

may take longer depending on the issues and schedules.

Should the child (ren) be brought to the Troubleshooting meeting?

It is not appropriate to bring the children to the initial meeting since most, if not all of the time will be spent in a joint meeting with the other parent. If the Friend of the Court representative feels it is necessary to interview the child (ren), arrangements will be made to schedule that meeting.

What should I bring to the meeting?

Any and all records that may be necessary to support your position should be brought to the meeting. Here is a checklist that may be helpful.

CHECKLIST

- Last 3 pay check stubs
- Last 2 years of federal income tax returns
- Child/ren's last report card
- Child/ren's attendance records
- Police reports involving yourself over the last 3 years
- Police reports involving your children over the last 3 years
- Verification of child care expenses
- Children's Protective Services reports involving you and/or your children over the last 3 years

Mental/physical health records from health care providers over the last 3 years for any relevant condition

Results from any recent drug testing

Signed waivers of confidentiality to all counselors/therapists seen over the last 3 years.

*** Note*** It is important to come prepared.

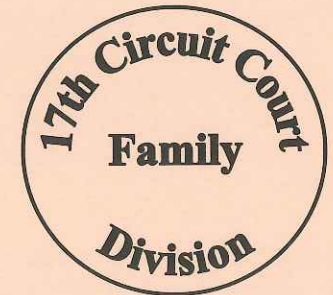


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Troubleshooting



Friend of the Court
“For Our Children”



2016

What is Troubleshooting?

Troubleshooting is scheduled upon a direct referral from the Court, usually on motion day. At the discretion of the Court there may be a fee for your custody and/or parenting time troubleshoot. The Order referring your case to the Friend of the Court office will address the fee amount, how the amount is to be proportioned between the parents and whether or not the fee is waived or reserved. If the fee has been reserved the evaluator may address the fee in their recommendation. The total fee needs to be paid at the Friend of the Court Office, cash or money order ONLY, prior to the troubleshooting appointment. If the fee is not paid prior to your scheduled appointment your troubleshoot will be TERMINATED. If one parent pays and the other parent fails to pay the fee your troubleshoot will be TERMINATED. Your troubleshoot WILL NOT BE HELD if the entire fee is not paid in full. A meeting is scheduled for a specific date and time at the Kent County Friend of the Court office, typically the Thursday following the motion day hearing. Troubleshooting is an alternative dispute resolution process where both parties attend a meeting with a Friend of the Court mediator or evaluator. The goal is to gather information to assist the parties in settling the dispute by reaching an agreement, if possible. If an agreement is reached, the Friend of the Court representative will prepare a stipulation and order.

The Friend of the Court representative will collect information under applicable statutes to make a determination regarding the best interests of the child(ren) involved. If the parties themselves cannot reach an agreement, a report

and recommendation will be prepared and sent to the Court, the parties and the attorneys. Along with the report and recommendation, a proposed order may be submitted reflecting the recommendation, if required by the court. Either party may file a written objection to the entry of the order within twenty-one (21) days. If no objection is filed, the Court will enter the order if it comports with the Court's decision.

Essentially, the troubleshooting meeting will allow both parties to more fully express their positions regarding the area of dispute. If the issues are too complex to be fully addressed in 3 to 6 weeks, the Troubleshooter will state in the recommendation that this case requires further evaluation and the recommendation is only for the interim. In this instance, the evaluation will continue with another report and recommendation being completed.

***** It is important to bring with you any documentation that substantiates your viewpoint (paycheck stubs, tax returns, police reports or other agency reports). Failure to bring the appropriate documentation may result in a delay in processing your case. *****

Frequently Asked Troubleshooting Questions

May I bring my attorney?

Usually attorneys do not attend unless the Judge specifically grants permission. There are certain circumstances under which the Judge will grant permission for the attorneys to attend, such as a history of domestic violence, or violent behaviors by one or both of the parties. If the Judge grants permission, both attorneys must attend.

Will I get notice of the meeting from the Friend of the Court?

No. You will be informed by the Court directly at the motion hearing, or through your attorney, of the date and time of the meeting. Often, you will also be informed of the name of the Friend of the Court mediator/evaluator.

Is there a way for me to request Troubleshooting be scheduled on my case without filing a motion?

Whether your case is appropriate for Troubleshooting is a judicial decision, so your case must be brought before the Court. However, your attorney may request a referral for Troubleshooting at a motion hearing.

What if no agreement is reached or I do not like the recommendation?

Please consult with your attorney about filing an objection within 21 days. If you are not represented, you must file a written objection within twenty-one (21) days; the Court may enter the order if no objection is filed. Objections are to be in writing stating the specific reason for objection and, are filed with the Clerk of the Court. A Notice of Hearing and Proof of Service must also be filed with the Clerk of the Court. If either party files an objection, then you must return to the Court as scheduled for a decision by the Judge.

Is there only one meeting for Troubleshooting?

Sometimes the Friend of the Court representative will need to obtain additional information and may want to meet with you individually, or with your child(ren). The initial meeting is normally scheduled for two (2) hours, but it