

POLICY ON DE NOVO JUDICIAL HEARINGS FOLLOWING OBJECTIONS TO FOC REFEREE RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy is adopted by the Family Division of the 49th Circuit Court, pursuant to MCL 552.507 and MCR 3.215, to avoid duplicative litigation and conserve resources of litigants and of the Court:

Request for De Novo Hearing: Following referee hearings in domestic relations matters, a party wishing to object to any recommendation made by the Referee shall, within 21 days after the recommended interim order is served on the parties, file a written objection with the Clerk, obtain a judicial hearing date and serve copies of the written objection and notice of hearing on the opposing party and Friend of the Court. *In order to schedule a hearing, you must contact the judicial scheduling clerk at 231-592-0135 ext. 1.*

a. Service: The objecting party shall serve copies of the written objection and notice of hearing on the opposing party and on the Friend of the Court.

b. Contents: The Objection shall include a clear and concise statement of specific errors of law or clearly erroneous findings of fact made at the Referee hearing. Matters not specifically objected to will not be considered by the Court. Objection forms will be made available at the FOC office.

c. Transcripts: The objecting party shall contact the office of the Friend of the Court to request preparation of a transcript of the referee hearing. The transcript shall be submitted to the court for review prior to the scheduled *de novo* hearing. Unless waived by the court pursuant to paragraph 4, the costs of transcription shall be paid in full by the objecting party before the transcript is prepared. If payment in full is not received at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled judicial hearing, the objection will be deemed withdrawn and the hearing will be cancelled.

d. Pre-Hearing Conference: Upon request, the Court may schedule a pre-hearing conference, as necessary to advance the purpose of this policy.

2. **Scope and Form of Review:** The Court will consider the case file, the written objections and Referee hearing transcript to determine the scope and form of its *de novo* review. Depending on the circumstances of each case, the court's review and decision may:

a. Be based entirely upon the record of the referee hearing (including exhibits and any memoranda, recommendations or proposed orders by the referee); or

b. Be based in part on the entire record of the Referee hearing, supplemented by relevant new evidence that was not introduced at the referee hearing (see 3, below), or

c. Be based entirely upon evidence presented at a "live" judicial hearing.

3. **Supplementing the Record:** Requests to supplement the record shall include an affidavit or sworn statement stating the substance of the proposed new evidence and establishing that it was not available at the time of the referee hearing. On a sufficient showing, a "live" judicial hearing may be held to supplement the record with such new evidence. Alternatively, the Court may remand the matter to the Referee to supplement the record.

4. **Transcription Costs. Indigence:** If the objecting party prevails, the cost of the transcript may be apportioned equally between the parties; if the *de-novo* hearing fails to change the outcome of the Referee hearing, the cost is completely assumed by the party who sought the judicial hearing. On a showing of indigence, the Court may waive the transcription costs incurred or apportioned to any party.

5. **Fivolous Objections:** If the court determines that an objection is frivolous or has been interposed for the purposes of delay, the court may assess reasonable costs and attorney fees. MCR 3.215(F)(3); MCR 2,114(E), (F); MCL 600.2591.

Tyler Thompson
Presiding Judge
49th Circuit Court, Family Division