This is for information and instruction. Do not file it.

HOW TO GET A DIVORCE

WITH CHILDREN

STEPS TO DIVORCE WITH CHILDREN page 2

ARE THESE FORMS FOR ME? page 4

DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS page 6

EXTRA HELP FILLING OUT THE FORMS page 7

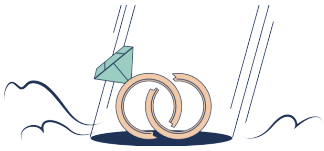
COSTS & FEES page 7

HOW TO FILE THE FORM page 8

WHAT'S NEXT page 9

This overview is not legal advice. It provides general instructions on how to use these forms in your court case. It cannot and does not try to cover everything that might happen in your court case. Your use of the forms does not guarantee you will be successful in court.

How a judge handles a case can vary from county to county. **Your county may have special requirements that are not covered in these instructions.** Ask the Circuit Clerk if your county has local rules and, if so, where you can get a copy.



DIVORCE WITH CHILDREN

When used in this document, the word “divorce” refers to the ending of a marriage or a civil union and the word “spouse” refers to husbands, wives, and domestic partners. The divorce process may take between six months - two years, and often involves multiple court visits. You are divorced when the judge signs the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union.*

1

STEP 1

FILL OUT AND FILE FORMS. START YOUR CASE.

To start a divorce case, fill out a *Petition for Divorce* and file it with the Circuit Clerk’s office in the county where you or your spouse lives. Fill out and file the *Certificate of Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union* at the same time.

Use these forms:
Petition for Divorce
Certificate of Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union

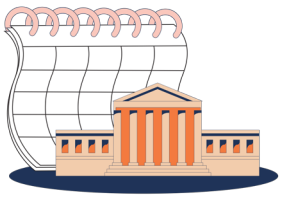
2

STEP 2

NOTIFY YOUR SPOUSE.

After you file the *Petition*, you must then notify your spouse that you started a court case to ask for a divorce. This is done by delivering a *Summons* and a copy of the *Petition* to your spouse. You may hear this called “serving the divorce papers.” This is usually done by a sheriff’s deputy handing a copy of the divorce papers to your spouse. It may also occur by your spouse signing and filing an *Appearance (Divorce)*.

Use these forms:
Summons
Letter to the Sheriff



3

STEP 3

COURT DATES SCHEDULED. PREPARE FOR COURT.

Once your spouse is served with a *Summons* and *Petition* they may file an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* or they may do nothing.

If your spouse does nothing, file a *Motion for Default* and send notice of a court date for that motion to your spouse.

If your spouse files an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response*, contact the Circuit Clerk to find out what you have to do to get a court date. At the first court date, tell the judge if you and your spouse have an agreement on any issues. The judge will decide what will happen next and may order mediation or other things to be done before the case can be ended.

Use these forms:
Motion for Default
Order for Default

4

STEP 4

COMPLETE THE DIVORCE.

To finish your divorce, you either need to do a "prove-up" or go to trial.

A prove-up is a final hearing that happpens when you and your spouse have an agreement on all issues. A prove-up may also occur if your spouse has not filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* and does not show up on the court date.

A "trial" is a final hearing where your spouse has filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* and you and your spouse do not agree on all issues. The judge will listen to each spouse and decide what happens on those issues.

Use these forms:
Parenting Plan
Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union

Laws covering these forms: Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act 750 ILCS 5/.

STEP 1

FILL OUT AND FILE FORMS. START YOUR CASE.

ARE THESE FORMS FOR ME?

You may **use these forms to end your marriage or civil union** when:

- You are married or entered into a civil union.
- You and your spouse have children together who are:
  - Younger than 18 years old, or
  - 18 years or older, and you are asking that your spouse help pay support for them because they are still in school or have a disability.
- You or your spouse has lived in Illinois for at least 90 days.

Do not use these forms if:

- You and your spouse:
  - Have not had or adopted children together, or
  - Have only adult children, who do not need support to attend school or because they have a disability.
    Note: If you don't have children or your adult children do not need any support for education or a disability, use the *Divorce No Children* forms at ilcourts.info/DivorceAllForms/
- You or your spouse is pregnant.
- Another divorce case was already filed and is still pending (not dismissed).
- Your spouse is on active duty with any branch of the U.S. military service or they live outside the United States, unless your spouse has signed an *Appearance (Divorce)* form.

Where can I get the forms?
You can find the forms at ilcourts.info/forms. Your courthouse may have self-help resources that can assist you with information and filling out the forms.

Information you will need to fill out the forms:

- Date and place of the marriage or civil union;
- Date you and your spouse separated;
- Addresses for you and your spouse;
- Place of employment and income for you and your spouse;
- Whether you or your spouse receive Social Security;
- Names and birth dates of all of the children you and your spouse have together or separately;
- For other court cases that involve the children you and your spouse have together: the case number, the county and state they were filed in, and whether the case is still active;
- Information about any real estate, personal property, and retirement and bank accounts that you or your spouse own or debts you and your spouse owe.

Forms needed for a Divorce with Children case:

Petition for Divorce: asks the court for a divorce and gives information needed to begin a divorce case.

- The email address (if you have one) and mailing address you put on the *Petition* is where important legal documents will be sent to you. You should use an email account that you check every day. If you do not check your email every day, you may miss important information, notice of court dates, or documents from other parties.

Certificate of Dissolution of Marriage: lists information about your case that is sent to the Illinois Department of Public Health after your divorce is final.

Summons: tells your spouse that you are asking the judge for a divorce and tells them what they have to do to participate in the case.

Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children): is the final order used by the judge to grant your divorce. If granted, the Judgment will also divide property, assign debt, and determine whether maintenance will be paid.

Parenting Plan: lists who is responsible for decision-making for the children and includes a schedule for when the children are with you and when they are with the other parent.

- The law requires that you file a suggested *Parenting Plan*, either your own or one that you and your spouse agree on, within 120 days of the date your petition is filed or the date your spouse was notified (see Step 2).
- You do not have to file a *Parenting Plan* if your spouse does not file an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* after they are notified.
- A judge may not require a *Parenting Plan* to be filed, so ask the judge during your first court date whether they want you to file one.

Forms that may be needed in some circumstances:

Appearance (Divorce): used by your spouse to tell the judge they will participate in the case. If your spouse agrees to complete and file one of these without you serving them with a *Summons* and a copy of the *Petition for Divorce*, then service is not necessary.

Motion for Default: asks the judge to hold your spouse in default if they do not file an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* within 30 days of getting the divorce papers.

Order for Default: used by the judge to give you permission to proceed with the divorce without your spouse and sets the case for final hearing.

Order for Support: used by the judge to set the amount of support and how often it is to be paid; it can be used for cases that involve child support only, maintenance only, or both.

Support Information Sheet: used by the Circuit Clerk to maintain contact records and other information for the parents in cases with support.

Income Withholding for Support: used to require the employer of the parent ordered to pay support to withhold support payments from wages. This form cannot be used for maintenance only cases.

Letter to Employer: used by you to send the *Income Withholding for Support* to the employer.

Letter to the Sheriff: used by you to send the *Summons* and *Petition* to the sheriff.

Financial Affidavit: provides financial information and documents to your spouse and the judge.

Certification of Agreement: shows that you and your spouse have agreed on what will be in the *Judgment* and *Parenting Plan*.

Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO): divides a pension or retirement plan. If one parent has a pension, the judge may order that a QDRO be prepared. There is no statewide QDRO form. Contact the Pension Plan Administrator and ask if they can provide a form.

DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS

Petitioner: the person who starts the case.

Respondent: the person who the case is filed against.

Irreconcilable differences: the only reason required in Illinois for getting a divorce.

- If you have been separated for 6 months or more, no other proof is needed to qualify for a divorce.
- If you have been separated less than 6 months at the time of your divorce hearing you will have to show the judge that you and your spouse:
  - Separated because you cannot get along anymore; and
  - Tried to fix the problems in your marriage, but could not, or the problems are so bad that trying to fix them is not best for your family.

Maintenance: money paid from one spouse to the other on a regular basis. Sometimes this is called "alimony." To learn more about maintenance, go to ilao.info/maintenance-payments.

Appearance: a form filed by your spouse stating that your spouse will participate in the case, and includes their contact information.

Answer or Response: a form filed by your spouse in which your spouse states their response to the statements you made in your *Petition*.

Default: for these instructions, "default" means that:

- Your spouse received a summons and a copy of your petition;
- 30 days have passed since the date of service of the divorce papers; and
- Your spouse has not filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response*.

Prove-up: the final hearing that happpens when you and your spouse have an agreement on all issues. A prove-up may also occur if your spouse has not filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* and does not show up on the court date.

Judgment: a form the judge will sign that grants your divorce.

Who will play a part in my divorce case?

- Circuit Clerk: the clerk's office is where you will file your divorce forms. The Circuit Clerk will accept your divorce forms, collect fees for filing your divorce case, and help schedule court dates. The Circuit Clerk cannot give you legal advice.
- Sheriff: the Sheriff in the county where your spouse lives is who you will ask to serve the *Summons* and copy of your *Petition for Divorce* on your spouse. The Sheriff's office is normally located in the county seat along with the county courthouse. The Sheriff cannot give you legal advice.
- Judge: the judge is who you will see and speak to at your court dates. The judge will listen to evidence from you and your spouse and then decide whether you get a divorce. The judge cannot give you legal advice.

EXTRA HELP FILLING OUT THE FORMS

Divorce Easy Form

Illinois Legal Aid Online has an Easy Form program that helps you complete your forms.
Easy Forms ask simple questions and put your answers in the right places on the forms.
At the end of the program, you can download or email your forms to e-file or print them.

Easy Forms are free to use. Visit ilao.info/divorce-easy-form or scan the QR code to use the Easy Form.

IL Court Help

For more information about going to court, including how to fill out and file forms, call or text **Illinois Court Help** at 833-411-1121 or go to ilcourthelp.gov.

If there are any words or terms used in these instructions that you do not understand, please **visit Illinois Legal Aid Online** at ilao.info/glossary. You may also find more information, resources, and the location of your local legal self-help center at ilao.info/lshc-directory.

ILLINOIS LEGAL AID ONLINE

- Your courthouse may have additional self-help resources that can assist you with information and filling out the forms.

COSTS AND FEES

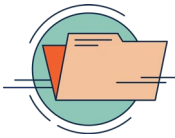
There may be costs and fees to take part in a court case. These fees and costs can include fees for filing court documents and Sheriff's fees for providing notice. Depending on the type of court case, there may be other costs and fees charged. If you cannot afford to pay costs and fees, you can ask the court to file for free or at a reduced cost by filing an *Application for Waiver of Court Fees.*

This is a separate form you can find at: ilcourts.info/fee-waiver-forms.

HOW TO FILE THE FORMS

E-filing

- After you fill out your court forms, file them with the Circuit Clerk. This is done by electronic filing, called 'e-filing'. You do not have to e-file if:
  - You qualify for an exemption (see the Not E-filing section below) or
  - Your case involves a criminal matter.
- Most people e-file their forms using Odyssey eFileIL at ilcourts.info/efile.
- There may be fees to file your forms. See the previous Costs & Fees page for more information.
- Follow step-by-step instructions and watch videos that walk you through the steps for e-filing at ilcourts.info/efile-info.
- E-filing is easier on a computer. It may not work on a cell phone or tablet.
- If you do not have access to a computer or if you need help e-filing, take your completed forms to a public library or a Circuit Clerk, Appellate Clerk, or Supreme Court Clerks' office. These places offer public computers where you can e-file your forms.
  - Depending on your courthouse, you can bring your forms on paper and there may be public computers with a scanner where you can turn your paper forms into electronic files.
  - Librarians and courthouse staff may be able to help you e-file, but they cannot provide legal advice.



Not E-filing

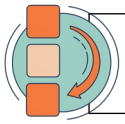
- Some people are not required to e-file, which means they can file paper forms at the courthouse or by mail. People who do not have to e-file are:
  - Inmates in prison or jail who do not have a lawyer.
  - People with a disability that keeps them from e-filing.
- You may also qualify for an exemption from e-filing if you:
  - Do not have internet or computer access in your home, and it is hard for you to travel.
  - Have trouble reading, writing, or speaking English.
  - Are filing documents in a sensitive case, such as an order of protection.
  - Tried to e-file your forms, but you were not able to because the equipment or help you needed was not available.
- To ask for an exemption from e-filing, use the form at ilcourts.info/exempt. If you cannot print this form, then ask for it at your local courthouse.
  - File your *Certification for Exemption from E-Filing* form along with your other court forms at the Circuit Clerk's office or by mail.
  - Bring or send your signed court forms and at least two copies of your forms to the Circuit Clerk's office. Ask them to stamp your copies and return them to you.
  - If you need to make copies of your forms, you can do that at the Circuit Clerk's office. They may charge you a fee to make copies.
- There may be fees to file your forms. See the previous Costs & Fees page for more information. If you mail your court forms to the Circuit Clerk's office, include a stamped envelope addressed to you. The Circuit Clerk will file your forms and then send your copies back to you in the envelope.

WHAT'S NEXT

STEP 2

NOTIFY YOUR SPOUSE.

- Your spouse must be notified that you have filed for divorce so that they can participate in the case if they want to. The judge cannot give you a divorce unless your spouse gets the type of notice the law requires. Follow the instructions carefully.
- There are 2 ways to give notice to your spouse:
  1. Entry of appearance
     - If your spouse signs and files an *Appearance (Divorce)*, you do not need to have your spouse served by the Sheriff.
     - If the spouse is signing an entry of appearance because they agree, whether it is filed by the petitioner or respondent, some counties require that a filing fee be paid.



You are ready to get a court date (skip to the "Take A Parenting Class" section in Step 3 of the instructions on page 10).

  2. Serve your spouse with a *Summons* and *Petition*.
     - Give the Circuit Clerk your *Summons* and they will date it, sign it, and put their seal on it.
     - Staple the *Summons* to the front of a copy of the *Petition*.
     - Get the name, address, and telephone number of the Sheriff for the county and the state where your spouse lives.
     - Call the Sheriff in that county to find out:
       - If it is the correct Sheriff's department for the address where you want your spouse served;
       - The address where you should bring or mail your *Summons* and *Petition*;
       - The number of copies of your *Summons* and *Petition* to bring or mail; AND
       - The cost of Sheriff's fees for service and if they will honor your *Order for Waiver of Court Fees* (if you have one). If the Sheriff is in Illinois, the Sheriff must honor the waiver.
       - Anything else the Sheriff needs from you to get the *Summons* and *Petition* served on your spouse.
     - In person or by mail, ask the Sheriff in the county where your spouse lives to serve your *Summons* and *Petition* on your spouse.
       - In Person
         - Bring the correct number of copies of your *Summons* and your *Petition* to the Sheriff's office.
         - Pay the Sheriff's fees OR give the Sheriff a copy of your *Order for Waiver of Court Fees* (if you have one) to not be charged a fee.
         - If the Sheriff is in a different county than the one in which you filed your case, give the Sheriff a self-addressed and stamped envelope for the Sheriff to mail the *Return of Service* to you.
       - By Mail
         - Mail the correct number of copies of your *Summons* and your *Petition* to the Sheriff's office.
         - Include payment for the fees or your *Order for Waiver of Court Fees*.
         - Include the *Letter to the Sheriff* found at ilcourts.info/forms.
         - Include a self-addressed and stamped envelope for the Sheriff to mail the *Return of Service* to you.
- If you don't know where your spouse lives, you may ask the court to let you notify them by another method. Learn more at ilao.info/divorce-spouse-not-found.

Confirm the Sheriff served the *Petition* on your spouse.

- If the Sheriff serves your spouse with your *Petition*, they will fill out the *Return of Service* section of your *Summons* form and file it with the Circuit Clerk or mail it to you.
  - If the Sheriff files the *Summons* with the completed *Return of Service* directly with the Circuit Clerk, call the Circuit Clerk to find out if it has been filed. If it has been filed, ask the Circuit Clerk how to get a copy.
  - If the Sheriff mails the *Summons* with the completed *Return of Service* to you, make a copy for yourself and file the original with the Circuit Clerk.
- If the Sheriff was not able to serve your spouse, ask them why. You should try to fix the problem and then fill out another *Summons,* called an "Alias Summons." In some counties you can prepare an alias summons and the Clerk will date, sign, and put their seal on it, in others, you will have to get permission from the judge before the Clerk will do that. Staple the *Summons* the clerk gives back to you to the front of a copy of the *Petition* and ask the Sheriff to try to serve your spouse again.

STEP 3

COURT DATES SCHEDULED. PREPARE FOR COURT.

Wait for your spouse to file an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response*.

- Once the Sheriff serves your forms on your spouse, your spouse has 30 days to file an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* with the Circuit Clerk.
  - If you do not get a copy of your spouse's *Appearance* or their *Answer or Response* within the 30 days, call the Circuit Clerk to ask if there is an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response* in the file or log into the e-filing program you used to file your document and see if it is there.
  - If your spouse files an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response*, you may ask for a court date.
  - If your spouse has not filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer or Response,* file a *Motion for Default* and an *Order for Default*.

Take a Parenting Class.

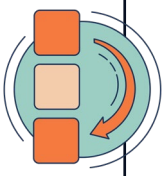
- The law requires that parents complete a class about parenting and divorce when they have minor children.
- Ask the Circuit Clerk for the name and contact information for the court approved class you must attend.
- There is normally a fee for the class. If you have an *Order for Waiver of Court Fees* you do not have to pay the fee. You can register for this class as soon as you file your divorce or wait until the judge orders you to go.

Ask for a court date.

- Contact the Circuit Clerk and ask if you have to schedule a court date or if one will be scheduled for you.
- If you need to schedule the court date, ask the Circuit Clerk how to do so. The Circuit Clerk may schedule the court date, or you may have to speak with other court staff.
- When you get your court date, ask if the court will send notice of the hearing to your spouse or if you need to.
- If you need to send notice, complete a *Notice of Court Date* found at ilcourts.info/forms.

STEP 4

COMPLETE THE DIVORCE.



Choose Part A or Part B.

Go to Part A: Agreement - if you and your spouse **agree on all issues** and your spouse will attend the court date with you (starting on page 11).

Go to Part B: No Agreement - if you and your spouse **do not agree** on all issues (starting on page 12). This includes cases where your spouse has not filed an *Appearance* or an *Answer* in the case and may not appear at the court date.

PART A: AGREEMENT

Get ready for your court date.

- Decide and write down all the things you and your spouse have agreed.
- Follow the instructions on the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children) and Parenting Plan* to add all of your agreements to the *Judgment*. Include:
  - What property will be awarded to each of you;
  - Who will be responsible for each of the debts;
  - Whether either of you will receive maintenance and how much;
  - Whether child support will be paid and, if so, how much; AND
  - Who will make decisions for the children and the parenting time schedule.
- Fill out the *Certification Agreement* if you and your spouse have an agreement to all of the items in the *Judgment, Parenting Plan*, and/or *Order for Support*.
- If you and your spouse have agreed to child support or maintenance, fill out an *Order for Support*. That form and instructions are found at ilcourts.info/forms.

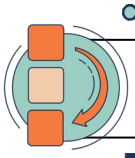
Go to your court date.

- Bring these items with you to court:
  - Copies of all the documents you filed with the Circuit Clerk; AND
  - Copies of the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children), Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* (if needed).
- Get to the courthouse at least 30 minutes early.
- Go to the courtroom number listed on your court date notice. If your notice does not have a courtroom number, look for a list of cases at the courthouse or ask the Circuit Clerk.
- Check in with the courtroom staff and wait for your name and case number to be called.
- When your case is called, walk to the judge and introduce yourself.
- If your court date is by phone or video:
  - Make sure to have the call-in or login information for your court date and make sure your technology is working.
  - Follow the instructions on the court notice you received. Call the Circuit Clerk or Circuit Court, or visit their websites for specific technology instructions.
  - Instructions for how to appear by phone or video are here: ilcourts.info/remote-resources.

Make sure you know how to attend your court date.

Your court date could be in person, by phone, or by video. If it is by phone or video, it is called a "Remote Appearance." Call the Circuit Clerk or visit their website for more information. To find the phone number for your Circuit Clerk, visit ilcourts.info/clerks.

- Tell the judge you and your spouse have an agreement. The judge may put you under oath and ask about the details.
- If the judge approves your agreement, the *Judgment, Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* will be signed.
- Get a copy of the *Judgment, Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* that were entered by the judge.



Skip to page 14 to read about **What to Do After Court.** Do not read Part B below. It does not apply if you and your spouse have a full agreement.

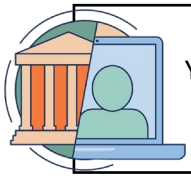
PART B: NO AGREEMENT

Get ready for your court date.

- Decide and write down:
  - What you want to ask the judge to do for you;
  - What you will say to the judge if asked to tell your side of the case; AND
  - Questions you have for witnesses, if there are any.
- Gather and make copies of pictures and documents you want the judge to see. Bring the original for the judge and one copy for you and for your spouse.
  - If you want the judge to hear from other people, those people will have to come to court and be witnesses (in most cases, you cannot bring in written statements of witnesses).
- Fill out the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children)* to the best of your ability. The judge may want to fill it out themselves or make changes. The judge may want this document before your court date.
- If you have not already filled out and filed your *Parenting Plan*, complete it now.
- If child support and/or maintenance is going to be ordered, complete an *Order for Support*. That form and instructions are found at ilcourts.info/forms.
- Bring an *Order of Default* (if needed).

Go to your court date.

- Bring these items with you to court:
  - Copies of all the documents you filed with the Circuit Clerk;
  - Any witnesses you want to testify and any documents you want the judge to look at; AND
  - Copies of the *Order of Default* (if needed), *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children), Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* (if needed).
- Get to the courthouse at least 30 minutes early.
- Go to the courtroom number listed on your court date notice. If your notice does not have a courtroom number, look for a list of cases at the courthouse or ask the Circuit Clerk.
- Check in with the courtroom staff and wait for your name and case number to be called.
- When your case is called, walk to the judge and introduce yourself.
- If your court date is by phone or video:
  - Make sure to have the call-in or login information for your court date and make sure your technology is working.
  - Follow the instructions on the court notice you received. Call the Circuit Clerk or Circuit Court or visit their websites for specific technology instructions.
  - Instructions for how to appear by phone or video are here: ilcourts.info/remote-resources.



Make sure you know how to attend your court date.

Your court date could be in person, by phone, or by video. If it is by phone or video, it is called a "Remote Appearance." Call the Circuit Clerk or visit their website for more information. To find the phone number for your Circuit Clerk, visit ilcourts.info/clerks.

Present your case to the judge.

If your spouse does not come to court:

- Give the judge your prepared *Order of Default* (if needed), *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children), Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* (if needed).
- Tell the judge what you want in the *Judgment, Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* (if needed).
- Tell the judge if you have documents to present or witnesses to testify.
- The judge will decide if documents and witnesses are necessary.
- The judge may put you under oath and ask you questions rather than look at documents and listen to witnesses.
- If the judge gives you the divorce, they will sign the *Judgment*, *Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support*.
  - Get a copy of each order that was signed by the judge.
  - If your spouse was not in court to get a copy, you must send them a copy of each order by 5:00 p.m. on the date you get the *Judgment*. Fill out and file a *Proof of Delivery* form with the Circuit Clerk to show that you sent the copy. You can find the *Proof of Delivery* at ilcourts.info/forms.

If your spouse comes to court:

- Tell the judge your side of the case and answer questions.
- Show evidence, including documents and photos. Give a copy to the judge and a copy to your spouse. Be prepared to explain why the document or photo is important.
- Question witnesses.
  - Tell the judge the name of your witnesses.
  - Ask the witnesses questions you prepared in advance.
  - The judge and your spouse can ask questions of your witnesses when you are done.
- The judge decides whether the documents, photos, or witness testimony can be considered in deciding your case.
- Tell the judge you have brought a *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children), Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support* (if needed).

What do I do when my spouse presents their case?

- Your spouse will also get to present their case by testifying, giving the judge evidence, and questioning witnesses.
- You will get to see any documents and photos your spouse brings to court. If you do not think the judge should consider them in making a decision about your case, tell the judge why.
- You may ask questions of your spouse and any of your spouse's witnesses. Write down your questions while they are speaking to your spouse or to the judge to remember what to ask them.

What happens after both sides present their case?

- The judge has to make a decision. The decision is recorded in the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children)*, and *Parenting Plan.*
- If the judge needs more information to make a decision, the judge may set up another court date. Make sure you understand what information is needed and get it to the judge before the new court date.
- If the judge needs more time to make a decision, the judge will let you know the decision later by mailing a court order or telling you at another court date.
- If the judge has enough information, the judge may sign the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children), Parenting Plan,* and *Order for Support.*
  - Get a copy of each order that was entered by the judge.

What to do after court date.

- Keep copies of your court papers in a safe place. If you lose any court papers that were filed with the Circuit Clerk, you can get another copy there. They may charge for those copies.
- If you got permission to go back to a former name, ask the Circuit Clerk to provide you with a certified copy of the *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children).* There may be a fee for this. The Secretary of State and Social Security Administration will want to see a certified copy of the *Judgment* before changing your name in their records.
- In Cook County, and in some other counties, the judge may ask you to get a transcript of the court hearing from the court reporter for the court file. Some judges will not sign your *Judgment for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children)* until you submit the transcript to the court.
- If a Cook County judge orders you to get a transcript follow these steps:
  1. If you have a fee waiver, ask the judge to enter an Order for Free Transcript;
  2. Call the court reporter's office 3 to 4 weeks after your court date at (312) 603-8405 to make sure the transcript is ready; if you do not have the Order for Free Transcript, ask what you will be charged for the transcript;
  3. When the transcript is ready, pick it up at 69 W. Washington St., 9th Floor, Chicago; you will need to bring the Order for Free Transcript or pay the transcript fee; AND
  4. Sign the last page of the transcript and return it to the judge's clerk in the courtroom where you got the divorce.
- In other counties, if the judge tells you to get a transcript, ask the Circuit Clerk about who to contact to get a transcript.
- Give a copy of the *Judgment* to your spouse either by hand or by mail and file a *Proof of Delivery* with the Circuit Clerk. You can find the *Proof of Delivery* at ilcourts.info/forms.

YOU'VE COMPLETED THE STEPS FOR A DIVORCE WITH CHILDREN CASE!