

# Serving Domestic Relations Pleadings Filed During COVID-19

## What is “service”?

**Service** means giving a copy of court papers to the other party or parties in your case. You must serve the other party or parties with any motions, answers, or other papers (“pleadings”) you file in your Domestic Relations case.

This document tells you:

- How to figure out what type of service you have to do
- How to tell the Court that you served your papers to the other party
- How to find more information about service

## Are there different rules for service in different cases?

Yes. There are different rules for service depending on whether your case is **open** or **closed**.

If:	Then your case is <i>probably</i> :
The Court has not yet issued a final order	Open
The Court issued its final order <b>less than 60 days ago</b>	Open
The Court issued its final order <b>more than 60 days ago</b>	Closed

**Not sure if your case is open or closed?** Call the Family Court Self-Help Center at **202-879-0096**.

## My case is open. How do I serve somebody?

If your case is **open**, you must follow [Rule 5](#) of the Domestic Relations rules. Rule 5 says that you must serve the papers in one of these ways:



**Hand** the papers to the other party



Leave the papers at the other party’s home **with a person who lives there** and is at least 18 years old



Leave the papers at their **lawyer’s office**



Send it by **first-class mail** to party (or lawyer’s) last known address



Through the Court’s e-filing software, **CaseFileXpress**



Any other way, as long as the other party **agrees** in writing

***If the other party has a lawyer, you must serve their lawyer.***

## I served the papers in my open case. Now what?

Once you serve the papers on the other party, you must tell the court by completing two steps:

1. **Fill out a Rule 5 Proof of Service form.** You can find this form [here](#).
2. **File the form with the Court.** During the COVID-19 public health crisis, you can file the form by emailing it to [FamilyCourtCIC@dcsc.gov](mailto:FamilyCourtCIC@dcsc.gov).

## My case is closed. How do I serve somebody?

If your case is **closed** when you file your motion, the Court will send you a **summons** to serve on the other party or parties. You must follow [Rule 4](#) of the Domestic Relations rules. Rule 4 says that you must serve **both** the **summons** and your **motion** in one of the following ways:



Ask someone else (18 or older) to **hand** the papers to the other party (*you cannot do this yourself*)



Ask someone else (18 or older) to leave the papers at the other party's home **with a person who lives there** and is at least 18 years old (*you cannot do this yourself*)



Send the documents by **certified or registered mail** to the other party's last known address



During the COVID-19 pandemic, you can send these documents by **email** or **text**

You can find a more detailed version of these instructions [here](#).

## I served the papers in my new or closed case. Now what?

Once you serve the papers on the other party, you must tell the court by completing two steps:

1. **Fill out a Rule 4 affidavit.** The affidavit is different depending on **how** you served the papers.
  - a. If you served the other party by **text or email**, use the affidavit [here](#).
  - b. If you served the other party by **certified mail**, use the affidavit [here](#).
  - c. If someone else **handed** the papers to the other party or someone who lives with them, use the affidavit [here](#).
2. **File the affidavit with the Court.** During the COVID-19 public health crisis, you can file the affidavit form by emailing it to [FamilyCourtCIC@dcsc.gov](mailto:FamilyCourtCIC@dcsc.gov).

## How can I get help figuring out how to serve my papers?

If you need help, call the Family Court Self-Help Center at **202-879-0096**. The Family Court Self-Help Center can explain the process to you, help you complete the proper legal papers, and direct you to other free legal resources.



Visit [www.lawhelp.org/dc](http://www.lawhelp.org/dc) for more information, including how to contact free legal assistance organizations, or call the D.C. Bar Legal Information Helpline at 202-626-3499 to listen to recorded messages about this issue.