

**SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
FAMILY COURT– DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH**

TIFFANI PULLEN,

Plaintiff,

v.

HANEEF MAING,

Defendant.

Case No. 2024 DRB 2507

Hon. Judge Laura E. Crane

Next Date: March 25, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.

**ORDER GRANTING ORAL MOTION TO SERVE BY POSTING
AND NOTICE OF HEARING**

This matter came before the Court on January 16, 2025 for a status hearing on Plaintiff Tiffani Pullen’s Complaint for Custody, filed July 26, 2024, concerning custody of the minor children, Claire Chanel Maing (DOB: 09/12/2011) and Taraji Juanita Maing (DOB: 07/15/2014). Neither party initially appeared. The Court was able to call Ms. Pullen on the phone and she participated over the phone. Mr. Maing did not appear.

Background

Plaintiff filed a Complaint for Custody on July 26, 2024, requesting that the Court grant Plaintiff sole physical custody and sole legal custody of the minor children. Plaintiff also requested that Defendant be permitted visitation with the minor children. Plaintiff alleged that the minor children have resided with her in Washington, D.C. since February 5, 2021.

An initial hearing was held before Judge Wiedmann on September 9, 2024. Plaintiff appeared, but Defendant did not appear. The Court attempted to reach Defendant via phone call but was unable to reach him. During the hearing, Plaintiff testified that she had filed a Return of Service on August 12, 2024, indicating she served Defendant via email. Judge Wiedmann thus

found Defendant was properly served and subsequently issued an Order Entering Default and Notice of Hearing, directing the parties to appear before Judge Crane on December 2, 2024.

During the December 2, 2024 hearing, Plaintiff testified regarding the efforts she made to serve Defendant, including via email, via U.S. mail to his mother's residence (Ms. Vanessa Jenkins), and via social media. Plaintiff testified that Ms. Jenkins informed her that she received the mail from Plaintiff, but she had not recently seen Defendant and thus could not provide him with notice of the hearing. The Court inquired about whether Defendant was still using the email Plaintiff attempted to serve him at. Plaintiff testified that she believed the email was in service because she did not receive a notice that the email was undeliverable; however, the Court advised that did not necessarily indicate that Defendant still used the email address. Moreover, Plaintiff was unable to confirm whether Defendant was active on the social media accounts she sent the messages to (she is blocked so does not know if he is using these accounts or not). The Court advised that based on the testimony, it was unclear that Defendant had been properly served despite the Court's earlier finding about service and the Court therefore is concerned that Defendant lacks sufficient notice for the Court to enter a default.

The Court inquired of Plaintiff whether Ms. Jenkins had a working phone number for Defendant. Plaintiff called Ms. Jenkins, who requested that the Court call her directly. The Court called Ms. Jenkins, who testified that she had "no idea" where Defendant was. Ms. Jenkins stated that Defendant has issues with his mental health and that he was homeless when they last spoke. She stated she last spoke to Defendant approximately four months ago, and at that time, he was incarcerated at the Fairfax County Detention Center. She has no way to reach him and does not know how to contact him. She was not sure if he was still detained and had no way to reach him.

The Court found multiple criminal cases for Defendant in Fairfax County, including a case with a hearing scheduled for January 9, 2025 (Case No. GC23078370-02). The Court contacted Defendant’s counsel in the criminal matter, Ms. Crystal Meleen who agreed to serve Defendant at his criminal hearing on January 9, 2025. On January 14 and January 15, 2025, the Court attempted to call Ms. Meleen numerous times but she did not answer. The Court separately attempted to call counsel for one of Defendant’s other criminal matters, Mr. Robert Gookin, but he also did not answer. The Court will continue to try to contact Defendant’s counsel in the pending Virginia cases. The cases with upcoming hearing dates are listed below

<input type="checkbox"/>	Case #: GC23074014-01 Hearing: 03/13/2025 <i>Fairfax County General District Court</i>	Defendant: MAING, HANEEF LAMAR Charge: VIOL PROBATION OF MISD OFF	Offense Date: 01/17/2024 Code Section: 19.2-306
<input type="checkbox"/>	Case #: GC23078370-02 Hearing: 03/13/2025 <i>Arlington General District Court</i>	Defendant: MAING, HANEEF LAMAR Charge: VIOL PROBATION OF MISD OFF	Offense Date: 01/17/2024 Code Section: 19.2-306
<input type="checkbox"/>	Case #: GC23006363-00 Hearing: 01/22/2025 <i>Arlington General District Court</i>	Defendant: MAING, HANEEF LAMAR Charge: OBSTRUCT JUSTICE/RESIST ARREST	Offense Date: 11/28/2023 Code Section: 18.2-460(B)

January 15, 2025 Hearing

At the January 15, 2025 hearing, Defendant did not appear. A review of the docket indicates that he has upcoming hearings on his criminal cases (on 1/22 and 3/13). The Court will continue to try to contact Defendant’s attorneys for additional information regarding his whereabouts.

Plaintiff testified that she nor the minor children have not had any contact with Defendant. During the recent holidays, the minor children spent time with their paternal grandmother, but Defendant was not present at the grandmother’s home. Plaintiff does not know if the grandmother has had any contact with Defendant recently.

Ms. Pullen made an oral Motion for Service by Posting. Before an order allowing service by publication or posting may be issued, the movant must demonstrate that she made a diligent but futile effort to locate the defendant, and must furnish the Court with the following:

- (1) the time and place at which the parties last resided together;
- (2) the last time the parties were in contact with each other;
- (3) the name and address of the last

employer of the Defendant either during the time the parties resided together or at a later time if known to the Plaintiff; (4) the names and addresses of those relatives known to be close to the Defendant; and (5) any other information which could furnish a fruitful basis for further inquiry by one truly bent on learning the present whereabouts of the Defendant. From such basic information, the Plaintiff should then detail for the Court the particular efforts which [sic] have been made in the effort to ascertain the Defendant's present address.

Bearstop v. Bearstop, 377 A.2d 405, 408 (D.C. 1977).

Plaintiff has demonstrated that she performed a diligent search for Defendant and that further efforts would be futile. Defendant has no fixed address and is not in regular communication with his mother (who has received mail on his behalf). He has multiple pending criminal cases but has not been in touch with his attorneys and has missed prior hearings. He has two upcoming hearings and the Court advised it will continue to follow those hearings in an attempt to locate him. The Court contacted Ms. Meleen prior to the December hearing; she did not have a phone number or contact info for him, but advised that she would bring any paperwork to court in the event that he appeared. The Court has not had any further contact from Ms. Meleen and Defendant did not appear at the latest hearing. The paperwork has been sent to the last known email for Defendant and did not bounce back. The Court has searched the Virginia jail system and there is no record of Defendant being detained. In light of the recent criminal cases that Defendant has picked up and the call he made to his mother several months ago, the Court finds that Defendant is not currently in the military. The Court finds that there is no other method that Plaintiff can use to try to contact Defendant.

Based on the foregoing, the Court finds that Plaintiff has made diligent efforts to locate Defendant and the further efforts by the Court to find him through his Virginia cases have been unsuccessful as he is a loss of contact from his attorneys. The Court will continue to monitor his

Virginia cases and attempt to locate Defendant, however, the Court finds that the efforts that have been undertaken are sufficient to support a motion for alternative service.

Pursuant to Super. Ct. Dom. Rel. R. 4(c)(4)(D) and D.C. CODE § 13-340(a), the Court may authorize service by posting notice in the Clerk's Office of the Family Court for a period of twenty-one (21) days if the cost of publication would impose a substantial financial hardship. The Court finds that Plaintiff lacks the resources to pay for publication and will therefore authorize service posting of the below notice for a period of twenty-one (21) days in the Clerk's Office and on the Court's website, www.dccourts.gov/services/service-notice. If Defendant Maing fails to file a responsive pleading within the time allowed after he has been served, the Court may enter default by order and convert the next hearing into a default/*ex parte* hearing.

Plaintiff requested the Court grant her sole legal and sole physical custody of the minor children with visitation to Defendant at Plaintiff's discretion. The Court will set a default hearing for March 25, 2025. If Defendant fails to appear or fails to file a pleading before the Court, the Court will award Plaintiff sole legal and sole physical custody of the minor children; Plaintiff agreed that she would be open to Defendant having visitation with the minor children if he was in a good space. As set forth above, the Court will continue to follow his pending criminal cases in Virginia in an attempt to locate Defendant before the hearing.

Based on the foregoing, it is, this 16th day of January, 2025 hereby

ORDERED that Plaintiff's January 15, 2025 oral Motion to Serve by Publication or Posting is **GRANTED**; and it is further

ORDERED, that the attached notice shall be posted in the Clerk's Office of the Family Court of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and on the Court's website, www.dccourts.gov/services/service-notice, for a period of twenty-one (21) calendar days in order

to serve Defendant and notify her of the present action in which she is a party. It is further

ORDERED that the parties shall appear for a **Default/Ex Parte Hearing** on **March 25, 2025** at **12:30 p.m.** The hearing will be conducted **in-person in Courtroom JM-13** at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia Moultrie Courthouse located at 500 Indiana Avenue Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20001. *The Court will allow the parties to participate in the hearing remotely using one of the following instructions:*

1. By scanning the QR Code with your phone and following the prompts:



To get started, simply scan the QR code above

2. WebEx videoconference, using laptop or desktop computer: Open Google Chrome web browser, then click on, or copy and paste, the following URL below into the browser, enter your name and email address, then click Join:

<https://dccourts.webex.com/meet/ctbjm13>

3. WebEx videoconference, using iPad or iPhone: Go to App Store, download the WebEx App (Cisco WebEx Meetings), open WebEx App, select Join Meeting, type the URL below, enter your name and email address, then click Join:

<https://dccourts.webex.com/meet/ctbjm13>

4. If a party is unable to participate by videoconference after making efforts to do so, the party may participate by telephone: Dial (844) 992-4726 (toll free), then enter Meeting ID 129 435 2730, followed by “##”.

**Failure to appear may result in a default judgment, sanctions, or dismissal; and it is
SO ORDERED.**

DATE: January 16, 2025



LAURA E. CRANE
Associate Judge

Copies to:

Tiffani Pullen
tiffpullen@gmail.com
via email
Plaintiff

Crystal Meleen
cam@lmslaw.org
via email
Counsel for Defendant in Case No.
GC23078370-02¹

¹ Though Ms. Meleen does not represent Mr. Maing in this matter, the Court requests that Ms. Meleen serve Mr. Maing with a copy of this Scheduling Order.

TIFFANI PULLEN,

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v.

HANEEF MAING,

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NOTICE OF CUSTODY PROCEEDING

HANEEF MAING YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT a complaint for custody has been filed in the above-captioned matter.

IF YOU WANT TO CHALLENGE THIS COMPLAINT, you must file a written objection with the Court by February 6, 2025 and prior to the hearing scheduled for March 25, 2025 at 12:30 p.m. in Courtroom JM-13 (in person or accessible at <https://dccourts.webex.com/meet/ctbjm13>, or by dialing (844) 992-4726 and entering Meeting ID 129 435 2730, followed by "##"). If you do not file a written objection by February 6, 2025 default may be entered against you and the status hearing may be converted to a default/*ex parte* proof hearing. Your objection should be directed to the Domestic Relations Branch Clerk, Family Court, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, 500 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001.

IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO CHALLENGE THIS COMPLAINT, you may consent to the relief sought prior to the status hearing scheduled for March 25, 2025 at 12:30 p.m. in Courtroom JM-13. For more information on how to file a Consent Answer, please contact the Self-Help Center, telephone number (202) 879-0096 and located at JM-570, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, 500 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001.

FAILURE TO RESPOND IN THIS MATTER MAY RESULT IN THE ENTRANCE OF A JUDGMENT OF CUSTODY WITHOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION.