

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

Administrative Order No. 2024-10-UFC

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER GOVERNING COLLABORATIVE LAW
PROCESS PROCEDURES**

(a) Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215 (b) (3) states the chief judge shall “develop an administrative plan” and “shall, considering available resources, ensure the efficient and proper administration of all courts within [this] circuit.”

(b) The collaborative dispute resolution process is a non-adversarial alternative to litigation that helps the parties maintain a working relationship and avoid the emotional and financial toll of litigation and encourages the peaceful resolution of disputes through a voluntary settlement process. (See Sections 61.55-61.58)

(b) In accordance with the authority vested in the Chief Judge by Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215, it is hereby **ORDERED**:

(1) The collaborative Law Process may be utilized to resolve dissolution of marriage and paternity actions and all attendant issues therein according to the requirements of this Administrative Order and applicable Florida Statutes and Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure.

(2) Because the Collaborative Law Process requires each party to be represented by an attorney as set forth in section 61.56(4), Florida Statutes, the Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement shall be a joint notice, in substantial conformity with Florida Family Law Rules Form 12.985(c), and shall be signed by both individual Collaborative attorneys. The Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement shall operate both as an application for stay of the proceeding and as a notice of appearance if either attorney has not previously filed a notice of appearance in the pending action.

(3) Upon the filing of a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement as described above, a court shall promptly either: (a) enter a stay of the proceedings ex parte, or (b) notify counsel for both parties that the application for stay must be scheduled for a non-evidentiary hearing. A stay entered pursuant to

Florida Family Law Rule 12.745(b)(2)(D) may include a requirement for a status report.

(4) Notwithstanding the stay of a proceeding in which a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement was filed, the court may enter orders on written interim agreements reached by the parties in the Collaborative Law Process.

(5) When a proceeding in a Collaborative matter is pending before a court, counsel shall promptly file a written notice with the court, consistent with Florida Family Law Rule 12.745(b)(2), upon the occurrence of any of the following events concluding the Collaborative Law Process:

- a. Resolution of the Collaborative matter as evidenced by a signed record;
- b. Resolution of a part of the Collaborative matter, evidenced by a signed record, in which the parties agree that the remaining parts of the Collaborative matter will not be resolved in the Collaborative Law Process;
- c. The provision of notice by either party to the other that the Collaborative Law Process is concluded (consistent with Florida Family Law Rule 12.745(b)(1)(B), the Notice shall not identify the party serving the notice that the Collaborative Law Process is concluded);
- d. The initiation by a party of a pleading, a motion, an order to show cause, or a request for a conference with the tribunal
- e. The request by a party that the proceeding be put on the tribunal's active calendar;
- f. An action by a party requiring notice to be sent to the parties; or
- g. The conclusion of the Collaborative Law Process in accordance with the terms of the parties' Collaborative Law Participation Agreement.

6) The filing of a Notice of any of the events listed in 5(a)-(g) above automatically terminates any stay of a proceeding which was based upon the filing of a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement.

(7) When a proceeding in which a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement has been filed is pending before a court and an individual attorney who signed the Collaborative Law Participation Agreement is no longer

representing a party to the Collaborative matter, whether they have withdrawn, been replaced, or otherwise:

a. The attorney who is no longer representing a party shall promptly provide notice to the court, which notice shall identify the date that the notice of discharge or withdrawal of the Collaborative attorney required by Rule 12.745(b)(2)(D) Fla. Fam. L. R. P., was provided to the parties;

b. Thirty-one (31) days after the date that the notice of discharge or withdrawal of the Collaborative attorney was provided to the parties, the Collaborative Law Process will be concluded and any abatement of a proceeding which was based upon the filing of a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement automatically terminated, unless a successor Collaborative attorney was retained, both Collaborative attorneys and the parties reaffirm the Collaborative Law Participation Agreement by the signing of an Amended Collaborative Law Participation Agreement, and within 30 days of the date the notice of discharge or withdrawal of the Collaborative attorney was provided to the parties, counsel files a Notice of Amended Collaborative Law Participation Agreement in substantial conformity with Florida Family Law Rules Form 12.985(c).

(8) In a family law matter in which a Notice of Collaborative Law Participation Agreement has been filed, the affidavit of a licensed mental health professional averring that he or she has acted as a facilitator, coach, child specialist or other similar capacity in the Collaborative Law Process and has spent at least 4 hours educating, training, and assisting each parent to understand the consequences of divorce on parents and children, such assistance of the licensed mental health professional may be considered the “good cause” referenced in section 61.21(4)(b), Florida Statutes, for excusing the parties from the parenting course requirements of section 61.21, Florida Statutes.

(9) In the event that the parties to a Collaborative Law Process file a joint notice of their desire to maintain the privacy of an agreement and/or appropriate attachments thereto (such as an Equitable Distribution Schedule, a Parenting Plan, etc.) and both parties execute an acknowledgement of their separate obligations to maintain a copy of the agreement and/or appropriate attachment(s) thereto, the documents which the parties have acknowledged an obligation to maintain shall be reviewed by the court if required, and if

incorporated in a court order, may be incorporated only by reference, without requiring the attachment or filing of the document(s).

(10) To the extent that this Administrative Order may conflict with law, statute, or rule, the law, statute, or rule shall prevail.

(11) This order vacates and supersedes Administrative Order 2020-17-UFC.

DONE AND ORDERED in chambers at Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, Florida on this 20th day of September, 2024.

/s/ Jack Tuter
Jack Tuter, Chief Judge