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The Family Court Process

- **Initial consultation**
 - Review of current situation
 - Brief discussion of history
 - Discuss preliminary limited options available
 - Quote fee, if requested. Pleadings prepared
- **Pleading prepared**
 - Summons and Complaint
 - Drafting process may take 1-2 weeks
- **Pleadings filed with Family Court**
 - Hand-delivered to Greenville; mailed out of county
 - Fee is \$150.00 to file Summons and Complaint; other fees may be necessary
 - Court assigns case number
- **Receipt of filed, stamped pleadings from Family Court**
 - Papers served on Defendant (Process Servers fee (\$45.00 – \$100.00))
- **Attempt settlement**
 - Client prepares information for attorney
 - Attorney drafts settlement letter
 - Parties engage in negotiations through their attorneys
- **Parties attend mediation**
 - Required by most counties as a means to attempt to settle contested issues before final hearing
 - Conducted by trained mediators who are usually attorneys or a retired Family Court Judge
 - Parties attorneys may or may not attend
- **Final hearing is requested (cannot request until after mediation or unless settlement is reached)**
 - Scheduled for 4-12 months from time of request, depending upon the amount of time requested
 - May need to update financial declaration
 - Client to be actively involved in hearing preparation
- **Final hearing**
 - 15 minutes if all issues are settled
 - Full day or more if issues are still contested
 - Testimony, evidence, and witnesses
- **Final Order prepared, filed, and signed by Judge**
 - Please note: Other motions may be filed with a Summons and Complaint in order to obtain faster relief.