

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF MARIN

**POLICY OF
FAMILY COURT SERVICES**

The welfare and best interests of children are primary concerns of the Marin County Superior Court and its Family Court Services. We believe that early settlement of conflicts or disagreements about child custody/visitation is a benefit to the whole family. We believe that child custody recommending counseling will encourage parents to cooperate for the best interests of the child(ren).

To assist resolution of custody/visitation disputes, child custody recommending counseling is mandatory. If, however, there is no dispute over custody/visitation, child custody recommending counseling is not required.

PROCEDURES

If you are a party to a child custody/visitation dispute, the law *requires* that you mediate the matter before the Court makes a decision. The Court provides child custody recommending counseling services without charge. Private child custody recommending counseling is also available. Consult an attorney, pediatrician, school counselor or Family Court Services (FCS) for a reference.

If you file or receive an Order to Show Cause or Motion regarding child custody/visitation, you will automatically be referred to Family Court Services for child custody recommending counseling. You will receive an appointment letter in the mail which also contains important information about domestic violence and how to view the FCS orientation. Please review this information carefully.

Family Court Services sends appointment letters to the addresses provided by the filing parent and/or the addresses of record listed with the Court. If you think FCS does not have your current address, please contact (415) 444-7090 to provide this information as soon as possible.

Failure to participate in FCS child custody recommending counseling may result in the Court denying a request for custody/visitation, not hearing evidence from the non-participant, monetary sanctions for violation of Court rules, or other penalties.

Except in unusual cases, hearings (trials) on requests for child custody/visitation will not be heard until child custody recommending counseling has been completed. This does not mean that the Court cannot make an order for temporary custody or visitation rights, where appropriate.

A COPY OF THIS WRITTEN POLICY MUST BE ATTACHED TO THE NOTICE OF MOTION OR ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE: CHILD CUSTODY/VISITATION WHEN IT IS SERVED ON THE OTHER PARTY. YOUR PROOF OF SERVICE MUST REFLECT SERVICE OF THIS WRITTEN POLICY. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY PREVENT THE COURT FROM GOING FORWARD ON YOUR REQUEST FOR CUSTODY/VISITATION ORDERS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELING, THE CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELING PROCESS, SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES, EVALUATIONS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF FCS, CONTACT AN ATTORNEY OR CALL FCS, WHO CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEEDINGS. OTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IN THE CALIFORNIA FAMILY CODE, THE STATE COURT RULES, AND MARIN COUNTY RULES OF COURT.