



Guidelines for family lawyers

The following [guidelines](#) have been made available to us by Principal Family Court Judge Jackie Moran. These give guidance and advice for family lawyers on **unsworn affidavits, electronic filing, remote hearings and electronic service**.

Shared parenting

The ministry has a number of [FAQs](#) on its website to provide further guidance and clarity for parents who have shared care of their children through alert level 4. You might like to read these so you are able to refer clients to this for further information. The FAQs also provide a link to an earlier statement on shared parenting from Principal Family Court Judge Jackie Moran.

Filing of non-urgent matters

Members have raised queries about whether counsel should still proceed with filing, for example, lawyer for child reports and submissions for registrar's reviews that are not urgent. Following confirmation from the ministry, the answer to this is no. Filing such matters would result in putting the registries under more pressure at this time.

The [priority proceedings](#) in the Family Court during alert level 4 are as follows:

- those with statutory timeframes such as applications for Compulsory Treatment Orders, IDCCR, Protection Orders or interim custody/care and protection orders;
- those involving vulnerable parties such as welfare guardianship or property orders under the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act; and
- those arising out of social dysfunction and family harm.

Where a hearing is directed, in almost all cases conferences and hearings will be conducted remotely.

Until further communication is received, lawyers should follow the matters being prioritised.

Court events

We understand last week a letter from the local Family Court judges in Waitakere was sent to local lawyers advising that all hearings for the next four weeks have been cancelled. Please note this is a response for local lawyers only. The situation may be different in other areas and we understand the profession will be given some more guidance from either a regional or national level in the near future.

Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki has started putting together guidance on how it is amending its practice in light of COVID-19. It is available [here](#).

Pro Bono support for Community Law Centres

The New Zealand Law Society is working with the New Zealand Bar Association to provide a list of lawyers to Community Law Centres to assist with their COVID-19 response. The expertise particularly sought includes shared care arrangements in the family law jurisdiction. If you are willing and able to assist, please fill out this [expression of interest form](#) provided by the NZBA. You will be asked to confirm your availability on the form. This information will then be provided to Community Law Centres for follow up.

FLS executive elections

This week you will receive a reminder from Electionz to cast your vote for the three vacancies on the FLS executive. As at today 405 members have already cast their vote. Elections will **close at 5.00pm on Friday 3 April**.

Free seminar - mediation

Hayden Wilson is a partner and mediator at Dentons Kensington Swan. He conducts mediations in relationship property matters, including issues involving complex commercial arrangements and trusts. He is hosting a free webinar on online dispute resolution on Thursday 2 April for the Resolution Institute.

The webinar is focused on mediators, but will hopefully also be useful to practitioners who are looking to use online tools for mediations for their clients, in these challenging times. Attendees will be able to claim CPD hours for attendance at the webinar. If you would like to take part, click on [this link](#).

Hayden can be contacted at hayden.wilson@dentons.com

Zoom

Many of you will already be using Zoom in our new way of working. For those you are not, you might find these instructions helpful for [setting up Zoom](#) and [scheduling a Zoom meeting](#). Our thanks to Senior Administrator Hollie Overton for putting these instructions together. Please note we are unable to provide technical IT advice and you should refer any such issues to your IT provider.

Kirsty Swadling

FLS Chair