

FAMILY FOCUSED PROTOCOL (FFP) **INFORMATION SHEET**

Beginning January 2, 2026, the Alberta Court of King's Bench has changed the way all family law matters, to which Part 12 of the Alberta Rules of Court applies, are conducted. The goal of this change to procedure is to reduce the risk of long-term harm to families, and especially children, from lengthy and adversarial litigation.

Pre-requisites to Appearing in Court

Under the new FFP process, the following three key steps must be completed prior to accessing the Court:

1. Exchange of Full Financial Disclosure: all the disclosure currently prescribed by the "Notice to Disclose" for matters proceeding in the Court of King's Bench and the Court of Justice must be exchanged between parties. This includes things like income tax returns for the previous three years, copies of bank and credit card statements for the most recent six months, and a sworn Statement of Income, Assets and Liabilities (SIAL), etc.
2. Attend Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): the parties must have at least attempted some form of ADR, such as mediation or a four-way meeting. If the opposing party is unresponsive to requests for ADR, a waiver may be obtained. However, significant efforts must be made prior to a waiver being granted, a waiver can only be sought after genuine efforts have been made to schedule and facilitate an ADR meeting.
3. Complete Parenting After Separation (PAS) Course: where the matter involves children, the PAS course must be completed and the certificate of completion filed with the Court. The course is free, online and takes approximately three hours to complete. The purpose of the course is to reduce conflict and encourage co-parenting. Even in matters that do not appear to involve children, such as claims for spousal support and property division, the children may be affected by the outcome and therefore PAS is required. Note that PAS must have been completed within the past 24 months, or you will be required to take it again. For more adversarial matters, we recommend additionally taking the Parenting After Separation for Families in High Conflict eCourse (PASHC).

In Grande Prairie, there is a fourth requirement that must be complied with prior to going to Court. In accordance with the Notice to the Profession & Public issued October 4, 2024, parties will be expected to engage with the resources available through the Family Resource Network

Hub at <https://www.familyeducationsociety.org/>. These resources aim to support families as they transition through relationship restructuring and to help prevent the toxicity associated with conflict.

Self-represented parties with children are also required to meet with a Family Court Counsellor, who may provide resources and guidance within the process.

Where a matter is urgent, or a waiver has been obtained, compliance with one or more of the requirements may not be necessary.

Mandatory Intake Conference

Once the pre-requisites have been completed and reviewed by a Case Management Officer (CMO), a Mandatory Intake & Triage conference (MIT) may be scheduled. An MIT is an initial meeting with the Justice who will be assigned the matter. At this meeting, the Justice may:

- A. Narrow and identify the key issues;
- B. Grant interim relief;
- C. Assess the need for expert reports;
- D. Mediate;
- E. Make procedural orders and set deadlines;
- F. Appoint child counsel;
- G. Consider any unique circumstances; and
- H. Remain “seized” or assigned to the matter.

The MIT is intended to replace the need for many of the interim applications often made under the old system, and to prepare the parties for a mandatory Settlement Conference. Notably, both parties, whether they have counsel or not, must attend the MIT and Settlement Conference.

Settlement Conference

Following the MIT, the parties may attend a Settlement Conference to address any outstanding issues. The Settlement Conference is a hearing before a different Justice than the Justice conducting the MIT, unless otherwise agreed. If an agreement is reached at the conference, it may be binding on the parties if they intend the settlement to be final. The conference may also serve to further narrow the issues and refine positions or confirm the factual and legal bases for unresolved issues. If the parties are unable to successfully resolve their issues at the Settlement Conference, a trial or streamlined trial will be set. To prepare for trial, the parties will be directed

to prepare a Litigation Plan Order or a Streamlined Trial Order and attend a Pre-Trial Conference at least 90 days prior to the scheduled trial date.

Urgent Matters

Under the FFP, for urgent matters where an MIT Justice has not yet been assigned, urgent requests must be directed to a Desk Duty Justice in Edmonton or Calgary. If a Justice has been assigned, the urgent request must go directly to that Justice.

Urgent matters are defined by the Court as matters where:

- A. There is a risk of immediate harm to one of the parties, or a child of the parties. This may include an application for exclusive possession of the family home;
- B. There is a risk of a child being removed from the jurisdiction;
- C. An Emergency Protection Order must be reviewed; and
- D. Parenting time, contact and/or communication with a child that cannot be reasonably delayed.

Matters in the Alberta Court of Justice

Commencing alongside the FFP on January 2, 2026, the Grande Prairie Practice Direction established similar mandatory pre-court requirements in the Alberta Court of Justice. Before filing a family court claim, individuals must complete the following steps:

1. Exchange Full Financial Disclosure: all the disclosure currently prescribed by the “Request for Financial Information” for matters proceeding in the Court of Justice must be provided. Like the Notice to Disclose form, this form requires one to submit documents like income tax returns for the previous three years, copies of bank and credit card statements for the most recent six months, and a sworn Statement of Income, Assets and Liabilities (SIAL), among other things. This requirement only applies to matters where child support, spousal support, or adult interdependent partner support is at issue.
2. Attend Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): the parties must have at least attempted some form of ADR, such as mediation or a four-way meeting. If the opposing party is unresponsive to requests for ADR, a waiver may be obtained. However, significant efforts must be made prior to a waiver being granted, a waiver can only be sought after genuine efforts have been made to schedule and facilitate an ADR meeting.
3. Complete Parenting After Separation (PAS) Course: where the matter involves children, the PAS course must be completed and the certificate of completion filed with the Court.

The course is free, online and takes approximately three hours to complete. The purpose of the course is to reduce conflict and encourage co-parenting. Even in matters that do not appear to involve children, such as claims for spousal support and property division, the children may be affected by the outcome and therefore PAS is required. Note that PAS must have been completed within the past 24 months, or you will be required to take it again. For more adversarial matters, we recommend additionally taking the Parenting After Separation for Families in High Conflict eCourse (PASHC).

For parties that are self-represented with dependent children, there is a requirement that the party must meet with a Family Court Counsellor prior to filing a claim.

The mandatory pre-court requirements do not apply to:

1. Applications for Protection Orders;
2. Applications that are eligible for waiver or deferral, including urgent matters;
3. Applications for Substitutional Service Orders;
4. Consent Orders (however, for Child Support or Spousal/Partner Support Orders, financial disclosure must still be completed); and
5. Any interjurisdictional Application where one party resides outside Alberta.