



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

- CENTRAL DIVISION, CENTRAL COURTHOUSE, 1100 UNION ST., SAN DIEGO, CA 92101, (619) 844-2888
- EAST COUNTY DIVISION, 250 E. MAIN ST., EL CAJON, CA 92020, (619) 456-4100
- NORTH COUNTY DIVISION, 325 S. MELROSE DR., VISTA, CA 92081, (760) 201-8300
- SOUTH COUNTY DIVISION, 500 3RD AVE., CHULA VISTA, CA 91910, (619) 746-6097

FAMILY COURT SERVICES **CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELING INFORMATION SHEET**

IMPORTANT: This information sheet is not and should not be considered or construed as legal advice. Child custody recommending counselors do not give legal advice. If you need legal advice, you should consult an attorney.

What Is Child Custody Recommending Counseling?

Child custody recommending counseling (formerly called "mediation") is a process in which parties are given the opportunity to work together, with the assistance of an experienced Family Court Services (FCS) counselor, towards a goal of reaching an agreement regarding a parenting plan for the child(ren). The child custody recommending counseling conference is an opportunity for parties to discuss custody and visitation and make their own decisions about what is in the best interest of the child(ren). The parenting plan that is developed will detail when the children are to be with each party and will specify other parental responsibilities. Information shared by parents in the child custody recommending counseling session is not confidential to the court. The counselor will notify the court of areas of agreement. If no agreement is reached, the counselor will make a written recommendation to the court as to what is believed to be in the best interest of the child(ren). The recommendation will be provided to the parties prior to the court hearing. If you disagree with the counselor's recommendation, during your court hearing, you or your attorney will have the opportunity to tell the judicial officer your position regarding a child sharing plan. Only a judicial officer can make a court order for child custody or visitation.

Telephone calls to a counselor after the Family Court Services session will not be accepted unless the counselor has requested specific information. All information that you want the counselor to know should be discussed during the FCS session.

What will happen at your Family Court Services appointment?

You will view an orientation video before seeing a counselor. The child custody recommending counseling conference will last 1½ to 2 hours. The Family Court Services Data Sheet (SDCS Form #FCS-002) will be reviewed. You will be asked about your home, relationships and other aspects of your life related to parenting. Your proposal for a child sharing schedule and any parenting concerns will be discussed.

Are the parties always seen together in the child custody recommending counseling session?

Arrangements can be made for a telephone conference if one party is out of the county. Please call the FCS office where your session will take place to arrange for participation by telephone.

If you are being protected by a restraining order against the other parent or if you allege domestic violence has occurred, you may be seen separately without the other parent present at your FCS appointment. Also, if a restraining order for your protection is in effect at the time of the appointment, you may have a support person with you during your FCS session, including a session where you are seen without the other parent. Please advise the FCS clerk of these requests when you check in.

Should I bring the child(ren) to the Family Court Services appointment?

Do NOT bring the child(ren) with you for the FCS appointment unless ordered to do so by the court. If an interview with the child(ren) is needed, arrangements will be made for this at a later time.

What are the limitations of child custody recommending counseling?

Child custody recommending counseling does NOT deal with issues related to money, child or spousal support, or property. Family Court Services cannot monitor or enforce court orders.

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I M P O R T A N T

If you do not need the Family Court Services child custody recommending counseling appointment you must cancel it at least one court day prior to the appointment date. If you do not cancel the appointment and/or fail to appear for the appointment you may be ordered by the court to pay a monetary sanction of up to \$1,500 pursuant to Code Civ. Proc. § 177.5.

Where can I obtain additional information about child custody recommending counseling?

FCS provides a free twice monthly Parent Orientation meeting to provide general information regarding child custody and Family Court matters. This meeting is facilitated by an FCS counselor. The orientation lasts about one hour. Advance registration is not required.

Day	Time	Address	Location	Tel. No.
3rd Tuesday of the month	12:00 p.m. *	1100 Union St., San Diego	FCS Room 430	(619) 844-2888
1st Thursday of the month	4:00 p.m.	1100 Union St., San Diego	FCS Room 430	(619) 844-2888

*Please be aware that doors are closed promptly at 12:10 p.m.

Additional information about child custody recommending counseling can be found at www.sdcourt.ca.gov and www.courts.ca.gov.