

**1920.51 EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION, DIVORCE, ANNULMENT, ALIMONY,
COUNSEL FEES, COSTS AND EXPENSES**

- 1) The Divorce Hearing Officer shall hear annulment, divorce, economic claims in divorce including alimony, equitable distribution, counsel fees, costs and expenses or any aspect thereof.
- (2) Any party shall file an original and a copy of the Motion for Appointment of Hearing Officer with the Prothonotary if proceeding under Dauphin County Local Rule 1920.51. If a Hearing Officer was previously appointed because of pretrial or discovery matters, the administrative fee of \$75.00 plus any filing fee required by the Prothonotary shall be paid to the Prothonotary. If a Hearing Officer has not been previously appointed, an administrative fee of \$150.00 plus any filing fee required by the Prothonotary shall be paid to the Prothonotary. The Motion for Appointment of Hearing Officer shall be in form prescribed by Dauphin County Local Rule 1920.74(a).
- (3) The Motion shall include the following attachments:
 - (a) An updated Income and Expense Statement in the form required by Pa.R.C.P. 1910.27(c)(1).
 - (b) An updated Inventory and Appraisalment in the form required by Pa.R.C.P. 1920.75.
 - (c) A proposed Order appointing the Hearing Officer and scheduling a Preliminary Conference in the form prescribed by Dauphin County Local Rule 1920.74(b).
 - (d) A Certificate of Service.
 - (e) A Self-Represented Entry of Appearance if the filing party is unrepresented by legal counsel.
- (4) The Prothonotary shall forward the Motion for Appointment of Hearing Officer to the Court Administrator's Office. A Family Court Judge shall appoint the Divorce Hearing Officer and the Divorce Hearing Officer shall schedule a Preliminary Conference with the parties and their legal counsel.
- (5) At the Preliminary Conference, the Divorce Hearing Officer shall address all outstanding pre-trial matters with counsel and the parties.
- (6) Following the Preliminary Conference, the Divorce Hearing Officer shall schedule a Settlement Conference with the parties and their legal counsel.

- (7) Following both the Preliminary Conference and the Settlement Conference, the Divorce Hearing Officer shall prepare a Memorandum memorializing any agreements and schedule the matter for a hearing on all remaining contested issues.
- (8) The Divorce Hearing Officer shall file the Memorandum with the Prothonotary and mail a copy of the Memorandum to all legal counsel and self-represented parties in accordance with Pa.R.C.P. 1920.51.
- (9) The Court shall pay a stenographer's appearance fee if a court reporter not employed by Dauphin County transcribes the hearing testimony; however the cost of any transcripts requested by the parties shall be borne by the parties.
- (10) The Divorce Hearing Officer shall file a Report and Recommendation and Proposed Order with the Prothonotary in accordance with the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure.
- (11) A copy of the Report and Recommendation and Proposed Order shall be mailed to counsel and self-represented parties with written notice of the right to file Exceptions.
- (12) If the parties request a transcript, the Divorce Hearing Officer may delay the filing of the Report and Recommendation and Proposed Order or file a Supplemental Report and Recommendation and Proposed Order in accordance with the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure.
- (13) If no timely Exceptions are filed, the Prothonotary shall promptly forward the Report and Recommendation and Proposed Order to the Court Administrator's Office for assignment to a Family Court Judge. If a Family Court Judge has handled a contested family law case for that family, the matter will be assigned to that Judge.
- (14) An original and a copy of Exceptions to the Divorce Hearing Officer Report and Recommendation shall be filed with the Prothonotary's Office along with a Prior Court Involvement Statement in accordance with Dauphin County Local Rule 1931. This form is available in the Dauphin County Self-Help Center.
- (15) The Prothonotary shall forward the Exceptions to the Report and Recommendation to the Court Administrator's Office for assignment to a Family Court Judge. If a Family Court Judge has handled a contested family law case for that family, the matter will be assigned to that Judge.
- (16) The Court shall promptly issue an Order scheduling a conference, the filing of briefs and/or oral argument.