

#### **4A-300. Domestic relations forms; instructions for stage three (3) forms.**

A. **Stage three (3) forms; scope.** The stage three (3) forms are the last forms that you must complete to dissolve your marriage (i.e., get a “divorce”). Once approved by the Court, the agreements and promises that you have made in these forms will settle financial matters between you and the other party, and will control your rights as a parent. When both parties sign the Marital Settlement Agreement (Form 4A-301 NMRA), the Custody Plan and Order (Form 4A-302 NMRA), and the Child Support Obligation and Order (Form 4A-303 NMRA), they may be enforced by either party as contracts. When the Court signs a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage (Form 4A-305 or 4A-306 NMRA), you will be divorced, and the Marital Settlement Agreement, the Custody Plan and Order, and the Child Support Obligation and Order will become legally binding on both of you. Any important changes to these agreements should be in writing and signed by both parties. These changes should be filed with the Court. You should be careful when filling out these forms, and be as complete as possible. It is highly recommended that you consult with an attorney.

B. **Marital Settlement Agreement.** A Marital Settlement Agreement (“MSA”) must be completed, signed by both parties, and filed with the Court in every dissolution of marriage case. (Use Form 4A-301 NMRA.) Although the MSA is called an “Agreement,” if the parties do not agree on its terms, the Court may use the terms of either party’s proposed MSA in its final order after a hearing. The MSA describes how you and the other party will divide your property and debts, and how you will settle any other financial matters, including whether one party will pay spousal support or make a cash payment to the other. When the parties sign the MSA or the Court signs and files a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, the MSA is legally binding on both parties. *See* Paragraph A, above.

If you and the other party cannot agree on some or all of the terms of the MSA, you may request the assistance of a mediator, if available, by completing and filing a Motion for Referral to Mediation (child support or other financial issues) (Form 4A-205 NMRA) with the Court. If you do not believe a mediator will be helpful, you may complete and file a Request for Hearing (Form 4A-206 NMRA), and the Court will make a decision for you. For more information about how to request a hearing, *see* Subparagraph (1) of Paragraph E of Form 4A-200 NMRA.

The MSA includes the following sections:

(1) ***Property we are dividing.*** This is where you describe how you will divide your property, including personal property, real property, bank and investment accounts, retirement plans, vehicles, and any other property. Examples of each type of property are included on the form. Complete the Personal Property List (Attachment A) to identify any personal property you own that is valuable to you and to show how you will divide it. If you have real property other than the home you lived in while you were married, complete the Real Property List (Attachment B) to identify the property and to show how you will divide it;

(2) ***Debts we are dividing.*** This is where you describe how you will divide your debts (e.g., credit cards, loans, etc.), cancel joint credit cards, file your taxes, and handle any issues that may come up with tax returns that were filed while you were married. Complete the Debt List (Attachment C) to identify each of your debts and to show how you will divide them;

(3) ***Cash payment.*** This is where you show any dollar amount that you have agreed one party should pay the other to settle the division of your property and debts. This amount will be included in the Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage as a judgment in favor of the party who is to receive the cash payment. This judgment may be enforced as provided by

law;

(4) **Spousal support.** This is where you show any dollar amount that you have agreed one party should pay the other as monthly spousal support. *If* the Court approves this section, the amount and timing of spousal support can be modified only by a court order. For more information on spousal support, *see* Section 40-4-7 NMSA 1978;

(5) **Other statements by parties.** This is where you promise to do what is necessary to carry out your agreements in the MSA and how you will resolve any arguments you may have about the MSA in the future; and

(6) **Verification.** This is where you affirm the truth of the statements in the MSA and sign it under penalty of perjury.

C. **Custody plan and order.** A Custody Plan and Order must be completed and filed with the Court in every dissolution of marriage case when the parties are the parents of one or more children under eighteen (18) years of age or under the age of nineteen (19) and attending high school. (Use Form 4A-302 NMRA.) This document describes decisions that have been made, and how decisions will be made in the future, about the children. When the Court signs and files a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, the Custody Plan and Order is legally binding on both parties. *See* Paragraph A, above.

If you and the other party cannot agree on the terms of a Custody Plan and Order, you may request the assistance of a mediator by completing and filing a Motion for Referral to Mediation (child custody, timesharing, or visitation) (Form 4A-204 NMRA) with the Court. If you do not believe that a mediator will be helpful, you may complete and file a Request for Hearing (Form 4A-206 NMRA), and the Court will make a decision for you. For more information about how to request a hearing, *see* Form 4A-200(E)(1) NMRA. Some courts will not set a hearing on custody matters until the parties have tried mediation but failed to reach an agreement. Check with the Court before you request a hearing to find out if mediation is required.

The Custody Plan and Order includes the following sections:

(1) **Identification and contact information.** This is where you list the names and contact information of the parties and the children who are covered by the form;

(2) **Custody of the children.** This is where you describe the agreement you have reached about how you will make decisions and who will have custody of your children. If you choose sole legal custody, you must provide the specific reason why sole legal custody is in the best interests of the children. Also describe how often, when, and where the non-custodial parent will be allowed to visit the children, if at all. If you choose joint legal custody, you must complete the parenting plan in Subparagraphs one (1) through five (5) of Paragraph B to describe how you will share the custody of your children; and

(3) **Verification.** This is where you affirm the truth of the statements in the Custody Plan and Order and sign it under penalty of perjury.

D. **Child support obligation and Order.** A Child Support Obligation and Order must be completed and filed with the Court in every dissolution of marriage case when the parties are the parents of one or more children under eighteen (18) years of age or under the age of nineteen (19) and attending high school. (Use Form 4A-303 NMRA.) This document describes how you will divide the expenses of raising the children, including child support and health insurance, and tax issues relating to the children. When the Court signs and files a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, the Child Support Obligation and Order will become legally

binding on both parties. *See* Paragraph A, above.

If you and the other party cannot agree on the terms of the Child Support Obligation and Order, you may request the assistance of a mediator by completing and filing a Motion for Referral to Mediation (child support or other financial issues) (Form 4A-205 NMRA) with the Court. If you do not believe that a mediator will be helpful, you may complete and file a Request for Hearing (Form 4A-206 NMRA), and the Court will make a decision for you. For more information about how to request a hearing, *see* Form 4A-200(E)(1) NMRA.

The Child Support Obligation and Order includes the following sections:

(1) **Identification and contact information.** This is where you list the names and contact information of the parties and the children who are covered by the form;

(2) **Child support.** This is where you describe how you will share the expenses of raising your children. This portion of the form refers to these additional documents:

(a) **Child support worksheet.** To complete Paragraph A of this section, you must complete and attach a child support worksheet to your Child Support Obligation and Order. The worksheet will help you figure out the amount of child support required by law. The worksheet is available at Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978, or you can find an interactive version at [www.nmcourts.com](http://www.nmcourts.com) by clicking on the “Family Law Forms” link and selecting “Child Support Worksheet.” The interactive worksheet will automatically calculate the monthly child support obligation. The amount shown on the child support worksheet will be awarded by the Court. If the parties need to deviate from the amount shown on the child support worksheet, they must request a different amount, explain why that amount is necessary, and the deviation must be approved by the Court; and

(b) **Wage withholding order.** Under Paragraph D of this section, you must tell the Court how you will begin wage withholding for child support. Payment of child support by wage withholding is mandatory unless otherwise agreed by the parties or ordered by the Court. Wage withholding will not take effect until the parties complete a Wage Withholding Order (Form 4A-304 NMRA) and submit it to the Court for filing, or until the Court signs and files the Child Support Obligation and Order and the parties open a case with the New Mexico Human Services Department, Child Support Enforcement Division (“CSED”). CSED can issue a notice of wage withholding for the parties on full service cases. You may request the Court to order wage withholding by attaching a completed Wage Withholding Order to the Child Support Obligation and Order; and

(3) **Verification.** This is where you affirm the truth of the statements in the Child Support Obligation and Order and sign it under penalty of perjury.

E. **Final decree of dissolution of marriage.** When the Court signs and files a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, you and the other party will be divorced. You may request a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage as follows:

(1) **Uncontested.** If you and the other party agree on the terms of your MSA (and Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order, if you have children), you may request a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage by doing the following:

(a) filing your completed MSA (and completed Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order, if you have children) with the Court Clerk’s Office; and

(b) submitting a completed Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage (Form 4A-305 (without children) or 4A-306 (with children) NMRA) to the judge for approval.

The Court may sign the Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage without further notice, or it may order you and the other party to appear for a hearing. **WARNING:** Once the Court signs and files the Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, your divorce will be final, and the terms of the MSA (and the Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order) will be binding as a court order on both parties. *See* Paragraph A, above;

(2) **Contested.** If you and the other party do not agree on the terms of your MSA (and Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order, if you have children) and you cannot submit completed forms to the Court, you should request a trial in your case by submitting a Request for Hearing (Form 4A-206 NMRA). For more information about how to request a hearing, *see* Form 4A-200(E)(1) NMRA.

The Court will set one or more hearings to resolve the remaining disagreements over the terms of the MSA (and the Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order, if you have children). *You must complete your own proposed MSA (and Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order if you have children) and Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage (Form 4A-305 (without children) or Form 4A-306 (with children) NMRA) and bring them with you to the hearing.* Once the Court has decided the terms of the MSA (and the Custody Plan and Order and Child Support Obligation and Order if you have children), it will sign and file a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage, and you will be divorced from the other party; or

(3) **Default.** If more than thirty (30) days have passed since you filed and served the Petition for Dissolution of Marriage and the other party has not filed an answer or otherwise responded to your petition, you may be able to request a Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage without the other party's participation. This is called a default judgment. *See* Form 4A-310 NMRA for instructions on how to request a default judgment and Final Decree of Dissolution of Marriage.

[Approved by Supreme Court Order No. 13-8300-010, effective for all pleadings and papers filed on or after May 31, 2013, in all cases pending or filed on or after May 31, 2013; as amended by Supreme Court Order No. 14-8300-011, effective for all pleadings and papers filed on or after December 31, 2014, in all cases filed or pending on or after December 31, 2014.]