

V. Recommendations

- Low-income care givers often lack access to safe, affordable, quality, childcare, and this limits their ability to access courts. To remove such barriers and improve all court users' ability to conduct court business using remote means:
 - Courts should retain and expand the best of the remote access opportunities that the courts adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., digital platforms accessible via computer or smart phone) – the ones that maximize communication and language access without penalizing litigants for using remote means. Publish (electronically) accessible directions on how to access court business and documents remotely, and limit fees for accessing court business and documents remotely.
 - Courts should consider more flexible hours of operation or, with increased funding, expanded hours of operation.
 - Stakeholders should explore additional way to improve access opportunities such as funding and distributing devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) that can support remote access in community and childcare centers, women's shelters, schools (as appropriate in individual jurisdiction); expanding on-site childcare centers at courthouses; or supporting other means (such as vouchers) to access childcare to attend court.
- The Washington State Legislature should consider funding “navigators” in courts in all counties to assist those seeking help with family law issues, and should also consider funding them for other areas of law.
- Stakeholders should propose an amendment to GR 34 to allow fee waivers based solely on the litigant's attestation of financial status, without additional proof. Allowing presentation of such waivers to the Clerk or other designated non-judicial officer should also be considered to help streamline the procedure. Information about fee waivers should be prominently displayed (in multiple languages) at the courthouse and online.

- Stakeholders should convene a workgroup to analyze the application of GR 34 fee waivers to name change recording fees. The workgroup should consider ways to reduce barriers to name change recording for indigent individuals.
- GR 34 is not always interpreted to extend fee waivers to fees associated with parenting classes, family law facilitators, and other family law costs and fees. GR 34 should be amended to explicitly extend waivers to all such fees.
- Courts should be required to accept electronic (as well as hard copy) filings and submissions of all documents.