

Rule 1930.4. Service of Original Process in Domestic Relations Matters.

(a) *Persons Who May Serve.* Original process in all domestic relations matters may be served by the sheriff or a competent adult:

(1) by handing a copy to the defendant; or

(2) by handing a copy

(i) at the residence of the defendant to an adult member of the family with whom the defendant resides; but if no adult member of the family is found, then to an adult person in charge of such residence; or

(ii) at the residence of the defendant to the clerk or manager of the hotel, inn, apartment house, boarding house or other place of lodging at which the defendant resides; or

(iii) at any office or usual place of business of the defendant to the defendant's agent or to the person for the time being in charge thereof.

(3) or pursuant to special order of court.

Official Note

See Rule 76 for the definition of "competent adult." Service upon an incarcerated person in a domestic relations action must also include notice of any hearing in such action, and specific notice of the incarcerated individual's right to apply to the court for a writ of habeas corpus ad testificandum to enable him or her to participate in the hearing. The writ is available where an incarcerated individual wishes to testify as provided by statute or rule, as well as where the individual's testimony is sought by another. *Vanaman v. Cowgill*, 363 Pa. Super. 602, 526 A.2d 1226 (1987). See 23 Pa.C.S.A. § 4342(j) and Rule 1930.3. In determining whether a writ of habeas corpus ad testificandum should be issued, a court must weigh the factors set forth in *Salemo v. Salemo*, 381 Pa. Super. 632, 554 A.2d 563 (1989).

(b) *Service in Protection From Abuse Matters.* In Protection from Abuse matters only, original process may also be served by an adult using any means set forth in subdivision (a) above. If personal service cannot be completed within forty-eight (48) hours after a Protection From Abuse petition is filed, the court may, by special order as set forth in subdivision (a)(3) above, authorize service by another means including, but not limited to, service by mail pursuant to subdivision (c) of this rule.

(c) *Service by Mail.* Except in Protection from Abuse matters unless authorized by special order of court pursuant to subdivision (b) above, original process may also be served by mailing the complaint and order to appear, if required, to the defendant's last known address by both regular and certified mail. Delivery of the certified mail must be restricted to addressee only, and a return receipt must be requested.

(1) If the certified mail is refused by defendant, but the regular mail is not returned within fifteen days, service may be deemed complete.

(2) If the mail is returned with notation by the postal authorities that it was unclaimed, service shall be made by another means pursuant to these rules.

(d) *Acceptance of Service.* In lieu of service pursuant to this rule, the defendant or the defendant's authorized agent may accept service of original process by filing with the prothonotary a separate document which shall be substantially in the following form:

(Caption)

ACCEPTANCE OF SERVICE

I accept service of the _____ . NAME OF DOCUMENT

I certify that I am authorized to accept service on behalf of the defendant.

DATE

DEFENDANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT

MAILING ADDRESS

Official Note

If defendant accepts service personally, the second sentence should be deleted.

(e) *Time for Service Within the Commonwealth.* Original process shall be served within the Commonwealth within thirty days of the filing of the petition or complaint.

(f) *Service Outside of the Commonwealth.* Original process shall be served outside the Commonwealth within ninety days of the filing of the complaint:

- (1) by any means authorized by this rule; or
- (2) in the manner provided by the law of the jurisdiction in which defendant will be served; or
- (3) in the manner provided by treaty; or
- (4) as directed by the foreign authority in response to a letter rogatory or request.

In Protection from Abuse matters, the defendant must be personally served with original process outside of the Commonwealth. Such service may be made either in accordance with subdivisions (a) and (b) of this Rule governing personal service or as provided for by law in the jurisdiction where the defendant resides. If personal service cannot be completed within 48 hours after entry

of the protection order, service outside of the Commonwealth may be made by any other means authorized by this rule.

Official Note:

Sections 5323 and 5329(2) of the Judicial Code, 42 Pa.C.S. § § 5323 and 5329(2), provide additional alternative procedures for service outside the Commonwealth. For Protection from Abuse matters, personal service outside of the Commonwealth must first be attempted before service can be made by certified and regular mail or by any of the other means prescribed in subsection (f) of this Rule for out-of-state service.

(g) *Reinstatement of Complaint.* If service is not made as required by subdivision (e) or (f) of this rule, the prothonotary upon praecipe accompanied by the original process, or praecipe indicating that the original complaint has been lost or destroyed accompanied by a substituted complaint, shall reinstate the complaint.

(1) A complaint may be reinstated at any time and any number of times. A new party defendant may be named in a reinstated complaint.

(2) A reinstated complaint shall be served as required by subdivision (e) or (f) of this rule.

(h) *Proof of Service.* Proof of service shall be made as follows:

(1) The person making service of original process shall make a return of service forthwith. If service has not been made within the time allowed, a return of no service shall be made upon the expiration of the period allowed for service.

(2) Proof of service shall set forth the date, time, place and manner of service, the identity of the person served and any other facts necessary for the court to determine whether proper service has been made.

(3) Proof of service by a person other than the sheriff shall be by affidavit. If a person other than the sheriff makes a return of no service, the affidavit shall set forth with particularity the efforts made to effect service.

(4) Proof of service by mail shall include a return receipt signed by the defendant or, if the defendant has refused to accept mail service, the returned letter with the notation that the defendant refused to accept delivery, and an affidavit that the regular mail was not returned within fifteen days after mailing.

(5) Proof of service or of no service shall be filed with the prothonotary.

(6) An executed Acceptance of Service shall be filed in lieu of a Proof of Service where defendant accepts service of original process.

(i) *Appearance at Hearing or Conference.* Regardless of the method of service, a party who appears for the hearing or conference will be deemed to have been served.

Source

The provisions of this Rule 1930.4 adopted October 2, 1995, effective January 1, 1996, 25 Pa.B. 4518; amended May 14, 1999, effective July 1, 1999, 29 Pa.B. 2767; amended October 11, 2002, effective immediately, 32 Pa.B. 5263; amended August 8, 2006, effective immediately, 36 Pa.B. 4709. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (294888) and (293863) to (293864).