



Alberta Court of Justice

Practice Directive

Northern Region

Grande Prairie Family Pre-Court Practice & Procedure

Effective: January 2, 2026

Commencing January 2, 2026, this Practice Directive applies to all applications made pursuant to the *Family Law Act*, SA 2003, c F-4.5, as amended (the *Act*) in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

This Practice Directive incorporates and implements the [four mandatory pre-court requirements](#) of the Family Justice Strategy introduced on December 18, 2023, as outlined herein. This Practice Directive further recognizes and supports the principles and goals of the Re-Imagining the Family Justice System (RFJS) initiative in the Court of King's Bench, Judicial District of Grande Prairie, as set out in the [Notice to the Profession and Public](#).

Prior to the commencement of family proceedings under the *Act*, individuals are encouraged to consult with legal counsel or alternatively with Resolution Services at 1-855-738-4747 or their website at <https://www.alberta.ca/family-court-assistance>. Resolution Services cannot provide legal advice but can provide information to help navigate the family justice system and may suggest alternatives to court that are less expensive and not as adversarial in accordance with the [Notice to the Profession and Public](#).

Subject only to the exceptions listed below, all four pre-court requirements must be completed prior to filing any document commencing a family law claim or prior to filing a new application in an existing family law claim unless a waiver or deferral is granted by the Court.

The Four Mandatory Requirements

The four mandatory pre-court requirements to be completed before filing a family court claim are:

- Completion of the online [Parenting After Separation Course](#) (PAS) where there are children under 18 or other dependent children affected by the proceeding.
- Meeting with a Family Court Counsellor (FCC) where parties are self-represented with dependent children. This requirement cannot be waived unless a party is represented by a lawyer.
- Providing Financial Disclosure when applying for child support, spousal support or adult interdependent partner support.
- Participation in an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process.

The Exceptions to the Mandatory Pre-Court Requirements

The four mandatory pre-court requirements to be completed before filing a family court claim are:

The mandatory pre-court requirements do not apply to the following matters:

- Applications for Protection Orders.
- Applications that have been waived or deferred in accordance with this Practice Directive.
- Applications for Substitutional Service Orders.
- Consent Orders. Completion of these requirements is waived if the parties reach an agreement on all issues without filing a court application, however, [Financial Disclosure](#) must still be completed for a Consent Child or Spousal/Partner Support Order.
- Any interjurisdictional Application where the Applicant or Respondent resides outside the Province of Alberta.

Once the Mandatory Requirements are Complete

Where the mandatory requirements have been completed, then:

- If the parties have resolved the matters for which a claim/application was to be started, those agreements can be put into a Consent Court Order by Counsel or by the Applicant and Respondent with the assistance of [Resolution Services](#).
- If, upon completion of the mandatory requirements, parties have been unable to resolve all of the matters for which a Claim was to be started, either party may file their family law action or new application with the Clerk of the Court of Justice by attaching the [PAS Certificate](#), [Confirmation of Participation in ADR Form](#), and completed [Financial Disclosure Statement](#). They will then need to serve the other party with the filed documents.

Mandatory Parenting After Separation (PAS) Course

The Parenting After Separation (PAS) course must be completed prior to filing any document that commences a family law action or any new application where there are children under the age of 18 or other dependent children affected by the proceeding, unless this item is waived or deferred by the Court.

Upon completion of the PAS course, a PAS Certificate will be provided. The PAS Certificate must be filed with the documents commencing the family law action or new application.

If it has been more than two years since a party to a family law action took the PAS course, they must complete the course again before filing a new family law action or application and provide a new PAS certificate when they file their documents.

Respondents must complete the PAS Course and file their PAS Certificates with the Clerk of the Court within 14 days of being served. If the Respondent decides to file a cross-application, they must complete the PAS course and submit their PAS Certificate when filing.

Mandatory Meeting with a Family Court Counsellor (FCC)

This requirement does not apply to parties who are represented by a lawyer, or to parties who do not have children who are under the age of 18 or other dependent children affected by the proceeding.

Before filing any document that commences a family law action or any new application, the Applicant must consult with an FCC who may provide guidance on matters including:

- Options to resolve the matter;
- Referrals to resources that may assist them in resolving their matter or otherwise assist their family;
- Information about court processes;
- The financial information they are required to provide to the Respondent and the Court to resolve their family law matters;
- Penalties which the Court may impose in respect of any failure to provide financial disclosure or failure to comply with any other mandatory requirements;
- How to best provide the Respondent with disclosure and information about the mandatory requirements and how best to engage the Respondent in dispute resolution processes where appropriate; and
- The suitability and preparation of a waiver/deferral request.

When an Applicant or their counsel serves the Respondent with the document commencing a family law claim or new application, the Applicant or their counsel must also serve the Respondent with a document outlining the services provided by FCCs.

If the Respondent only files a response to a family law claim or new application, the Respondent may choose not to meet with a FCC. If a self-represented Respondent decides to file a cross-application, they must meet with a FCC before filing.

Mandatory Financial Disclosure

This requirement applies to all parties filing an application for child support, spousal support or adult interdependent partner support unless this item is waived or deferred by the Court.

Before meeting with a FCC, Applicants must review the Financial Disclosure Statement, gather the necessary disclosure and bring it to the meeting with the FCC.

When acting for a party, counsel must ensure that their client's disclosure is complete. Respondents may be prohibited from proceeding with any cross applications or new applications until their financial disclosure is complete.

If the Applicant or Respondent does not provide financial disclosure when required to do so, the Court may order costs against them, make a support order against them based on the information available to the Court or grant any other remedies available to the Court.

Mandatory Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Before filing any document commencing a family law claim or prior to filing a new application the Applicant must attend ADR, unless this requirement is waived or deferred by the Court. The Applicant must meet with an ADR provider acceptable to the Court within a maximum of 6 months prior to filing any document commencing a family law action or new application.

The ADR requirement is met if one party (either the Applicant or Respondent) attends an ADR session and provides their required financial disclosure, even if the other party fails to attend or provide their financial disclosure.

A [Confirmation of Participation in ADR Form](#) must be filed with the Court when filing the documents to commence a family law claim or any new application. The Applicant cannot seek relief that was not discussed in the ADR without leave of the Court. The mandatory ADR requirement is not satisfied if a party attends ADR to discuss financial issues without first providing their financial disclosure.

Waivers and Deferrals of Mandatory Pre-Court Requirements

The determination of whether a waiver or deferral is to be granted will be made by a Justice of the Court of Justice. An application may be made by attaching a [Request to Waive/Defer Mandatory Requirements Form](#) using the unfiled documents needed to commence the claim. All applications for waivers in Grande Prairie will be by desk application.

In the case of self-represented litigants, an FCC will meet with the Applicant or Respondent who has not completed one or more of the mandatory requirements and assist in preparing an application to the court to defer or waive the requirement(s).

A deferral or waiver may be issued by a Justice in circumstances including:

- There is a risk of immediate harm or severe economic harm to a party or child(ren).
- There is an imminent risk of abduction or flight with one or more of the children.

- The Respondent refuses to comply with/participate in the mandatory processes or they cannot be located, or there is an existing Order prohibiting contact between the Applicant and the Respondent.
- Any circumstance determined by the Justice to be sufficient to justify a waiver or deferral for one or more of the mandatory requirements.

The above list is not exhaustive, and additional reasons that waivers or deferrals may be issued are outlined in the instruction sheet and listed in the [Request to Waive/Defer Mandatory Requirements Form](#).