

## NOTICE TO THE BAR AND PUBLIC

### FAMILY -- TRANSFER OF CERTAIN DISSOLUTION (FM) CASES FROM THE MERCER VICINAGE TO ATLANTIC/CAPE MAY, BURLINGTON, AND MIDDLESEX VICINAGES


Effective April 15, 2024, the Supreme Court has authorized the transfer of certain dissolution (FM) cases filed in the Mercer Vicinage.

New FM cases without a fully executed settlement agreement will be redirected to other Vicinages (Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, and Middlesex) for handling through final disposition. Following disposition and the timeframe for an appeal, cases will be transferred back to the Mercer Vicinage for any future post-judgment motions. This temporary measure aims to allow the Mercer Vicinage to allocate resources to address pending cases while ensuring timely handling of new filings. The Court's April 2, 2024 Order is attached.

Notice in English and Spanish will be provided to all parties involved in a transferred case. Court proceedings for transferred cases will be conducted in a manner consistent with the Court's [October 27, 2022](#) Order, with continued to judicial discretion to accommodate virtual or in-person participation as appropriate.

The Judiciary remains committed to providing quality customer service to the parties and attorneys involved in these cases and extends its appreciation to all involved in the Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, and Middlesex Vicinages who will handle the transferred cases.

Questions about this notice should be directed to the Family Practice Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts at (609) 815-2900, ext. 53350.

  
Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.  
Acting Administrative Director

Dated: April 3, 2024

## **SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY**

The Mercer Vicinage continues to operate with a significant number of judicial vacancies. In light of the ongoing prioritization of cases involving detained criminal defendants, as well as emergent matters including domestic violence and child welfare matters, cases in the matrimonial dissolution (FM) docket have fallen into backlog.

More timely handling and resolution of dissolution cases is required. Some of the state's other Vicinages therefore will be called on to temporarily assist the Mercer Vicinage in expediting the resolution of its new FM filings.

Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED that, effective immediately and pending further court order:

1. Matrimonial dissolution (FM) cases filed in the Mercer Vicinage on or after April 15, 2024, will be transferred to the Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, or Middlesex Vicinages for case management and disposition.
2. New complaints filed in the Mercer Vicinage will be promptly processed and docketed.
3. Complaints will be handled by the Mercer Vicinage only if a fully executed property settlement agreement or marital settlement

agreement is filed with the complaint or received within 35 days after the filing of the complaint.

4. In general, the Mercer Vicinage will retain the complaint for 35 days, to allow time for the filing of an Answer. After the expiration of 35 days, the court will enter an Order to Transfer Venue to send the case to one of the receiving Vicinages.
5. The court will enter an Order to Transfer Venue without delay, and without waiting for the expiration of 35 days, if an Order to Show Cause or Notice of Motion is filed. Such Order to Show Cause or Notice of Motion will be handled by the receiving Vicinage.
6. Transferred cases will be evenly distributed among the designated three vicinages (Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, and Middlesex).
7. The courts will provide notice to all attorneys and parties of the transfer of new FM cases filed in the Mercer Vicinage through a Notice of Case Transfer. That Notice of Transfer will include a copy of this Order along with a Family Division phone number for the receiving Vicinage.
8. The Order to Transfer Venue and the Notice of Case Transfer will be sent to (1) attorneys of record by electronic mail; (2) self-represented plaintiffs by electronic and regular mail; and (3) defendants by regular

mail, and electronic mail if available.

9. The courts in the receiving Vicinages will conduct proceedings for transferred cases consistent with the framework established in this Court's October 27, 2022 Order. Consistent with the provisions of that Order, courts will have discretion to modify the format of proceedings and to accommodate parties in appearing either virtually or in person, as needed.
10. Matrimonial dissolution cases transferred from the Mercer Vicinage pursuant to this Order will be handled by the receiving Vicinage (Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, and Middlesex) through the disposition of the case.
  - a. Following disposition, such cases will be transferred by order back to the Mercer Vicinage after the expiration of 45 days, to allow time for the filing of an appeal.
  - b. The order will provide that the case has been transferred back to the Mercer Vicinage for any and all future applications, including any motions for post-judgment relief.
11. The Judiciary will provide notice and plain language information, including in Spanish, about the temporary transfer of matrimonial dissolution (FM) cases filed in the Mercer Vicinage authorized by this

Order, including on its public website, njcourts.gov.

For the Court,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stuart Rosen". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping underline.

Chief Justice

Dated: April 2, 2024