THE SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF THE SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO CR 4.1—PROCESS-DOMESTIC RELATIONS ACTIONS	)	**O R D E R**
	)	NO. 25700-A-1660

The Pattern Forms Committee, having recommended the suggested amendments to CR 4.1—Process-Domestic Relations Actions, and the Court having approved the suggested amendments for publication;

Now, therefore, it is hereby

ORDERED:

(a) That pursuant to the provisions of GR 9(g), the suggested amendments as attached hereto are to be published for comment in the Washington Reports, Washington Register, Washington State Bar Association and Administrative Office of the Court's websites in January 2026.

(b) The purpose statement as required by GR 9(e) is published solely for the information of the Bench, Bar and other interested parties.

(c) Comments are to be submitted to the Clerk of the Supreme Court by either U.S. Mail or Internet E-Mail by no later than April 30, 2026. Comments may be sent to the following addresses: P.O. Box 40929, Olympia, Washington 98504-0929, or supreme@courts.wa.gov. Comments submitted by e-mail message must be limited to 1500 words.

DATED at Olympia, Washington this 8th day of October, 2025.

For the Court

Stephens, C. J.
CHIEF JUSTICE

GENERAL RULE 9

RULE AMENDMENT COVER SHEET

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RULES CR 4.1

1. **Proponent Organization**
   Pattern Forms Committee

2. **Spokesperson & Contact Information**
   Commissioner Barb McInvaille
   Pierce County Superior Court
   930 Tacoma Ave S, Rm 334
   Tacoma, WA 98402-2108
   bmcinva@piercecountywa.gov

3. **Purpose of Proposed Rule Amendments**

   A plain language update for all summons listed under rule 4.1. The proposed revision of the 4.1 summons is the result of comments from clerks that pro se filers were not properly filling out the summons by leaving off the petitioner's service address, resulting in an invalid summons.

   Given the pro se errors and the Supreme Court's mandate that plain language be used in the forms when possible, the summons was redesigned to meet plain language standards and published in January of 2022. The redesigned summons contains all the required information under current CR 4.1, but it does move sections and reword the language used.

   Following plain language visual design suggestions, the information the petitioner needed to fill out was moved up to the beginning of the form and clearly labeled. See Five Steps is Plain Language, The Center for Plain Language, https://centerforplainlanguage.org/learning-training/five-steps-plain-language/. For a respondent, the petitioner's service address and the court's address for filing are located on the first page and clearly labeled.

   The second page contains the information about filing a written response, the timeline for a response, what happens if the respondent does not file and serve a response, information about a lawyer, and what steps to follow to file and serve a response. The deadline for a response to be served is at the top of the second page and appears in bold. The bolded 20 days links it to the bolded word deadline, even when a user is just scanning the summons. The important information about what happens if the respondent does not file and serve a response and the action steps about how to file and serve a response are broken into vertical lists, drawing the readers eye to the information.

   After the signature line, there is information about what to do if the case has not been filed. It was moved to the end of the document, because it is information that does not apply to all cases. Last, is the statement that the summons is issued pursuant to Rule 4.1 and RCW 4.28.180.

4. **Is a Public Hearing Recommended?**

   No.

5. **Is Expedited Consideration Requested?**

No.

Attachments:

CR 4.1 Process – Domestic Relations Actions_redline

Suggested Amendments
CR 4.1
Process—Domestic Relations Actions

(a) [Unchanged.]

(b) **Summons—Content, Form.**

(1) [Unchanged.]

(2) *Form*. The summons for personal service in the state in an action for dissolution of marriage or domestic partnership shall be substantially in the form below. The summons for personal service in the state in any other action authorized by RCW 26.09 should be adapted from this form. The summons for personal service out of state should be adapted from this form and must include the modifications required by statute. See RCW 4.28.180.

Superior Court of Washington, County of _____

In re the ~~Matter of the~~ ~~M~~marriage / domestic partnership of: Petitioner *(person who started this case)*: _____ And Respondent *(other spouse / partner)*: _____	No. _____ ~~**Summons for Dissolution of Marriage**~~ **Summons: Notice about a Marriage or Domestic Partnership**

TO THE RESPONDENT: The petitioner has started an action in the above court requesting ~~that your marriage be dissolved~~ to end your marriage / domestic partnership. ~~Additional requests, if any, are stated in the petition, a copy of which is attached to this summons.~~

Important! *Petitioner **must** complete the address boxes below. If Petitioner does not give a service address and the court's address,* ***this Summons will be invalid.***

[ ] Petitioner [ ] Petitioner's Lawyer *(name)*:

Petitioner's Address for Service: *(This does **not** have to be a home address.)*

You may **only** serve Petitioner by email if an email address is provided below or Petitioner otherwise agrees in writing. See *All Civil 006 Agreement re: Service by Email.*

[ ] Email *(optional)* – Petitioner agrees to accept service of legal papers for this case by email at this address: _____

Superior Court of Washington, County of
Court's Address for filing:

~~You must respond to this summons and petition by serving a copy of your written response on the person signing this summons.~~ You must **respond to this summons** in writing for the court to consider your side.

Deadline! Your *Response* must be served on Petitioner within **20 days** of the date you were served this *Summons* (60 days if you were served outside of Washington State or served in a jail, detention facility, or prison). If the case has been filed in court, you must also file your *Response* by the same deadline.

If you do not file and serve your *Response* or a *Notice of Appearance* by the deadline:

- No one has to notify you about other hearings in this case, and
- The court may approve the Petitioner's requests without hearing your side. (This is called a *default judgment.*)
- The court may enter an order ending your marriage / domestic partnership 90 days after service and filing of the petition is complete.

Lawyer not required. It is a good idea to talk to a lawyer, but you may file and serve your *Response* without one.

Follow these steps:

1. **Read** the *Petition* and any other documents you receive with this *Summons*. These documents explain what Petitioner is asking for.

2. **Fill out** the *Response* on one of these forms:

- *Response to Petition about a Marriage* (*FL Divorce 211*) if you are married, or
- *Response to Petition about a Registered Domestic Partnership* (*FL Divorce 212*) if you are a domestic partner.

You can get the *Response* and other forms at:

- The Washington State Courts' website: *www.courts.wa.gov/forms*
- Washington Law Help: *www.washingtonlawhelp.org*, or
- The Superior Court Clerk's office or county law library (for a fee).

3. **Serve** (give) a copy of your *Response* to Petitioner at the petitioner's address for service listed on page **1.**

4. **File** your original *Response* with the clerk of the court at the court's address for filing listed on page **1.**

_____ _____

*Signature of Petitioner **or** lawyer* *Date*

_____

*Print name of Petitioner **or** lawyer and WSBA No.*

If there is no "Case No." listed on page 1, *this case may not have been filed and you will not be able to file a Response. Contact the Superior Court Clerk or check www.courts.wa.gov to find out.*

If the case was ***not*** *filed, you must still serve your Response, and you may demand that the Petitioner file this case with the court. Your demand must be in writing and must be served on the Petitioner or their lawyer (whoever signed this Summons). If the Petitioner does not file papers for this case within 14 days of being served with your demand, this service on you of the Summons and Petition will not be valid. If the Petitioner does file, then you must file your original Response with the court clerk at the address above.*

This summons is issued pursuant to RCW 4.28.180 and Superior Court Civil Rule 4.1 of the State of Washington.

~~If you do not serve your written response within 20 days after the date this summons was served on you, exclusive of the day of service, the court may enter an order of default against you, and at the end of 90 days after service and filing, the court may, without further notice to you, enter a decree dissolving your marriage and approving or providing for other relief requested in the petition. If you serve a notice of appearance on the undersigned person, you are entitled to notice before an order of default or a decree may be entered.~~

~~You may demand that the petitioner file this action with the court. If you do so, the demand must be in writing and must be served upon the person signing this summons. Within 14 days after you serve the demand, the petitioner must file this action with the court, or the service on you of this summons and petition will be void.~~

~~If you wish to seek the advice of an attorney in this matter, you should do so promptly so that your written response, if any, may be served on time.~~

~~One method of serving a copy of your response on the petitioner is to send it by certified mail with return receipt requested.~~

~~This summons is issued pursuant to rule 4.1 of the Superior Court Civil Rules of the State of Washington.~~

~~Dated _____ (signed) _____~~
~~_____ Print or Type Name~~

~~SERVE A COPY OF YOUR RESPONSE ON:~~

~~( ) Petitioner ( ) Petitioner's Attorney~~

~~_____~~

~~Address~~

~~_____,WA _____~~

~~(city) (zip)~~