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## FACT SHEET

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# Center for Families, Children & the Courts

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) is dedicated to improving the quality of justice and services to meet the diverse needs of children, youth, families, and self-represented litigants in the California courts. Working closely with the Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee, Task Force on Self-Represented Litigants, and Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force, CFCC provides courts and court-connected agencies statewide with legal and court services, research, educational and training opportunities, print and electronic publications, and financial assistance.

In 2003 the American Bar Association's Government and Public Sector Lawyers Division presented CFCC with the Hodson Award for Public Service in recognition of CFCC's sustained and outstanding commitment to serving Californians.

### Services and Programs

#### **Legal services**

CFCC attorneys provide legal services for the Judicial Council, the Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, its Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force, the courts, other AOC divisions, and court-connected programs. Their services address the numerous issues that arise in cases affecting children, families, litigants in cases involving domestic violence allegations, and self-represented litigants in the California court system. CFCC facilitates the development of California Rules of Court, Judicial Council forms, and California Standards of Judicial Administration. CFCC also supplies the public with general legal information through its question-and-answer teams, its Web sites, and its multimedia educational materials and publications.

### **Court services**

CFCC's leadership and outreach extend to the entire state through support, consultation, and technical assistance for juvenile and family courts, domestic violence courts, collaborative justice court projects, judicial officers, court service providers, and California's increasingly diverse pool of litigants. CFCC staff members work with courts to provide a continuum of services in juvenile and family law proceedings, to unify and coordinate those proceedings, to improve court responses to domestic violence, to help self-represented litigants work with the courts, and to support and evaluate collaborative justice approaches.

### **Research**

CFCC conducts research for the development of court policy, innovative strategies, effective programs, and training curricula. Current research projects are examining subjects such as improvements in juvenile courts, workload and caseload standards, the assessment of processes and caseload management in delinquency, unification and coordination of court proceedings involving families and children, the impact of self-help and other legal services on self-represented litigants, and effective programs and practices for collaborative courts, child custody and dependency mediation, supervised visitation, parent education, domestic violence, and Court Appointed Special Advocates. Research services include briefings and statistical data sheets, mandated studies, program evaluation, research consultation, and technical assistance.

CFCC manages family and juvenile court research databases, including two of the largest data archives in the family law field. The Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS) is a longitudinal study with more than 18,000 records from family court services clients. The system provides up-to-date information about trends facing family and juvenile courts. The Family Law Facilitator Database includes service delivery and demographic information on child support services in all 58 California counties.

### **Education and training**

CFCC provides a wide range of educational programs, professional trainings, conferences, and policy forums each year. Its programs focus on the enhancement of professional knowledge and skills in such areas as family and juvenile law, social science data on family and juvenile issues, family dispute resolution, collaborative justice, self-represented litigants, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. There are programs designed specifically for judicial officers, court administrators, family court services staff, family law facilitators, legal service providers, and other

professionals serving families, children, and self-represented family law litigants, as well as collaborative justice court programs. Most of CFCC's statewide, regional, and local court trainings fulfill continuing education requirements mandated by statutes or court rules. CFCC is actively involved in efforts to produce cost-effective, on-demand training through use of technology and distance-learning options.

### **Financial assistance and administration**

CFCC distributes and administers grants to local courts and court-connected programs for the improvement of the administration of justice in proceedings involving children and families. Grants from the federal government, the state, and private foundations fund court staff members and underwrite direct services such as Court Appointed Special Advocate programs; family law information centers; pilot self-help centers; child support services; interpreting services in domestic violence matters; programs to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases; collaborative justice court programs; and Access to Visitation programs, which support parent education, supervised visitation, and group counseling services for parents and children. In addition to these direct grants, a research grant program provides funding for research and demonstration projects in family court.

CFCC administers the Dependency Representation, Administration, Funding and Training (DRAFT) Pilot Program, a voluntary program created to improve the quality of trial court dependency representation through uniform standards for dependency counsel performance and compensation.

Through the Domestic Violence Safety Partnership (DVSP) project, CFCC seeks to work collaboratively with the courts to enhance safety, improve practice, and identify needed resources for the courts in domestic violence cases. DVSP provides courts with a comprehensive self-assessment tool and tailors technical assistance and local education to assist courts in improving identified areas of practice.

### **Publications**

CFCC publishes many written materials for a diverse audience of judges, professionals, and court users. These publications—many of which are available in Spanish—include an academic journal, legislative reports, judicial and administrative deskbooks, a children's activity book, a restorative justice resource manual, research briefings, statistical updates, informational pamphlets (including one for victims of juvenile crime, program reports), and an extensive Web site

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([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/)). The Web site makes CFCC publications, grants, and other resources available to the public. Resources for courts and nonprofit legal services agencies providing self-help services are available at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/equalaccess/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/equalaccess/). Information about the Judicial Council's Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force and its draft guidelines and recommended practices are available at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/advisorycommittees.htm#dvpp](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/advisorycommittees.htm#dvpp). CFCC maintains two additional Web sites. First, a Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/collab/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/collab/) that is focused on collaborative justice court programs, with resources, grant information, and research reports pertaining to each type of collaborative justice/problem-solving court. Second, a Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/ccjp/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/ccjp/) focused on assisting California courts and communities implement restorative justice principles. CFCC also collaborates with other AOC divisions to publish judicial handbooks on domestic violence and sexual assault issues and to maintain the California Courts Online Self-Help Center ([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/)), which includes more than 900 pages of information on legal issues, in both English and Spanish.

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*Additional resources:*

Reports and publications, [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4\\_18fam\\_cfcc.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_18fam_cfcc.htm)