

IDRT Explanation Script

All Montana courts now use a process called an Informal Domestic Relations Trial (or IDRT) for family cases where at least one person doesn't have a lawyer. Because neither of you objected by the deadline I set, we will be using the IDRT process. This means that:

- You speak directly to me without interruption or questions from the other party.
- You explain the issues in a way that makes sense to you and can provide any documents or other evidence without worrying if it's allowed under the Montana Rules of Evidence.
- I ask you and the other party questions about what you've told me.

Here's how this will work:

- 1) The person who started the case will speak first. That will be you, [petitioner's name]. You will tell me about the case, what result you want, and why. I will then ask you questions so I can confirm relevant facts. Only I will ask questions, not the other party or lawyer. I will then ask [respondent's name] or their lawyer whether there are other topics I should ask you about.
- 2) Then we'll repeat this process for you, [respondent's name].
- 3) While you testify, you can both submit relevant documents and any other evidence you want me to see. I'll look at each item and decide whether it should be considered. The other party can't object to your testimony or the evidence you give to me.
- 4) If there are any experts: the expert's report will be given to me. Either of you can ask to have the expert testify, and the expert can be questioned by me, either of you, or your lawyers.
- 5) I'll give you each an opportunity to respond to statements made by the other person.
- 6) At the end, each of you or your lawyer may make a short closing statement about the issues and how I should rule.
- 7) Once we've gotten through all that, I will make my decision. I may be able to share that with you before we leave the courtroom, or I may need some time to consider and send you the result in writing.

Any questions?