THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION OF HONG KONG

The Family Dispute Resolution Process Report

Executive Summary

(This Executive Summary is an outline of the report. Copies of the report can be obtained either from the Secretary, Law Reform Commission, 20/F Harcourt House, 39 Gloucester Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong, or on the Internet at <http://www.info.gov.hk/hkreform/>.)

Background

1. This is the third in a series of four reports which have been undertaken by the Commission under its reference on guardianship and custody of children. These reports follow extensive research in this area by the Commission's Sub-committee on Guardianship and Custody, which issued a consultation paper on the topic in December 1998. The Commission's first two reports, on *Guardianship of Children* and *International Parental Child Abduction* were published last year. The Commission's fourth report, on custody and access, is expected to be published later this year.

2. The Commission's focus in reviewing the family dispute resolution aspect of the guardianship and custody reference has been on formulating proposals to minimize the adversarial nature of family proceedings, so as to promote the best interests of the child.

Overview of the report's recommendations

3. The report contains 34 separate recommendations for reform. Those presented in Chapter 5 relate to court-based support services to facilitate family mediation; those in Chapter 6 cover mediation services in their wider context; and those set out in Chapter 7 relate to the family litigation process.

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the family dispute resolution process

4. Chapter 1 examines the various types of dispute resolution process used in family cases, such as mediation, adversarial settlement and litigation, counselling and family therapy, and compares their principal features and how they differ in approach to the handling of family disputes.

Chapter 2 – Family dispute resolution – the situation in Hong Kong

5. Chapter 2 begins by providing a brief overview of the standard court procedures relating to divorce and child custody cases. It then examines the various support services now available in Hong Kong to assist in the resolution of family disputes. This chapter notes the significant developments in Hong Kong in this area in recent years, with the implementation of the Pilot Scheme on Family Mediation at the Family Court and new proposals for reform of the civil justice system advanced by the Chief Justice's Working Party on Civil Justice Reform. In relation to the Pilot Scheme on Family Mediation, a review of the findings of the interim evaluation report on the scheme is included.

Chapter 3 – The family dispute resolution system in England and Wales

6. Chapter 3 looks at the developments which have taken place in England and Wales in relation to family dispute resolution, some of which have evolved in the general context of 'access to justice' and as a consequence of Lord Woolf's reforms of the civil procedure system in England and Wales.

Chapter 4 – Family dispute resolution in Australia and New Zealand

7. In Chapter 4, we look at the family dispute resolution models developed in Australia and New Zealand, which, like those adopted in England, have been influential in the formulation of the Commission's recommendations appearing later in the report.

Chapter 5 - Court based support facilities for family mediation

8. Chapter 5 sets out the Commission's recommendations in relation to court-based support services for family mediation. The Sub-committee's interim recommendations in this area, which were contained in its consultation paper, were generally strongly supported by the consultees.

9. In paragraph 5.6, we note that a number of our interim recommendations contained in the consultation paper have now been provisionally implemented through the Pilot Scheme on Family Mediation at the Family Court. We nonetheless reiterate our endorsement for these earlier proposals, to add our voice to those advocating the future expansion of the Pilot Scheme on Family Mediation into a permanent service.

10. There are also some areas where our proposals on court-based support services diverge from those implemented under the Pilot Scheme. We take the opportunity in Chapter 5 to note these alternative or supplementary proposals, and trust that these may also be considered by the

Administration in the context of its long-term strategy planning for mediation in family litigation.

11. In brief, our Recommendations 1 to 5 on court-based support services emphasise that providing access to mediation and other support services, such as information sessions and parent education, should be an integral part of the Family Court system and should be government-funded (Recommendation 1). We recommend that mediation should be actively promoted through the courts, and suggest that more publicity and education of the public is needed to encourage families to go for assistance at an early stage of marital conflict (Recommendation 2). We recommend that solicitors should be under an obligation to inform and encourage their clients to consider reconciliation and to advise them about the counselling and mediation services available (Recommendation 3). We also advocate: providing free, court-based information sessions to parties contemplating divorce; an obligation on solicitors to advise clients of these sessions; and a power to Family Court judges to order parties to attend information sessions if necessary (Recommendations 4 to 6).

12. Our Recommendations 6 and 7 focus on the court powers and procedures we propose to encourage parties to attend mediation. Recommendation 8 introduces the concept of the 'counselling conference.' This is designed to assist the parties to resolve emotional conflicts which may be barring them from reaching agreement on the practical issues of their divorce, particularly on custody and access arrangements for their children.

13. Our Recommendations 9 to 11 on court-based support services concern the role of the support services co-ordinator (Recommendation 9), the accommodation of support services at the Family Court (Recommendation 10), and the screening and matching of cases for mediation (Recommendation 11).

Chapter 6 - Family mediation services generally

14. Chapter 6 sets out the Commission's recommendations relating to the more general role of mediators. We note (at paragraph 6.2) that the objective of these recommendations is to ensure that mediation in Hong Kong operates in accordance with clear guidelines and adequate resources, so that the integrity of the process and the quality of mediation services will be maintained. Again, the Sub-committee's interim recommendations in this area, which were contained in its consultation paper, were generally strongly supported by the consultees.

15. Our Recommendations 12 to 19 cover a number of issues, including: the training of mediators (Recommendation 12); the system of accreditation (Recommendation 13); guidelines to ensure the separation of roles of social welfare officers, lawyers and others who act also as mediators (Recommendations 14 to 15); the availability of experts' reports in difficult cases (Recommendation 16); the introduction of statutory privilege for

statements made by parties engaged in mediation (though we accept that statements which may indicate a risk of harm, particularly to a child, should not be confidential) (Recommendation 17); the provision of statutory immunity from liability for mediators (Recommendation 18); and the provision of a statutory requirement that mediators should advise their clients to obtain legal advice (Recommendation 19).

16. In Recommendation 20, we propose that legal aid should be available for mediation. In Recommendation 21, we advocate that mechanisms should be in place so that the views of the child can be considered in the mediation process. We also propose, in Recommendation 22, that rules of court should facilitate the converting of mediation agreements into consent orders. We advocate the introduction of parenting plans in Recommendation 23. In Recommendation 24, we do not advocate any change to the current position in relation to the enforcement of mediation agreements. Recommendations 25 and 26 set out our proposals to encourage the development and wider use of community mediation services.

Chapter 7 - The family litigation process and related matters

17. Chapter 7 contains the Commission's recommendations in relation to the family litigation process itself, as well as other related matters. Once more, the Sub-committee's provisional recommendations set out in its consultation paper were generally widely supported by the consultees.

18. We note, at paragraph 7.3, that underpinning many of our recommendations on family litigation is a new, streamlined court process for dealing with family cases. We have designed a Flow Chart, appearing on page 116 of the report (see also attachment to this Executive Summary), which outlines the steps in this new court process. A key feature of this process is the application of case management strategies to minimize delay in these cases, as delay is obviously contrary to the best interests of the child. The steps set out in the Flow Chart are necessary steps in the management of family cases, with a time schedule set by the judge in consultation with the parties.

19. In Recommendations 27 and 28, we set out our general proposals in relation to case management and the avoidance of delay in family proceedings, including the introduction of a Practice Direction governing case management in the Family Court, more powers to judges to control costs, and the introduction of target times for the disposal of civil cases concerning children.

20. In Recommendation 29, we detail our proposals for 'issues' and 'settlement' conferences as stages in the court process, which are aimed at clarifying outstanding issues and further promoting agreement between the parties.

21. The importance to the Family Court process of the production of social welfare officers' reports is addressed in Recommendation 30, which proposes that increased resources be concentrated in this area and target times for the production of such reports be introduced. Also proposed, in Recommendation 31, is a power to the court to order the production of reports by independent experts.

22. Recommendations 32 and 33 propose, respectively, that more statistics on child-related cases should be maintained by the Family Court, and that children's privacy should be protected by the issuing of a Practice Direction to control the release of unreported judgments concerning children.

23. Recommendation 34 sets out the Commission's endorsement of codes of practice for lawyers dealing with family cases, and we recommend that the legal profession should be consulted on how the existing Code can be further developed and strengthened.

Chapter 8 – Summary of recommendations

24. Chapter 8 contains a summary of all of the Commission's recommendations on the family dispute resolution process. These are set out below. (Please note that footnote references below refer to the text of the Report.):

(Recommendations 1 to 11 below are to be found in Chapter 5 of the report, on *Court-based support facilities for family mediation*.)

Recommendation 1

(Task Group on establishment of a family court)

- (a) We generally approve and adopt the recommendations on support services of the report of the Task Group on a Family Court, but prefer to adopt the terms "mediation and mediators" rather than "conciliation and conciliators."¹
- (b) We recommend² that providing access to mediation services should be an integral part of the Family Court system;
- (c) We consider that providing support for mediation, by allocating more resources to promoting mediation, providing information sessions and parent education, complements the court process. We recommend that these resources to provide support for mediation should be government funded and provided within the Family Court system.

¹ See Chapter 5, at para 5.9.

² See Chapter 5, at para 5.9.

(Information on family dispute resolution support services)

We recommend³ that:

- (a) the courts should do more to put parents in touch with support services. More publicity and education of the public is needed to encourage families to go for assistance to local family service centres or other agencies at an early stage of conflict or when problems are first encountered;
- (b) the Family Court should provide information relating to court processes, support services and alternatives to litigation, including mediation;
- (c) the court should be under a duty to actively promote mediation and that the Chief Justice should approve a document which sets out the benefits and procedure for mediation;
- (d) pamphlets should be produced which include information on the availability of, and encouragement to use, mediation as an alternative to litigation. Such information pamphlets on mediation should be included in the Information Kit on Marriage;
- (e) such information pamphlets, including the Information Kit on Marriage, should be available at the Family Court, the lobby of the High Court Building and at family services centres;
- (f) these pamphlets should be periodically updated.

Recommendation 3

(Obligation on solicitors)

We recommend⁴ that:

- (a) solicitors should be obliged to inform and encourage their clients to consider the possibility of reconciliation;
- (b) the applicant (and the respondent when he is served with the pleadings) should be informed of the nature and purpose of counselling and mediation and offered a list of services for reconciliation, counselling and mediation;
- (c) this information should be in a pamphlet approved by the Family Court.

³ See Chapter 5, at para 5.16.

⁴ See Chapter 5, at para 5.19.

(Information sessions)

We recommend⁵ that:

- (a) a voluntary information session be introduced, which would be a service open to everyone;
- (b) an information session would be attended by the parties before the filing of the petition in the majority of cases;
- (c) at the information session, parties could receive information and advice about family support services and alternatives to litigation such as mediation;
- (d) information to educate parents on the psychological process of divorce and its effect on children would also be included, by way of oral presentation, video and information packs;
- (e) the information session would encompass elements of the United States parent education programmes and the Australian information sessions;
- (f) the presentation would be made by persons with counselling and mediation training;
- (g) clients should also be informed by solicitors, the Legal Aid Department and the Duty Lawyer Service of the availability of information sessions;
- (h) the information on such services could be contained in a pamphlet approved by the Family Court.

Recommendation 5

(Referral to information session)

We recommend⁶ that:

- (a) solicitors should be placed under an obligation to inform their clients about the availability of the information session;
- (b) Family Court judges should have the power to order the parties to attend an information session.

⁵ See Chapter 5, at para 5.24.

⁶ See Chapter 5, at para 5.28.

(The court's powers in relation to mediation)

We recommend⁷ that:

- (a) the voluntary mediation recommendations of the report of the Chief Justice's committee on court annexed mediation be adopted, to the effect that the court should only be able to order the parties to attend mediation if they agree;
- (b) a similar provision to section 15A of the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance (Cap 179) could be enacted to encourage mediation;
- (c) a provision on the lines of section 19A of the Australian Family Law Act 1975 should be enacted, empowering potential litigants or parties to file a notice in the Family Court seeking the appointment of a mediator;
- (d) a provision should be enacted that where the parties agree to go to mediation, but cannot agree on a mediator, the court may appoint a suitable mediator;
- (e) if one party does not consent to adjourn the case for mediation, the judge should be able to use his best endeavours to encourage mediation;
- (f) before a case is set down for hearing, the parties should provide a certificate to satisfy the court that mediation was or was not considered, or that it was not appropriate.

Recommendation 7

(Issue of compulsory powers)

- (a) We do not consider that mediation should be made compulsory;⁸
- (b) We recommend that the judge should have the power, in appropriate cases, to refuse to set down an action until the parties have certified to the judge that they have attempted some form of mediation.⁹

⁷ See Chapter 5, at para 5.33.

⁸ See Chapter 5, at para 5.35.

⁹ Same as above.

(Counselling conference)

We recommend¹⁰ that:

- (a) a process similar to the Australian conciliation conference be introduced, but prefer the term "counselling conference" in order to avoid any confusion with mediation;
- (b) the counselling conference be a necessary stage in the court process. It would be seen as an integral part of the case management process of the court system;
- (c) the Support Services Coordinator should advise the judge in writing as to whether the parties have or have not attended the counselling conference, so that the next stage in the process can be initiated;
- (d) the conferences should be run by counsellors;
- (e) the conferences should be publicly funded;
- (f) if there are disputes between parents on both financial and children's issues, there should be a joint counselling conference dealing with such issues together.

Recommendation 9

(Support Services Co-ordinator)

We recommend¹¹ that:

- (a) the post of Support Services Co-ordinator be created whose duty would be to facilitate the proper functioning of the services that will support the Family Court dispute resolution system;
- (b) the Support Services Co-ordinator's task would extend beyond mediation to counselling conferences and referral of parties to counselling outside the court.

¹⁰ See Chapter 5, at para 5.44.

¹¹ See Chapter 5, at para 5.48.

(Support services accommodation at the Family Court)

We recommend the provision of accommodation at the Family Court for counsellors and mediators which would facilitate early referral to appropriate services.¹²

Recommendation 11

(Screening and matching cases for mediation)

We recommend that guidelines for cases of domestic violence and child sexual abuse should be established to screen cases for family mediation on a similar basis to the Australian and New Zealand guidelines.¹³

(Recommendations 12 to 26 below are to be found in Chapter 6 of the report, on *Family mediation services generally*.)

Recommendation 12

(Training of mediators)

We recommend that high standards of selection, training, supervision and accreditation should be required of family mediators participating in mediation scheme operating through the Family Court.¹⁴

Recommendation 13

(Accreditation)

We recommend that the current system of accreditation of qualified family mediators should be approved by government and the Judiciary.¹⁵

¹² See Chapter 5, at para 5.50.

¹³ See Chapter 5, at para 5.53.

¹⁴ See Chapter 6, at para 6.5.

¹⁵ See Chapter 6, at para 6.7.

(Social welfare officers and mediation)

We recommend¹⁶ that:

- (a) the social welfare officers who are professionally qualified mediators participating in the mediation service operating through the Family Court should be separate from those social welfare officers who carry out the service of executing social investigations and reports for the Family Court;
- (b) the Social Welfare Department establish appropriate guidelines to separate these functions.

Recommendation 15

(Other professions and mediation)

We recommend¹⁷ that:

- (a) other professionals involved in counselling or therapy, whether working in governmental or non-governmental agencies or privately, should adopt similar guidelines;
- (b) the Law Society and the Bar Association should draw up appropriate guidelines to ensure the separation of roles of lawyers acting as lawyers, from lawyers acting as mediators.

Recommendation 16

(Experts' reports)

We recommend that family mediators have access to facilities to obtain an expert's report, with the parties' consent, to assist in difficult cases concerning disputes over children.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Chapter 6, at para 6.9.

¹⁷ See Chapter 6, at para 6.12.

¹⁸ See Chapter 6, at para 6.14.

(Privilege and confidentiality)

We recommend that:

- (a) for the removal of doubt, a statutory provision be enacted, conferring privilege on statements made during the course of any mediation.¹⁹
- (b) whilst statements made during the course of any mediation process should, in general, be both privileged and confidential, statements which indicate a risk of harm to human life, particularly to a child, should be privileged but not confidential.²⁰

Recommendation 18

(Immunity from liability)

We recommend the introduction of a provision on similar lines to section 19M of the Australian Family Law Act 1975 granting immunity to protect qualified family mediators.²¹

Recommendation 19

(Legal advice)

We recommend the adoption of a provision along the lines of Order 25A, rule 12, of the Australian Family Law Rules which requires mediators to advise clients that they should obtain legal advice as to their rights, duties and obligations.²²

Recommendation 20

(Legal aid and mediation)

We recommend²³ that

(a) there should be statutory provision for legal aid to be made available for mediation of guardianship, custody and access disputes;

¹⁹ See Chapter 6, at para 6.32.

²⁰ Same as above.

²¹ See Chapter 6, at para 6.34.

²² See Chapter 6, at para 6.36.

²³ See Chapter 6, at para 6.40.

(b) once such legislation is enacted, the Legal Aid Department should establish a proper scheme for the funding of family mediation that will include education, publicity and screening of potential cases.

Recommendation 21

(Child's voice in the mediation process)

We recommend²⁴ that:

- (a) a provision on the lines of an amended section 11(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 be adopted to provide a mechanism for considering the views of the child in the mediation process;
- (b) consideration be given to what mechanisms are needed to determine the child's views so that these can be brought to the mediator's attention.

Recommendation 22

(Arrangements for children)

We recommend that rules of court should facilitate mediation agreements being converted into consent court orders. This should assist both compliance with the terms of the agreement, and its enforcement in the event of the arrangements breaking down.²⁵

Recommendation 23

(Parenting plans)

We recommend²⁶ that:

- (a) a provision for parenting plans (which could be registered in the Family Court) be adopted, similar to the provisions of the Australian Family Law Reform Act 1995;
- (b) a section 18 declaration under the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Ordinance (Cap 192) would still be made which could have the parenting plan attached;

²⁴ See Chapter 6, at para 6.45.

²⁵ See Chapter 6, at para 6.49.

²⁶ See Chapter 6, at para 6.53.

- (c) parenting plans should be encouraged, and there should be a grace period when they would be voluntary;
- (d) parenting plans should only become mandatory at a later stage to ensure their use on a more extensive basis.

(Enforcement of mediation agreements)

We do not see the need to amend section 14 of the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Ordinance (which provides that a provision in a maintenance agreement restricting the right to apply to court for an order concerning financial arrangements, is void).²⁷

Recommendation 25

(Community mediation)

We recommend that community based family mediation services should be available to the public and that there should be more publicity and education to encourage early referral to such services.²⁸

Recommendation 26

(Approving community mediation)

We recommend:²⁹

- (a) the introduction of legislative provisions similar to the relevant provisions in the Australian Family Law Reform Act 1995 which provide a mechanism for community based counselling and mediation organisations to become approved organizations;
- (b) that a similar scheme be established in Hong Kong with funding provided by the Government to approved organisations. The Government would work in partnership with such organisations as regards the quality of the service, continuing supervision and training of the mediators and other relevant matters.

²⁷ See Chapter 6, at para 6.61.

²⁸ See Chapter 6, at para 6.64.

²⁹ See Chapter 6, at para 6.66.

(Recommendations 27 to 34 below are to be found in Chapter 7 of this report, on *The family litigation process and related matters*. See also the attached Flow Chart for the new court process.)

Recommendation 27

(Case management and settlement)

We recommend³⁰ that:

- (a) procedures at the Family Court be streamlined and that there be continuous monitoring of the system by effective case management;
- (b) a Practice Direction governing case management in the Family Court be introduced (possibly modelled along the lines of the Construction List checklist and its associated Practice Direction);
- (c) there be a requirement that a pre-trial checklist be completed at the Summons for Directions stage of any case involving a dispute in relation to children;
- (d) time limits should be imposed for the delivery of any affidavits associated with the case in order to minimize delay;
- (e) judges should be given more control to reduce the costs and delay in the system;
- (f) failure to conduct cases economically should result in appropriate orders for costs, including wasted costs orders.

Recommendation 28

(Delay in family proceedings)

We recommend³¹ that:

- (a) to promote the best interests of the child, priority must be given to the hearing of disputes concerning children (ie disputes as to custody and access, child abduction, wardship and guardianship);
- (b) the introduction of statutory provisions on the lines of sections 1(2) and 11 of the Children Act 1989 in England;
- (c) in the interim before legislation is enacted, target times be set for the disposal of custody, access and guardianship disputes.

³⁰ See Chapter 7, at para 7.14.

³¹ See Chapter 7, at para 7.18.

(Issues and settlement conferences)

We recommend³² that:

- (a) statutory provision be made for issues and settlement conferences tailored to the needs of Hong Kong;
- (b) there ought to be a clear distinction between issues and settlement conferences;
- (c) these conferences would be separate from mediation;
- (d) the issues conference be substituted for the call-over list;
- (e) a settlement conference would be a necessary step in the process unless there was a certificate filed by a party or the parties that an attempt at settlement in a settlement conference is likely to be unsuccessful and that costs would be wasted by such attendance;
- (f) if no settlement conference takes place, there would still be a conference similar to a directions hearing at which directions for trial would be ordered and the judge could still suggest settlement at this stage;
- (g) no evidence disclosed at these pre-trial conferences should be admissible as an admission in any subsequent hearing or proceedings, or as part of a transcript or record of the conferences without the consent of the parties.

Recommendation 30

(Social welfare officer's report)

We recommend³³ that:

- (a) more resources need to be put into the Family and Child Protective Services Units to minimise delays in investigating and preparing reports for the court;
- (b) a performance pledge should be introduced that a report of the social welfare officer should be completed as expeditiously as possible, but should in any case not take longer than six weeks, except in exceptional cases;

³² See Chapter 7, at para 7.29.

³³ See Chapter 7, at para 7.33.

(c) social welfare officers preparing reports for the Family Court should have a minimum of three years' experience in family and child care work, and their training should include the preparation of court reports.

Note:

We also wish to bring to the attention of the Administration the suggestion that, in addition to any training that social welfare officers receive, a handbook on the relevant law in this area, including a glossary of relevant terms, should be prepared for those working on family cases.³⁴

Recommendation 31

(Independent experts)

We recommend that the court should have a power to order a report from an independent expert, such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, paediatrician, registered social worker or other relevant expert.³⁵

Recommendation 32

(Statistics and research)

It would be useful for the Law Reform Commission and for policy makers if statistics were kept, and research conducted, in the Family Court. We recommend that statistics of the number of custody, access or guardianship cases, including the numbers settled, and when they were settled, should be kept by the Family Court.³⁶ This would assist in the planning of policies and their implementation.

Recommendation 33

(Availability of judgments and privacy)

We recommend³⁷ that:

(a) a Practice Direction regulating the release of unreported judgments in disputes concerning children be issued to encourage their increased availability to legal practitioners;

³⁴ See Chapter 7, at para 7.34.

³⁵ See Chapter 7, at para 7.37.

³⁶ See Chapter 7, at para 7.42.

³⁷ See Chapter 7, at para 7.55.

(b) for the protection of children and their parents, all identifying details, including the names of parties and their children, addresses, schooling, place of employment, and even the names of witnesses, should be deleted (except for the first initial) from all such judgments, whether unreported or reported.

Recommendation 34

(Code of Practice for conduct of family cases)

We note with approval³⁸ the introduction of the Hong Kong Family Law Association's Code of Conduct and believe that this may encourage a more conciliatory approach by solicitors.

We recommend that, in addition, a Guide to Good Practice for Solicitors, modelled on the equivalent English Guide, should be adopted to provide specific guidance to those acting for children.

We further recommend that the Administration should consult the legal profession and other organisations working in this field as to:

- (a) Whether the HKFLA's Code of Conduct should be made mandatory by incorporating it into the codes of the respective professional bodies; and
- (b) Whether the HKFLA's Code of Conduct should be extended (with appropriate adjustments) to apply not only to solicitors but also to the other disciplines working in the family litigation field.

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³⁸ See Chapter 7, at para 7.64.

Proposed Case Management and Support Services Flow Chart for Dispute Resolution Process

	Mediation		Litigation
1.	Information session.	1.	Application filed.
		2.	Answer filed.
2.	Referral to mediation with parties' consent and SSC's assistance.	3. ∽	Support Services Coordinator (SSC) organises a counselling conference and can refer parties to information session, if they have not already attended.
		4.	SSC informs judge by memo whether parties have or have not attended counselling conference or mediation.
3.	5	5.	Return date for decree <i>nisi</i> .
	incorporated into consent summons. Or	6.	Request for issues conference filed with pre-trial checklist.
1.		7.	Issues conference -
	as parties cannot agree on mediator, though they do agree to mediate.		(Judge makes consent orders, defines contested issues, ensures compliance with pre-trial checklist, including asking whether parties have
2.	Parties agree to mediate on their own volition. SSC assists in organising	\rightarrow	considered mediation, orders social welfare officer's report and affidavits to be filed).
3.	referral to mediator.	8.	SWO's report ready; affidavits filed.
0.	÷	9.	Certificate filed that settlement conference or mediation has been considered and not appropriate.
		10.	If no settlement conference or settlement conference fails; pre-trial conference held where judge fixes date for hearing and makes
	Ļ		necessary procedural orders to facilitate hearing.
4.	Mediated agreement \longrightarrow incorporated into consent summons.	11.	Settlement conference - (Judge clarifies outstanding issues, encourages settlement, makes consent orders on part/all issues arising from mediation or settlement.) If parties agree to mediate, judge adjourns settlement conference, and subsequently makes consent order if mediation ends in agreement.
		12.	Hearing takes place on unresolved issues after a pre-trial conference.