

New Mandatory Forms For Family Law Litigants In Washington State

By Washington State Family Law Lawyer [Anne Bennette](#)

As a result of a major six-year overhaul by the Access to Justice Board, new “Plain Language” Family Law Forms are currently available on <https://www.courts.wa.gov/forms> and mandatory to be used in all family law cases as of July 1, 2016.

The purpose for the overhaul was to make the court forms more comprehensible for Pro Se litigants, the benefit being that some of the legalistic and archaic language has been removed and most forms provide check boxes for further simplification.

As this is a new endeavor for the Access to Justice Board, they welcome feedback from practitioners, judges, courthouse facilitators, and pro se litigants to evaluate the effectiveness of the plain language forms and to possibly make further adjustments.

While some practitioner’s may have difficulty adjusting to the new format, it is important to note that a party’s failure to use the mandatory forms or follow the format rules shall not be a reason to dismiss a case, refuse a filing, or strike a pleading. However, the court may require the party to submit a corrected pleading and may impose terms payable to the opposing party or payable to the court, or both. [RCW 26.18.220\(3\)](#)

Even though the steps taken improve unrepresented parties access to justice, it does not necessarily help to understand the complexity of the issues or help to ease the turmoil of process. Because of this, we believe in the importance of having an educated advocate on your side.

If you need assistance with any domestic issues, please contact Anne Bennette or Dimitra Scott in Beresford Booth’s Family Law Group.

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