO must be effected by electronic means. The current email address for service on FRO is: <a href="mailto:FROLEGALSERVICE@ontario.ca">FROLEGALSERVICE@ontario.ca</a>. For such hearings, the moving party and counsel for the FRO shall participate via teleconference. As such motions are filed, dial in instructions will be given to the party making the motion along with any other directions the court determines need to be provided.
- 54. FRO's general contact information (during business hours) is:

**Toronto:** 416-326-1817 **Toll-free:** 1-800-267-4330

TTY (service for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing): 1-866-545-

0083

Also, automated information is available 24 hours a day for Parties enrolled in FRO's Public Secure Online system for case specific information and for general information at www.thefro.ca

#### **OTHER FAMILY MATTERS**

55. All other family matters not included in this Notice and Local Practice Direction shall continue to be administratively adjourned.

#### PRE-COURT DISCUSSIONS

56. Parties should make reasonable efforts to communicate prior to a hearing to attempt to resolve the issues. If a contested hearing is necessary, parties should determine the issues that remain in dispute. The parties should make efforts to narrow the issues as much as possible and discuss the nature of any evidence to be heard and how it will be presented.

#### **LEGAL RESOURCES**

## **Legal Aid Ontario**

57. People who would have received in-person legal aid services through the Family Law Information Centres will be able to continue to get help from LAO over the phone by calling 1-800-668-8258.

## Law Society of Ontario emergency family referral line during COVID-19

- 58. The Law Society of Ontario continues to support a telephone line to assist people who are self-represented (SRLs) and trying to determine whether or not their family court matter meets the criteria to be heard by the court on an 'urgent' basis and, if so, how to proceed in making their request. The emergency service will connect SRLs with family lawyers, working on a pro bono basis, who will provide 30 minutes of legal advice specific to determining whether or not their family court matter is urgent and referrals to other available legal services.
- 59. SRLs may contact the law society by phone at the following numbers to access the service: Toll-free: 1-800-268-7568: General: 416-947-3310.

## Law Society of Ontario Referral Service

60. The Law Society of Ontario's Referral Service will give you the name of a lawyer within or near your community, who will provide a free consultation of up to 30

minutes to help you determine your rights and options. You can start the online process of obtaining a lawyer referral at <a href="http://www.findlegalhelp.ca/">http://www.findlegalhelp.ca/</a>, 24 hours per day.

# A Guide for Self-represented Family Litigants during COVID-19

61. The Ontario Court of Justice has prepared a guide for self-represented family litigants during COVID-19. You may find it here: Guide for Self-represented Family Litigants during COVID-19

#### **MEDIATION SERVICES**

- 62. The Ministry of the Attorney General provides mediation services. Free online mediation is available for anyone at first appearance, on a conference, motion or trial. Free intakes for 6-hour mediations are also by Zoom, along with the subsidized mediations. You may also wish to contact the mediation services for information about resources that are available in your location, including virtual mandatory information sessions.
- 63. You can find them here: Ministry of the Attorney General Mediators by Court Location

  (https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/service\_provider\_by\_family\_court\_location.php)

#### **FURTHER UPDATES**

64. Please continue to check the Ontario Court of Justice's website (<a href="https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/">https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/</a>) and the Halton County Law Association's website (<a href="https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/">https://haltoncountylaw.ca/covid-19/</a>) for general and courthouse specific updates. The Court will provide additional information about the scheduling and conduct of all court proceedings, including the Court's ongoing work to make more services available using remote technology.

Justice Victoria Starr Local Administrative Judge, Family