

must file within ten days a notice of commencement of his action with the conciliation bureau of the Judicial District wherein the action is commenced. Such a notice must give full details of the family, including the children.

The Commissioner of the conciliation bureau may then decide whether a conciliation proceeding is called for. If he decides it is not, a report is made to the supervising justice and the suit goes forward. Otherwise the case may be referred by the commissioner to a conciliation counsellor. The counsellor must hold at least one conciliation conference, which both parties can be compelled to attend, and such further conferences as the rules may call for. Such conferences are conducted on an informal basis. The counsellor must file a final report with the commissioner within thirty days.

If reconciliation is effected the case is dismissed; if no reconciliation can be achieved, the counsellor refers the matter to the commissioner who may decide (i) that reconciliation is at an end or (ii) hold a conciliation hearing, attendance at which is mandatory for all parties to the proceedings.

The Conciliation Hearing is a formal procedure at which the parties may present evidence, cross-examine witnesses and be represented by attorneys. If upon the evidence, the Commissioner finds that reconciliation is possible and in the interests of the parties and the children, he may apply to the supervising justice for an order requiring that the parties attempt to effect a reconciliation for a period not exceeding sixty days. If, on the other hand, the Commissioner finds that reconciliation is not possible, he reports the fact to the supervising justice and the conciliation procedure is at an end.

The Act also provides that the records of conciliation conferences shall be confidential and available only to employees of the bureau or to the parties and their attorneys. If there are minor, handicapped or incompetent children of the marriage, a special guardian may be appointed. Such a guardian becomes a party to the proceedings with the duty to look after the interests of the children in the proceedings and to recommend temporary care, custody and maintenance during the hearings.

The conciliation bureau is empowered to appoint marriage counsellors to its own staff and may also use public, religious and social agencies in the various judicial districts.