

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA

In the Matter of:)
)
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FAMILY) Administrative Order
COURT IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE) No. 2019 - 115
AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS)
)
)

The Arizona Judicial Branch strategic agenda, *Justice of the Future: Planning for Excellence*, places a high priority on the goals of access to justice and protecting children and families. Goal Two acknowledges the need to continually improve family court case processes and the provision of resources to help parties find necessary assistance and services in an understandable and timely manner.

As a large number of self-represented litigants access the court system, courts across the country are striving to meet the needs of this population while balancing the duties of fairness and impartiality with access to justice. This need has become most apparent in family courts, where an overwhelming majority of cases have at least one self-represented party. In 2013, approximately 79% of all domestic relations cases were filed by self-represented litigants in the Superior Court of Maricopa County¹.

The judiciary recognizes the complexities of family court issues, the impact that involvement with the judicial system can have on children and families, and the need to provide self-represented litigants with the resources necessary to successfully navigate a case to conclusion. Therefore, pursuant to Article VI, Section 3, of the Arizona Constitution,

IT IS ORDERED that the Family Court Improvement Committee (“Committee”) is established as a standing committee of the Arizona Judicial Council. The Committee is created to assist the Arizona Judicial Council and the Supreme Court in the development and implementation of policies designed to improve the quality of justice, access to family courts, and efficiency in court operations.

1. **Purposes:** The Committee shall:

- a. Make recommendations that would improve and enhance family law statutes, rules, and court processes and procedures.

¹ Nicole Zoe Garcia, *Examining Dissolutions Amongst Self-Represented Litigants in the Superior Court of Maricopa County*, Institute for Court Management ICM Fellows Program 2013-2014, <https://cdm16501.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/accessfair/id/344>

- b. Develop and coordinate policies and strategies that would improve the likelihood that child support will be paid.
 - c. Conduct the federally-mandated quadrennial Child Support Guidelines review and make recommendations on issues raised by the 2017 Committee for an Interim Review of the Child Support Guidelines.
 - d. Identify and respond to emerging trends and issues impacting family court services.
 - e. Advise the Administrative Office of the Courts Education Services Division staff about judicial officer and court staff educational needs.
 - f. Provide advice regarding the use of online dispute resolution in family court cases.
2. **Membership:** The individuals listed in Appendix A are appointed as members of the Committee beginning upon entry of this Order through the noted term expiration. Committee members holding membership by virtues of their positions shall be members of the Committee so long as they hold their respective positions. The Chief Justice may appoint additional members as necessary.
 3. **Organization:** Subcommittees to help the Committee carry out its responsibilities may be established by the chairperson upon approval of the Chief Justice.
 4. **Meetings:** The Committee shall meet as necessary, but no less than twice per year. Meetings may be scheduled, cancelled, or moved at the discretion of the Committee chairperson. All meetings shall comply with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration §1-202: Public Meetings.
 5. **Actions:** The Committee shall adopt rules for conducting Committee business. These rules shall prescribe the quorum, majority needed to constitute committee actions, virtual attendance, and proxy provisions
 6. **Administrative Support:** The Administrative Office of the Courts shall provide administrative support and staff for the Committee who may, as feasible, conduct or coordinate research as requested by the Committee.

Dated this 18th day of September, 2019.

ROBERT BRUTINEL
Chief Justice

**Appendix A
Membership List
Family Court Improvement Committee**

Chair

Judge Paul McMurdie
Court of Appeals, Division I

Members

Presiding Judge Bruce Cohen, Family Court
Superior Court in Maricopa County
BVP

Presiding Judge Scott Rash, Family Court
Superior Court in Pima County
BVP

Judge R. Erin Farrar
Superior Court in Yuma County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2020

Judge Elaine Fridlund-Horne
Superior Court in Coconino County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021

Commissioner Joseph Goldstein
Superior Court in Yavapai County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Brian Bledsoe
Superior Court in Maricopa County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Marla Randall
Superior Court in Navajo County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021

Amanda Stanford
Clerk of the Superior Court in Pinal County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Megan Spielman
Clerk of the Superior Court in La Paz
County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Joi Hollis
Superior Court in Pima County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Tracy McElroy
Superior Court in Pinal County
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021

Sabrina Lopez
Department of Economic Security
Division of Child Support Services
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Janet Sell
Office of the Attorney General
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Benjamin L. Deguire
State Bar Representative
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021

Jennifer Mihalovich
State Bar Representative
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Patricia Madsen
Community Legal Services
Term Expiration: 12/30/2022

Kellie E. DiCarlo
Arizona Legal Document Services, LLC
Term Expiration: 12/30/2020

Mental Health Service Provider - tbd
Term Expiration: 12/30/2020

CaSaundra Guadalupe, Custodial Parent
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021

Vance Simms, Non-Custodial Parent
Term Expiration: 12/30/2021