

For Immediate Release (1-17-2014):

Family Court Task Force seeks public input

A Delaware Family Court task force, appointed by Senate President Pro Tem Patricia Blevins and Speaker of the House Pete Schwartzkopf, is charged with reviewing the feasibility of opening Family Court proceedings to the public. It wants to hear from members of the public as it readies its recommendations to the General Assembly.

Currently, Family Court proceedings involving:

- Adoption or termination of parental rights
- Custody rights and visitation
- Dependency or neglect, guardianship
- Paternity
- Divorce, alimony and property division

are legally “presumed closed” unless participants can make a case for opening proceedings to the public. The task force is discussing each of those cases to determine if a specific case type should continue to be “presumed closed” or changed to “presumed open.”

In order for the task force to do a comprehensive analysis of each case type, we are seeking input from the public. Specifically, we would like to know what case type you were involved in, whether you think the court proceeding should stay “presumed closed” or be changed to “presumed open” and WHY you feel that way. Do you feel the outcome of your court case would be better if the court had been open to the public, or do you feel your court case would be better closed to the public?

Prior to each task force meeting, there is a 55-minute public discussion period to gather public input on the issues. The interactive discussions between the public and the three “public members” of the task force are designed to gather public opinion.

The task force’s next public session is scheduled to be held on January 23 from 9:00 a.m. to 9:55 a.m. in the second floor Senate Hearing Room at Legislative Hall in Dover. The regular task force meeting will follow from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.

If people are unable to attend, they can send written comments to Dick.Carter@state.de.us. Please note that comments will be anonymous. You may also call Dick Carter at 302-744-4155 to give him your opinion.

For more information on the task force, please go to: <http://legis.delaware.gov/TaskForces> and click on [Family Court Task Force](#).