



## **Families Matter Triage Program Overview (Full Ver.)**

*Please read carefully*

### **Welcome!**

We are pleased to serve you in our Families Matter Triage Program (FMTA). The FMTA is a product of a collaboration between Floyd County Superior Court 3 and Michigan State University's CAPACITY Lab. The main goal of the FMTA is to support you in the divorce and child support legal process. We know that navigating the law is hard without an attorney. Our program is designed to help connect you to services and resources that will help you get your case resolved faster.

### **FMTA Services**

As part of the program, a Legal Navigator will discuss a range of topics such as your plan for parenting time, child support, finances, and more. The Legal Navigator will learn more about the levels of agreement or disagreement on these topics. Given the Legal Navigator is an employee of the court, everything you say to them will become part of the court record and will be shared with the Judge.

Once mandatory conference is completed, you will meet with a Resource Specialist. The Resource Specialist is affiliated with Michigan State University and is not employed by the court. Therefore, everything you discuss with the Resource Specialist will be confidential. The Resource Specialist will assess your individual needs and support you in getting connected to helpful resources. Finally, the Resource Specialist will share a general recommendation for legal services with the Judge. In that recommendation, they will not disclose the reason and will keep the reason for their recommendation confidential.

The Judge will ultimately make a decision regarding the next steps in your case. The Judge may determine that a case needs the help of a family mediator. Family mediators are a neutral party and helpful for instances when both parties are not in full agreement on a range of topics in a divorce or child support cases. The goal of mediation is to assist both parties in coming to an agreement without waiting for a Judge to decide. If you decide to participate in the FMTA and the Judge determines that a family mediation is the right service for your case, in most cases, you will be granted a low-cost Mediator. The Judge may determine that a hearing is most appropriate for your case. If you decide to participate in the FMTA, these hearings will be expedited to resolve your case as quickly as possible.

### **Participant Rights**

By participating in the FMTA, your case will be resolved in an expedited and fair manner. You will also receive access to free and low-cost services to help you resolve your case and support your family. The FMTA Conference will take up to an hour. The services recommended to you through the FMTA are voluntary, though strongly encouraged unless ordered by the Judge. Time commitments for the services will depend on the services provided to you. We will inform you



of time commitments as services are offered. Your participation in the program will not affect the outcome of your proceedings in any way. Should you wish to opt out of the FMTMP, you must file a notice with the court before the mandatory conference. Should you choose not to participate in FMTMP, you would be responsible for completing the Dissolution of Marriage on your own or obtaining your own legal counsel to complete the process and will not be able to rely on FMTMP assistance. By attending the mandatory conference, you are automatically enrolled in this program.

### **Confidentiality**

The FMTMP program complies with state and federal laws as well as professional ethical codes regulating confidentiality. Parties' personal information will not be shared outside of this program unless they are documented court records which will be publicly available.

### **Resource Navigation**

Parties' personally identifiable information that is communicated with the Resource Specialist is protected under the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and other privacy laws. Any personal and sensitive information shared during session will not be disclosed to and used for the court. The assigned Resource Specialist will only provide a general recommendation for type of legal path.

### **Limits of Confidentiality**

All Resource Specialists, Legal Navigators, and other members of FMTMP are mandated reporters; therefore, confidentiality must be waived under the following conditions:

1. If the navigator believes that a litigant is at risk of harming oneself or anyone else;
2. If the navigator believes that a child is at risk of being neglected or abused; or
3. If the navigator believes that an elder or an adult with disability is being neglected, abused, or financially exploited.

### **Subpoena Laws**

No party shall attempt to subpoena any testimony or records of the FMTMP for a disposition or a court hearing of any kind for any reason.

### **Parties Must Verbally Agree to the Following to Proceed with the FMTMP:**

- Parties understand that the Families Matter Triage Program (FMTMP) is voluntary and that they may withdraw participation prior to the mandatory conference by filing notice with the court. Once in the FMTMP, services recommended by program staff are voluntary, though strongly encouraged unless ordered by the Judge.
- Parties have had sufficient time to consider the above information and ask necessary questions.
- Parties understand the social service processes, their rights, the expectations, and the limits to confidentiality of participation.



- Parties understand the obligation to attend meetings/sessions to the best of their abilities, talk openly and honestly with their Legal Navigator and Resource Specialist, and provide feedback about how the services are working for them.
- Parties agree to not subpoena any testimony or records of the FMTP for a disposition or a court hearing of any kind for any reason including after completion or withdrawal of program.