NOTICE TO THE BAR

FAMILY DIVISION – COVID-19 – CONDUCTING MATRIMONIAL EARLY SETTLEMENT PANELS (MESPs) BY TELEPHONE OR VIDEO – UPDATED INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE

The March 31, 2020 Notice to the Bar advised that Matrimonial Early Settlement Panel (MESP) events would resume using video or telephone technology, rather than in-person sessions, beginning the week of April 27, 2020. That notice included a number of steps to be taken to ensure the scheduling and conducting of these remote MESP sessions. Those steps have since been revised. Accordingly, the following steps replace the steps set forth in the March 31 notice:

1. Vicinage Family Division staff will continue with the MESP dates that have been scheduled through the case management conferences for April 27 and beyond. It should be noted that although court notices may show that the MESP session will be held at the courthouse, all MESP sessions in fact will be conducted by video or telephone until further notice.

2. Each county will designate a Family Division staff person who will coordinate with the panelists as to the number of MESP events that will be heard by each panel.

3. The county coordinator and the MESP panelists can determine, after consulting with the attorneys and/or self-represented litigants, whether the events will be conducted by video or by telephone. If the event will use video technology, the coordinator and the panelists will decide who will arrange for the video conference. As needed, the Judiciary staff can arrange for video conferencing and interpreters. Each county's coordinator will be responsible for this task.

4. MESP panelists will be required to complete the MESP Case Information form at the conclusion of the event or if the event is adjourned. The completed form should be sent via email to the Vicinage Family staff contact person.

5. If the MESP session is unsuccessful, the case will be referred to Post-MESP Mediation (Economic Mediation) in accordance with Rule 5:5-6. In that situation, the litigants are to select a mediator, who should be contacted for an initial appointment. If the mediator cannot be contacted, the "Referral Order for Post-MESP Mediation Program" should reflect that the mediator and the date of initial appointment are tentative. The order of referral and the MESP

Case Information form should be completed and sent via email to the Vicinage Family staff contact person.

Questions about this notice may be directed the Family Practice Division at 609-815-2900 ext. 55350.

Glenn A Grant by SDB

Hon. Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts

Dated: April 22, 2020