

**STATE OF MAINE  
SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER JB-20-02 (A. 6-21)

APPROVAL OF FAMILY LAW MAGISTRATE PILOT PROJECT

Effective: June 1, 2020  
(Revised June 1, 2021)

The Supreme Judicial Court issued this Administrative Order, approving a Standing Order of the Chief Judge of the District Court, which, effective June 1, 2020, authorized Family Law Magistrates to hear and dispose of all elements of certain final contested actions for divorce with children, legal separation with children, parentage, or parental rights. The Supreme Judicial Court hereby amends and extends this Order to June 1, 2023.

**I. SCOPE**

The pilot project established by the Standing Order of the Chief Judge of the District Court authorizes Family Law Magistrates to hear and dispose of all elements of final contested actions for divorce with children, legal separation with children, parentage, or parental rights subject to certain conditions as follows:

- A. Parties must consent in writing to having a Family Law Magistrate conduct the final contested hearing and issue a final order that will not be subject to the objection process found in M.R. Civ. P. 118.
- B. Final contested hearings may not take longer than three hours.
- C. All final orders issued by a Family Law Magistrate as part of this pilot project are subject to direct appeal to the Law Court, rather than the objection procedure set forth in M.R. Civ. P. 118.
- D. All final orders issued by a Family Law Magistrate as part of this pilot project are exempt from the holding in *Dietrich v. Dietrich*, 2016 ME 130; 146 A.3d 423. Accordingly, a Family Law Magistrate is authorized to entertain post-judgment motions pursuant to Rules 52 and 59(e) of the

Maine Rules of Civil Procedure filed in regard to the final orders issued as a part of this pilot project.

- E. This Order does not apply to final orders issued by a Family Law Magistrate when the proceeding is uncontested, or to final orders issued by a Family Law Magistrate after a contested proceeding when child support is the only contested issue.

## **II. PURPOSE**

This Order approves the establishment of this pilot project in order to improve the efficiency of the handling of family matters.

## **III. DURATION**

The pilot project shall be extended 24 months to June 1, 2023. The duration of the pilot project may be amended by further order of the Chief Judge of the District Court.

## **IV. REVIEW**

The Family Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts shall submit a report to the Supreme Judicial Court and the Chief Judge of the District Court with findings and recommendations by May 1, 2023. At that time, the Supreme Judicial Court and Chief Judge of the District Court shall make and implement such further recommendations as they deem proper, including extension of the pilot project, if appropriate.

For the Court,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Andrew M. Mead  
Acting Chief Justice

Promulgation Date: June 1, 2021

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Approval of Family Law Magistrate Pilot Project  
AO JB-20-02 (A. 6-21), dated and effective June 1, 2021  
Signed by: Andrew M. Mead, Acting Chief Justice, Maine Supreme Judicial Court  
Issued to amend and extend this Administrative Order to June 1, 2023.

**Historical Derivation of JB-20-02:**

Approval of Family Law Magistrate Pilot Project  
Effective: June 1, 2020; Dated: May 13, 2020  
Signed by: Andrew M. Mead, Acting Chief Justice, Maine Supreme Judicial Court  
Original promulgation