

The Supreme Court  
State of Washington

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Re: ATJ/AOC/WSBA Plain Forms Project

Dear Friends of Access to Justice:

The members of the Washington State Supreme Court encourage you to join an important collaborative project that will have a significant and positive impact on family law litigants. The Access to Justice Board, the Washington State Bar Association, and the Administrative Office of the Courts are working collaboratively to create “plain language” forms for family law cases.

Most individuals who come to family court are facing untold challenges and turmoil in their lives and the lives of their children. Many times the parties cannot resolve their disputes in a cooperative fashion and must rely on the courts to help them reach justice. Adding to these stresses, all family law parties—some with attorneys and most without—have a myriad of paperwork to read and understand. Currently, the family law forms in use in Washington are often difficult to comprehend and complete because of legalistic and sometimes archaic language.

Plain language and more accessible formats allow parties to understand our forms and the legal concepts they convey easily and completely. Less confusion, greater clarity, better understanding, and achievement of personal and legal goals are just some of the benefits plain language forms offer. The benefits of plain language forms extend to attorneys and the courts as well.

The forms will undergo vigorous field testing to ensure they meet all legal requirements under statute and court rule. Protocols are being developed to make sure that the forms are not available for use until all testing and revisions have been done and to make

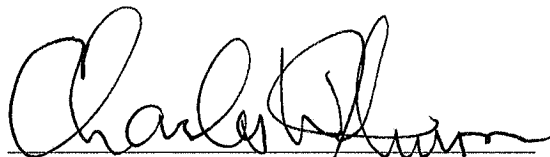
sure we have the smoothest transition possible as the new forms are put into use. Access to Justice partners, such as courthouse facilitators, pro bono legal programs, and dispute resolution centers, will help with both the testing and transition phases of this project.

Our Access to Justice partners will keep you informed as the plain language forms project proceeds. If you have suggestions, comments, or concerns, please share them with Ms. Merrie Gough, Senior Legal Analyst, at 360.357.2128 or at [Merrie.Gough@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Merrie.Gough@courts.wa.gov), or with Ms. Janet Skreen, Senior Court Program Analyst at 360.705.5252 or at [Janet.Skreen@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Janet.Skreen@courts.wa.gov), both with the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Madsen  
Chief Justice



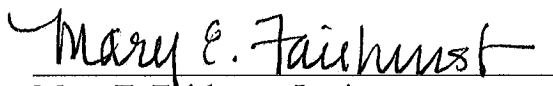
Charles W. Johnson, Assoc. Chief Justice



Tom Chambers, Justice



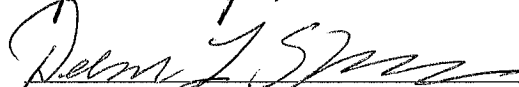
Susan Owens, Justice



Mary E. Fairhurst, Justice



James M. Johnson, Justice



Debra A. Stephens, Justice



Charles K. Wiggins, Justice



Steven C. Gonzalez, Justice