



A Report to the California Legislature

FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS:
AN EVALUATION OF THREE
PILOT PROGRAMS

MARCH 2003



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

A REPORT TO THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

**FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS:
AN EVALUATION OF
THREE PILOT PROGRAMS**

**Judicial Council of California
Administrative Office of the Courts**

March 1, 2003

Judicial Council of California
Administrative Office of the Courts
Center for Families, Children & the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688

This report has been prepared and submitted to the California Legislature pursuant to Assembly Bill No. 2207, chaptered as Family Code section 15000 et seq.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The Family Law Center has helped me every step of the way. I don’t know where I’d be without it. The people are very helpful. I’m a single mom with low income and without this center I would not have been able to accomplish everything.”

*Customer, 2002
Female*

“Very helpful and informative. I think more fathers would respond to court orders with the help they can receive. The service was very directional and friendly, went through step by step process very quickly and with patience even though she had people waiting.”¹

*Customer, 2002
Male*

THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

The three pilot Family Law Information Centers were established by the Legislature in 1999 to address the reality of the growing numbers of litigants without attorneys who need to access the family law courts. The Legislature stated the concerns that led to the creation of the centers in Family Code section 15000(a) by making the following findings:

1. A growing number of family law litigants are unrepresented in family law proceedings, and the primary reason for the lack of representation in these matters is their inability to afford legal assistance;
2. The inability to have access to legal resources prevents low-income litigants from fully understanding their rights and remedies in family law proceedings, thereby restricting their access to justice;
3. There is a compelling state interest in ensuring that all family law litigants better understand court procedures and requirements and that all litigants have more meaningful access to family court; and
4. It is the public policy of this state to maximize the opportunity for low-income persons to receive fair and just treatment by the family court and to

¹ These quotations are taken from narratives written by customers on customer satisfaction forms from the Los Angeles County program.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

(FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER ACT)

1. EACH FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER SHOULD SEE AT LEAST 100 CUSTOMERS PER YEAR

v *FY 2001-2002: MORE THAN 45,000 INDIVIDUALS WERE SERVED. NUMBERS ARE COMPARABLE IN ALL YEARS OF SERVICE.*

2. THE MAJORITY OF JUDGES IN PILOT COUNTIES SHOULD REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS EXPEDITE PRO PER CASES

v *88% REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS HELP EXPEDITE CASES WITH PRO PER LITIGANTS.*

v *88% REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER SAVES COURTROOM TIME.*

3. THE MAJORITY OF CUSTOMERS SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH SERVICES

v *93% FELT THE SERVICE WAS HELPFUL*

v *95% FELT THEY HAD BEEN TREATED WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT*

**Family Law
Information
Centers
FY 2001–2002**

* Budget: \$300,000

* The courts of Los Angeles, Fresno and Sutter Counties provided additional funding to the Family Law Information Center programs in the total amount of \$120,000.

* Combined funding provided services to more than 45,000 individuals

* Cost is approximately \$9.33 per customer.

decrease inequities resulting from an unrepresented party's limited legal skills and knowledge.

Three pilot Family Law Information Centers were authorized. The three pilot centers are in Los Angeles, Fresno, and Sutter Counties. All are operated under the administrative structure of the local offices of the family law facilitators. The family law facilitators are attorneys who work for the courts providing information to pro per litigants with respect to child support. The funding for the family law facilitators limits them to working only on child support related issues, and particularly in Title IV-D child support enforcement cases. The pilot Family Law Information Centers are able to provide assistance with the numerous other issues commonly arising within the family law courts.

An evaluation of the three pilot programs was conducted pursuant to the Family Law Information Center Act (Fam. Code §15010(k).) Data were taken from all the pilots. Because of its high volume of customers, the Los Angeles Family Law Information Center accounted for approximately 80 percent of the data overall. Aggregate numbers, therefore, are more reflective of the Los Angeles County program than of the other two pilots. Data for the individual programs are set out in detail in the following chapters of the report.

The three pilot programs provide services in several different case types:

- a. Dissolution. Traditionally, family law covers several different types of cases. Each case type is defined by the relationship between the parties. For example, cases types involving the marital relationship are dissolution (divorce), legal separation and nullity. In these marital cases, examples of potential issues within them are: custody/visitation, child support, spousal support, division of property and debt, and domestic violence restraining orders. Dissolution cases make up 70 percent of the case types seen in the Family Law Information Centers.
- b. Paternity. If parties are unmarried, but have minor children in common, they may file an action to legally determine parentage. This is called a paternity case and it is filed under the Uniform Parentage Act (UPA). Examples of issues that can be raised in a paternity case are: parentage, child support, custody/visitation

and domestic violence restraining orders. Because the parties are not married, they may not raise issues of spousal support or property division within this case type. Paternity cases account for 25 percent of the cases seen in the Family Law Information Centers.

- c. Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement. These cases are filed by the State of California through the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS). The purpose of such cases is to establish and collect child support. Parents may be married or unmarried. If they are unmarried the Title IV-D case will seek to establish who the legal parents are. Once parentage has been established, then issues of child custody/visitation, child support and restraining orders may be raised within this type of case. The family law facilitator in Los Angeles County handles all Title IV-D cases. In Sutter County, the Family Law Information Center handles Title IV-D cases 29 percent of the time. The Fresno County program handles Title IV-D cases 17 percent of the time.
- d. Domestic Violence Prevention Act. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) allows a victim of domestic violence to seek protective restraining orders without the necessity of filing a dissolution or paternity case within which to raise this issue. The issues of custody/visitation and child support may be raised within a DVPA case as long as parentage has been established elsewhere. The issue of parentage itself will not be heard with in this type of case. Overall, these cases make up less than 3 percent of the Family Law Information Center caseloads. Most of the pilot programs work in collaboration with other legal services agencies to provide assistance in domestic violence cases.
- e. Other Case Types. There are also other types of cases that sometimes appear in the cluster of family law matters. Each has its own set of rules about what issues can be raised. Examples of such cases are: juvenile dependency, probate guardianships, name changes, civil harassment restraining orders, adoptions, petitions for custody/support, and registration of foreign judgments. These other case types also accounted for less than 3 percent of the cases handled by the Family Law Information Centers.

Within these various cases, the Family Law Information Centers dealt with numerous issues; however, matters of child custody and visitation were in the great majority. Customers had custody/visitation issues in 72 percent of the cases. The issue of child support (21 percent) was the next most frequently raised issue in the pilot programs. Numerous other issues were also presented to the centers, including spousal support, grandparent visitation, name changes, and child abduction.

Services are provided mainly on a one-on-one basis; however, workshops and telephone help-lines are also used to assist customers. Family Law Information Centers help individuals get cases started, respond to cases, make motions to get specific sorts of orders, complete judgments, and enforce judgments.

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

Family Code section 15010 sets out the standards for the evaluation of these pilot programs. If the programs meet the following criteria, they shall be deemed successful:

- They assist at least 100 low-income families per year;
- A majority of judges surveyed in the pilot project court believe the Family Law Information Center helps expedite cases with pro per litigants; and
- A majority of Family Law Information Center customers evaluate the Family Law Information Center favorably.

NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED

The evaluation year was fiscal year 2001–2002. The grant funds provided for this period were \$300,000. The courts in Los Angeles, Fresno and Sutter Counties provided additional funding for the programs in an amount of \$120,000. As a result, the pilot Family Law Information Centers were able to provide services to more than 45,000 individuals at a cost of approximately \$9.33 per customer. In its five-year report, the

SARAH'S CASE

Sarah, a young mother, came to her local Family Law Information Center to open a paternity case for her three-week-old infant. The Center staff helped her start her case. Approximately one month later, Sarah came back to the center and wanted to file paperwork giving custody of the baby to her best friend. Sarah had just found out that she was in stage four level of cervical cancer and was not expected to live much longer. It turned out that the baby's father had died and the only living relatives were Sarah's parents who were both drug addicts. She was extremely worried about what would happen to the baby and did not want her drug-using parents to have the child. The Family Law Information Center helped Sarah file her documents, and the court granted her request. Right after court she came by and thanked the center's staff with tears in her eyes. She said how thankful she was for the services she had received. She said that she knew her baby would have ended up in foster care or with her drug addicted parents and she was very grateful for getting help she needed to protect her child. Approximately six or seven weeks later, Sarah's friend came in to the center's office. She told the staff that Sarah had died, but right before her death she was saying how grateful she was for the help she received from the Family Law Information Center office.

JOSE'S CASE

Jose's children had been living with him for the last several years. He had been solely responsible for them and for their support. Recently, he filed a motion with the court asking for a legal order stating that he had custody of the children, and requesting child support. He prepared his papers himself without any sort of assistance. Somehow he became confused about the time scheduled for his hearing. Believing it was set for 1:30 in the afternoon, he failed to show up at 8:30 in the morning, which was the scheduled time. The mother of the children did appear at 8:30 and because Jose was absent, the judge believed that he would not object to the mother's request that she now be given custody. When Jose arrived at court at 1:30 pm, he discovered that custody had been transferred to the mother without the opportunity for him to explain his situation to the judge. Jose came from the courtroom to the Family Law Information Center, which is located in the same building. The center was able to help him get paperwork started to make an emergency request to the court for the return of the children, and for an opportunity to be heard. Jose was able to complete and submit the paperwork and obtain an order that the children be allowed to return home pending an opportunity for a further hearing.

Most customers are employed and have gross monthly incomes under \$2,000.00 per month.

Customers were overwhelmingly pleased with the services they received.

“If the Family Law Information Center wasn’t here, I wouldn’t know what to do. The staff was helpful and gave me the information I needed.”

Customer, 2001

California Commission on Access to Justice estimated that 72 percent of the legal needs of California’s poor and low-income residents were unmet. This report cites the pilot Family Law Information Centers as models for other courts in addressing this issue. ²

WHO ARE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER CUSTOMERS

Customers of the Family Law Information Centers tend to be working individuals with low-paid jobs. Most customers have incomes under \$2,000 per month. The percentage of customers with incomes under \$2,000 per month was greater than that in the general populations in their counties as reported in the 2000 census. Customers were both male and female, petitioners and respondents. The majority were between 20 and 40 years of age with one or two children. The majority reported graduating from high school and many had some college. The ethnic and language diversity of the customers of Family Law Information Centers was roughly approximate to that in their county populations as reported in the 2000 census.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customers were overwhelmingly pleased with the services they received at the Family Law Information Centers. They valued their interactions with staff most highly, but spoke also of the kinds of help they received. Many wrote narratives expressing enormous admiration and gratitude toward the staff.

A survey of customer satisfaction provided the following results:

- 93 percent felt the service was helpful;
- 95 percent felt they had been treated with courtesy and respect;
- 90 percent got effective help with forms;
- 87 percent felt like they understood their case better;
- 82 percent felt better prepared to go to court;
- 83 percent believe they gained a better understanding of the court;
- 78 percent reported receiving prompt service; and
- 92 percent would use the center again.

² State Bar of California, *The Path to Equal Justice: A Five Year status Report on Access to Justice in California* (San Francisco, 2002)

JUDICIAL SURVEY

Twenty-four judges³ in the pilot counties were interviewed to document their evaluation of the Family Law Information Center pilots. These judges were also extremely satisfied with the service the pilots provided to both the public and the court.

- 88 percent report that the centers help litigants provide correct paperwork to the court;
- 75 percent believe that the centers help the litigants become better prepared for court;
- 67 percent believe that the centers help people understand how the law and court procedures are being applied in their cases.
- 88 percent report that the Family Law Information Center saves courtroom time; and
- 88 percent report that the Family Law Information Centers help expedite cases with pro per litigants.

Three of the judges in Los Angeles found it difficult to respond to certain questions because they felt they could not be sure where the pro per litigants had received help.

Of those judges who felt they could respond, 100 percent felt that the programs helped the litigants get the proper paperwork to the court, 90 percent believe the litigants are better prepared to present their cases to the court, 89 percent think that the litigants understand how the court works better after having visited the Family Law Information Center, 96 percent felt that the Family Law Information Center saves them valuable court time, and 100 percent felt that the Family Law Information Centers help expedite pro per cases in family law.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the evaluation of the three Family Law Information Center pilot programs, we conclude the following:

1. The three Family Law Information Centers have clearly met the criteria set out in Family Code section 15101 (k) and are found to be successful in the mission set for them by the Legislature.

³ This includes both judges and commissioners.

Judges believe that the Family Law Information Centers are helpful – both to litigants and to the courts.

“The Family Law Information Center helps litigants get beyond some of the emotional stress they are experiencing and get more focused on what the court needs them to address.”

Judge, 2002

2. The evaluation data suggest that the Family Law Information Centers serve to reduce costs for the courts in processing pro per family law cases. This aspect of should be studied in more detail, and consideration given to expanding the Family Law Information Centers as a method of cost savings for the courts.
3. Data suggest that funding for the Family Law Information Centers should be sufficient to allow adequate staffing to provide direct assistance with forms preparation, and document review.
4. Subject matter workshops are an efficient method of providing assistance with forms preparation.
5. Telephone help-line assistance is effective in increasing access for those who cannot get to the courthouse during business hours.
6. Timely scheduled appointments can increase customer satisfaction with respect to time spent at the Family Law Information Centers.
7. Further study should be conducted to determine whether courtroom and/or financial mediation services for pro per litigants might further expedite case processing in family law cases.

Most of the judges who were interviewed for this evaluation agreed that the Family Law Information Centers save valuable time in the courtroom and expedite pro per cases as a whole. Many also recognized that Family Law Information Centers are an integral part of managing cases in family law where pro per litigants are the majority in most courts. It is a situation in which the needs of the public and those of the court are in complete accord.

Judges and Family Law Information Center customers alike, each from their own perspectives articulate the need for the continuation and expansion of these pilot programs. †

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Family Law Information Center bill (AB 2207) was introduced in the 1997-1998 session of the California legislature by Senator Martha Escutia. The Budget Act of 1999 provided \$300,000 in funding for the Judicial Council to establish three pilot projects for Family Law Information Centers that were authorized by Family Code sections 15000–15012 (Appendix A).

The Family Law Information Centers were created to “help all low-income family law litigants better understand their obligations, rights, and remedies and to provide procedural information to enable them to better understand and maneuver through the family court system.” (Fam. Code, §15000(b).)

The Legislature stated the concerns that led to the creation of the centers in Family Code section 15000(a). It found that:

1. A growing number of family law litigants are unrepresented in family law proceedings, and the primary reason for the lack of representation in these matters is their inability to afford legal assistance;
2. The inability to have access to legal resources prevents low-income litigants from fully understanding their rights and remedies in family law proceedings, thereby restricting their access to justice;
3. There is a compelling state interest in ensuring that all family law litigants better understand court procedures and requirements and that all litigants have more meaningful access to family court; and
4. It is the public policy of this state to maximize the opportunity for low-income persons to receive fair and just treatment by the family court and to decrease inequities resulting from an unrepresented party’s limited legal skills and knowledge.

The services to be provided by the family law information centers included:

The Family Law Information Centers were created to “help all low-income family law litigants better understand their obligations, rights, and remedies and to provide procedural information to enable them to better understand and maneuver through the family court system.” (Fam. Code, §15000(b).)

“There is a compelling state interest in ensuring that all family law litigants better understand court procedures and requirements and all litigants have more meaningful access to family court.” (Fam. Code, §15000(a)(3).)

“It is the public policy of this state to maximize the opportunity for low-income persons to receive fair and just treatment by the family court and to decrease inequities resulting from an unrepresented party’s limited legal skills and knowledge.” (Fam. Code, §15000(a)(4).)

1. Information on the nature of various types of relief available through the family court, including restraining orders, marital dissolution or legal separation, establishment of parentage, child or spousal support, disposition of property, and child custody and visitation, and the method to seek that relief;
2. Information on the pleadings necessary to be filed for relief and instructions on the proper completion of those pleadings, including information on the importance of the information called for by the pleadings;
3. Information concerning the requirements for proper service of court papers;
4. Assistance in preparing orders after court proceedings consistent with the court’s announced orders;
5. Information concerning methods of enforcing court orders in family law proceedings; and
6. Referral to low-cost legal assistance, counseling, domestic violence shelters, parenting education, mental health services, and job placement programs.

The pilot project “shall consist of three pilot project courts that shall be selected by the Judicial Council from those courts that apply to participate in the pilot project.” (Fam. Code, §15010(b)(1).)

A request for proposals was developed and sent to all of California’s court executive officers, family law facilitators, and legal services agencies that receive Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funding.⁴ Twenty proposals were received, each of which proposed that the family law facilitator operate the Family Law Information Center. Thus, the Judicial Council was able to ensure that “the pilot project shall coordinate its services with the services of the family law facilitator, and in at least one pilot project court, the family law facilitator shall staff and provide the services of the family law information center.” (Fam. Code, §15010(b)(3).)

A special committee, the Selection Review Committee of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee of the Judicial

⁴ Family Code section 15012(j) provided that a “pilot project court may contract with a private nonprofit entity to staff and provide the services of the family law information center; however the family law information center must be located, and the services provided, in the superior court.”

Council, was established to review the family law information center applications and make recommendations regarding funding. The Committee held a final meeting on January 24, 2000, and selected three pilot projects based upon the criteria set forth in the statute, including the requirement that the Judicial Council “give priority to courts in counties that the Judicial Council determines are most underserved.” (Fam. Code, §15010(b)(4). The committee’s recommendations were made to the Judicial Council and were approved.

Based upon these criteria, the committee recommended that the pilot projects proposed by Los Angeles, Fresno, and Sutter Counties be funded. The three projects served different types of geographical areas, and anticipated providing services in different ways in order to help “determine the most effective service delivery model to provide family law information and services to unrepresented litigants.” (Fam. Code, §15010 (a)(2).)

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County proposed establishing two centers, one at the central and the other at the Norwalk courthouse. Services would be provided by paralegals under the supervision of an attorney. In addition to offering assistance with family law issues, the program would serve as a referral provider for all family law agencies, develop a litigant’s resource library with videos and how-to materials, assist litigants preparing orders after hearing, and perform community education and outreach.

The number of self-represented litigants in Los Angeles County was striking. Los Angeles County had 134,443 new family law filings in fiscal year 1998–1999 and 16,667 requests for pre-trial orders. In 85 percent of these family law cases, at least one party was not represented by counsel. At the time of application, there was such a great demand for the family law facilitator’s services that litigants would line up every morning outside the facilitator’s office before the office opened. There could be anywhere from 5 to 100 people waiting when the staff arrived. The facilitator’s receptionist frequently booked one month’s worth of appointments in two days.

In Los Angeles:

85% of all family law case filings have at least one party appearing without an attorney.

FRESNO COUNTY

The Fresno County project was designed to maximize efficiency by providing services in close coordination with both the family law facilitator and a domestic violence project sponsored by Central California Legal Assistance. Fresno had a high unemployment rate, a large immigrant population, and an adolescent birthrate 40 percent higher than the state rate. Services would be offered in seven outlying courts and the civic center of Fresno County. By providing services throughout this medium-sized county, the program anticipated reaching low-income litigants in traditionally underrepresented groups including the non-English-speaking, migrants, refugees, and those who find it difficult to access the civic center because of distance.

SUTTER COUNTY

Sutter County proposed providing regional services to residents of Yuba and Colusa Counties as well as Sutter. The program anticipated a comprehensive model of one-on-one assistance, daily legal information clinics, computer work stations to allow pro per litigants to prepare forms and do basic legal research, a room for mediation, and a pro per legal research/law library “quiet work area.” The family resource center would house not only the family law information center, but also other existing services including custody/visitation mediation services, a family conflict/transition program, juvenile legal advocate services, and family and juvenile substance abuse programs. By offering services for three counties, this one program could provide concentrated assistance for the smaller counties, which had very high unemployment rates and limited services available.

The Legislature intended “that all family law services available to litigants in the superior court of each county strive to adopt policies to most effectively coordinate their activities to ensure ease of access to unrepresented litigants and to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and administrative oversight by the Judicial Council or other oversight agencies.” (Fam. Code, §15010(a)(3).)

Because the programs were operated in conjunction with the family law facilitator programs, the administrative expenses were quite low. After an initial meeting with the pilot courts to review the terms of the grants, all training sessions and

Tom's case

Tom, a young father, had been paying child support for a baby he fathered when he was still a minor. Soon after the child's birth, the mother established Tom's paternity. The mother and baby lived with the maternal grandmother. A custody order was made giving custody to the mother and supervised visitation to Tom. Tom had consistent trouble being allowed to visit with his daughter, and finally the mother and grandmother moved away leaving no forwarding address. Tom tried to get the address from the child support enforcement agency, but they could not release it to him for reasons of confidentiality. Tom had no idea how to find his child. Recently, however, Tom was informed by the child support agency that the child was living with someone other than the mother. Through a family friend, Tom was able to find out that the mother had left the little girl with a great grandfather who lived in the area. Tom came to the Family Law Information Center seeking assistance in gaining access to his daughter. Tom recognizes that a gradual introduction into her life is in her best interests. That process is currently ongoing, and it is expected that soon Tom's daughter will be living with him, his wife and their new baby.

Helen's case

Helen came to the local Family Law Information Center asking for help with the process of divorcing her husband. She had been severely abused by him for many years. When Helen came to the center, her husband had finally been incarcerated after stabbing her and deliberately setting fire to their house with Helen and the children still inside. Helen had many issues to deal with. Her children had been taken into temporary placement while she recovered from her injuries. As part of a reunification plan to regain custody of her children, Helen was looking for employment and suitable housing. At the same time, she was required to participate in her husband's criminal trial. The Family Law Information Center helped Helen file her petition for dissolution and eight months later her final judgment was granted. Even though she is safe from her husband as long as he is incarcerated, her ability to complete her divorce from him has been very important to her overall recovery from the domestic violence.

meetings were held in conjunction with facilitator training sessions. Site visits were conducted by staff in conjunction with meetings with other self-help programs. Materials developed by the Family Law Information Centers were shared between the centers (many of the materials are available at <http://aocweb/programs/cfcc/resources/selfhelp/list.htm>).

The Judicial Council was directed to “create any necessary forms to advise the parties of the types of services provided, that there is no attorney-client relationship, that the family law information center is not responsible for the outcome of any case, that the family law information center does not represent any party and will not appear in court on the party’s behalf, and that the other party may also be receiving information and services from the family law information center.” (Fam. Code, §15010(i). Form FL-945, *Family Law Information Center Disclosure*, was approved by the Judicial Council on July 1, 2000, to comply with that statute (see Appendix B).

The Judicial Council was also directed to “promulgate guidelines for the operation of the family law information center in accordance with the Rules of Professional Conduct.” (Fam. Code, §15010(f).) These guidelines were developed in consultation with the State Bar as well as Family Law Information Center and family law facilitator staff. They were circulated for comment and were approved as Division V of the Standards of Judicial Administration and titled “Guidelines for the Operation of Family Law Information Centers and Family Law Facilitator Offices.” These guidelines are set out in Appendix C and may also be accessed on the internet at: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/rules/2002/appendix/appdiv5.pdf>.

Additionally, Family Code section 15010(h) provided that a “person employed by, or directly supervised by, an employee of the family law information center shall not make any public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in the court as provided by paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics. All persons employed by, or directly supervised by, an employee of the family law information center shall be provided a copy of paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics, and shall be required to sign an acknowledgment that he or she is aware of its provisions.” (Fam. Code, §15010(h). That statement was developed for use by all Family Law Information Center programs (see Appendix D).

The Judicial Council was further directed to conduct “an evaluation of the pilot project” and to “report to the Legislature, no later than March 1, 2003, on the success of the pilot project. The evaluation of the three pilot projects has been completed and is set out in the following report. (Fam. Code, §15010(k).)

METHODOLOGY⁵

The Legislature articulated two primary goals for the evaluation: (1) to assess the increase in access to the courts for low-income litigants as a result of the pilots; and, (2) to assess the role of this pilot project in reducing the burden on the courts with respect to litigants without lawyers. Pursuant to statute, the evaluation was to include the following data:

- The types of cases and issues for which customers sought information, including dissolution, paternity, domestic violence prevention, child custody, visitation, and child or spousal support;
- The number of people using the services of the Family Law Information Centers;
- The gender of those seeking assistance;
- The frequency with which people seeking information from the Family Law Information Centers requested help to initiate or respond to an action;
- The degree to which those using the services of the Family Law Information Centers evaluated those services favorably; and
- A survey of judges to ascertain their opinion on the role of the Family Law Information Centers in reducing the burden on the court with respect to self-represented litigants.

According to California Family Code section 15010(k), the Family Law Information Centers will be deemed successful if, among other things, they assist at least 100 low-income families per year, a majority of judges surveyed believe that the Family Law Information Centers help expedite family law cases involving pro per litigants, and a majority of customers surveyed rate the services of the Family Law Information Center favorably.

⁵ A more detailed methodology description is contained in Appendix H.

Data for this evaluation were gathered from a variety of sources.

- **PROGRAM PROCESS DATA.** Each county developed its own system for maintaining program operational data. The Sutter County pilot did not record programmatic data uniformly during the first few months of program development, but later implemented a comprehensive data collection system. The Fresno County pilot recorded data regularly. Fresno County, and later Sutter County, used the family law facilitator survey data elements for their pilot programs. The Los Angeles program collected data from its inception, but used a system entirely separate from the facilitator survey data project. Comprehensive data were available for all three pilots during fiscal year 2001-2002. There were broad categories of common information into which program details could be collapsed and compared. Those comparative data were, therefore, used for evaluation purposes, and they included information on methods of service delivery, types of services requested by the customers, types of cases, and issues within those cases.
- **CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHIC DATA.** Each county developed its own system for collection of customer demographic data. The variance in the data collection strategies for demographics among the pilot programs mirrors that set out above with respect to program process data. Once again, the greatest amounts of comparable data were found in fiscal year 2001-2002. While there were many common categories of data collected by the programs, there was also some information only available in the two counties using the family law facilitator survey project strategy.
- **FOCUS GROUPS.** Three focus groups were held in which the directors of the pilot programs were interviewed with respect to program design, implementation progress, obstacles faced, and lessons learned. There was one focus group in each year of operation.
- **SITE VISITS.** Site visits were made to each of the three pilot Family Law Information Centers. During the site visits, the evaluators were able to be present at intake and observe interaction between center staff and

customers. Evaluators toured the physical space at the centers, and engaged in open-ended discussions with staff that covered topics such as scheduling, sufficiency of staff to meet the needs of the public, and what techniques of service delivery appear most efficacious in specific circumstances.

- **WRITTEN PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS.** As part of the evaluation, the directors of each Family Law Information Center provided detailed written program descriptions setting out their staffing, hours of operation, and administrative structures.
- **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SNAPSHOT SURVEY.** In order to assess customer satisfaction, a written survey was made available to customers in the offices of the pilot Family Law Information Centers for a specified period of time. The same form was used in all three pilot locations between the dates of October 22, 2002, and December 31, 2002. In the survey, customers were asked if they found the services of the centers helpful and, if so, in what way. They were asked what the center could do to be more helpful. Inquiry was also made about the manner in which they were treated by pilot project staff.
- **LOS ANGELES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FORMS.** The Los Angeles County pilot collected customer satisfaction forms from its inception. The forms were short and asked mainly open-ended questions. Responses were reviewed by evaluators for patterns in the narrative comments made by the customers. Many of the quotes from customers set out in the margins of this report come from these narratives.
- **JUDICIAL SURVEY.** In December 2002, the evaluation consultant interviewed twenty-four judges from the counties where Family Law Information Centers were located. The judges were selected on the basis of their assignments in family law. They were interviewed using a structured set of questions to ascertain their opinions of the role played by the pilots in expediting pro per family law cases. |

METHODOLOGY

- Program Process Data
- Customer Demographic Data
- Focus Groups
- Site Visits
- Written Program Descriptions
- Customer Satisfaction Snapshot Survey
- Los Angeles Customer Satisfaction Forms
- Judicial Survey

CHAPTER 1

Program Descriptions

Data about the Family Law Information Center pilot projects' operations were derived from several sources. Information about staffing, location, hours of service and collaborative work with community based organizations was derived from site visits, focus groups and written descriptions authored by the program directors. Information about numbers of customers, methods of service delivery, case types, issues raised within those cases, and the specific types of services requested is taken from operations data maintained by the pilots for the fiscal year 2001-2002. Fiscal year 2001-2002 was selected as the evaluation year because the pilot programs maintained operations data in a manner that was comprehensive and comparative during this period.

I. STAFFING

The Family Law Information Center Act (Fam. Code, §15000) requires that at least one of the three pilot programs be created within the local office of the family law facilitator. In fact, all the Family Law Information Centers are operated by the local family law facilitator offices.

FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER LOCATIONS & STAFFING

COURT	STAFF	LOCATIONS	GRANT FUNDING⁶
LOS ANGELES	1 attorney 2 paralegals* ⁷ 2 clerical*	Central Norwalk	\$145,000/yr.
FRESNO	2 attorneys 6 paralegals* 1 clerical* 1 court clerk*	Fresno, Firebaugh Reedley, Kerman Sanger, Coalinga	\$77,500/yr.
SUTTER	.4 attorney 3 court clerks*	Yuba City	\$77,500/yr.

⁶ Each court contributed funding in differing amounts that allowed additional staff to be allocated to the Family Law Information Center pilot program.

⁷ The * indicates part-time workers. The degree to which these individuals could devote time to the Family Law Information Center was dependent on the amount of additional funding contributed by their particular courts.

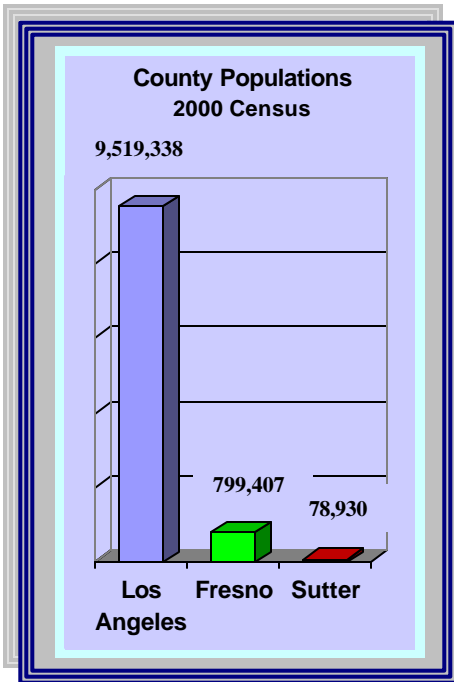
Family Law Information Centers FY 2001–2002

* Budget: \$300,000

* The Los Angeles, Fresno and Sutter courts provided additional funding to the Family Law Information Centers in the total amount of \$120,000.

* Combined funding provided services to over 45,000 individuals.

* Cost is slightly over \$9.33 per customer



In all locations, the support staff working in the Family Law Information Centers were parttime. Support staff time was shared with either the family law facilitator, or the court clerk's offices. In Sutter, the attorney for the Family Law Information Center attorney shared her time with the family law facilitator's office. All three pilot courts contributed different levels of additional funding to these programs. The aggregate contribution by the courts was \$120,000.00 for fiscal year 2001-2002.

II. DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Los Angeles County

In central Los Angeles, the Family Law Information Center is open Monday through Wednesday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. with an hour for lunch, and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. until noon. The office is closed on Fridays. Before October 2002 the center was open Monday through Friday, but the hours of service have been reduced owing to cuts in the court's budget.

The Norwalk Family Law Information Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. with an hour for lunch. Cuts in the court's budget have reduced the paralegal time available in this location.

Fresno County

Two Family Law Information Center attorneys provide direct services to the public in six locations throughout the county. The main Family Law Information Center in downtown Fresno is open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. with an hour for lunch. On Friday, the office opens at 9:00 a.m. and continues as usual the rest of the day. On Wednesday evenings, divorce workshops are being initiated.

The two Family Law Information Center staff attorneys go to outlying areas to provide services throughout the week. On Mondays, services are available at the court in Firebaugh, on Tuesdays in Reedley and Kerman, on Wednesdays in Sanger, and on Thursdays in Coalinga. Services are also available on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday at the Selma Regional Center. On Friday afternoons, divorce workshops are held at the Selma Regional Center. Further, the Fresno Superior Court has a mobile van that delivers legal assistance to other rural

towns 8 to 12 times per month, and to the Rescue Mission and other homeless shelters and similar facilities.

Sutter County

The Sutter County Family Law Information Center is located in a family law center that also houses the child support commissioner's courtroom, and family court services. The office is open every weekday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. Subject matter workshops are held every morning at 9:00 a.m. according to a monthly schedule published by the Family Law Information Center. On Monday mornings, the family law Information Center attorney is also available in the Family Law courtroom for the motion calendar and assists unrepresented litigants with procedural information. The Sutter County Family Law Information Center serves individuals from Yuba, Colusa, and Butte counties.

III. THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER PROCESS

The manner in which services are delivered varies within all the Family Law Information Centers. There are four basic categories of contacts: (1) one-on-one direct contact; (2) workshops; (3) telephone help-line assistance; and, (4) correspondence.

All the Family Law Information Centers provide forms, instructional packets, various types of educational materials, and computer access. The directors of the Family Law Information Centers are convinced that while some individuals are able to use these self-help resources adequately, none of these methods is useful in isolation.⁸ Each method needs to be part of a comprehensive system that is centered on legally trained staff available to answer questions.

Los Angeles County

The design of the Los Angeles County program has been determined to a great extent by the large volume of customers it must serve. The staffing resources for the Family Law Information Center in Los Angeles do not reach levels sufficient to meet the demand for in-depth, individualized

⁸ J.W. Meeker and R. Utman, *An Evaluation of the Legal Aid Society of Orange County's Interactive Community Assistance Network (I-CAN!) Project* (University of California, Irvine, 2002) p. iii. Kiosk or Web-based self-help forms systems are strongest when part of a more integrated system of pro per assistance.

IN-PERSON SERVICES
ARE PROVIDED IN A
VARIETY OF WAYS :

- ONE-ON-ONE
- WORKSHOPS
- TELEPHONE HELP-LINE
- CORRESPONDENCE.

**LOS ANGELES
COUNTY
FY 2001–2002**

38,521 CUSTOMERS

TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE AND TRIAGING ARE CRUCIAL FOR LOS ANGELES WHERE THE VOLUME OF PEOPLE REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IS SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER THAN IN THE OTHER TWO PILOT COUNTIES.

“The Family Law Information Center staff person was the best. She helped about 20 people with different kinds of problems—she made everyone feel good before leaving.”

Customer, 2000

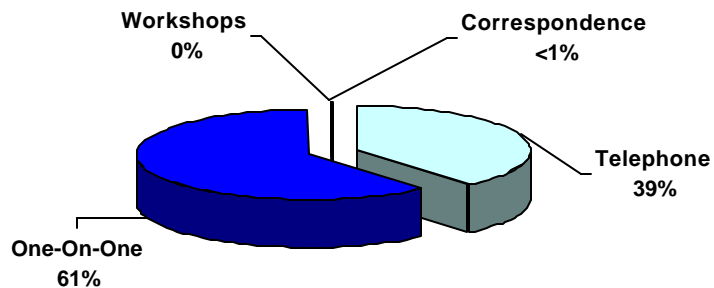
service. As a result, the program focuses on providing information about remedies and procedures, and making correct forms with written instructions available to the customers. Individualized assistance with forms preparation is not provided, and document review services can only be offered in about a third of the cases. Customers are served on a drop-in, first-come-first-serve basis.

The Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center also uses a telephone help-line⁹ strategy to increase access to its services. While most of the customers are served in person, the telephone permits additional assistance to those who can not get to the courthouse because of work, childcare, or transportation problems. The Los Angeles County program is the only one of the three pilots that has employed this telephone help-line strategy to increase access for the public.

The Los Angeles County program has recently begun to collaborate with Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles to provide workshops for dissolution cases. The Family Law Information Center schedules litigants into the workshops. The workshops are conducted by legal aid attorneys and are structured in a three-part design. The first workshop helps get the case started. Workshop number two helps the litigants move the case through default or trial setting. The third workshop helps complete the final judgment.

CONTACT TYPES

Los Angeles



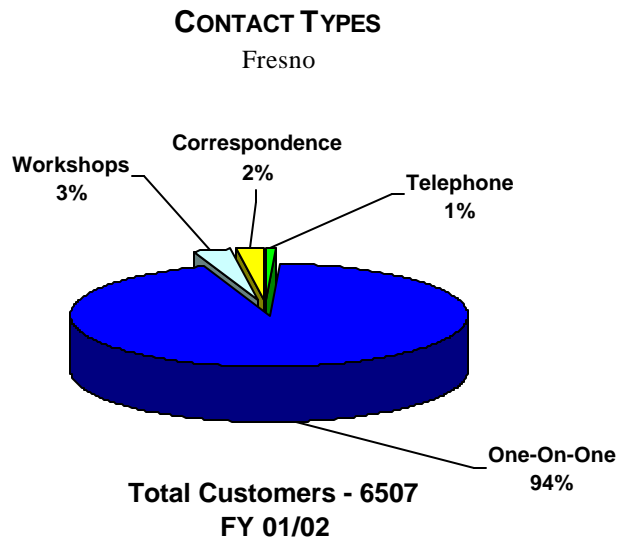
**Total Customers - 38,521
FY 01/02**

⁹ J. Pearson and L. Davis, *The Hotline Outcomes Assessment Study: Final Report Phase III: Full Scale Telephone Survey*. http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1037814145.6/Hotline_Phase3.pdf Telephone hotline services are most effective when used for brief services (such as those offered at the Family Law Information Centers.)

Fresno County

The Fresno County Family Law Information Center has addressed the issue of access by arranging to send attorneys and paralegals out into the community to provide one-on-one service. The services occur at outlying courts, at community centers, or in the mobile self-help van. Fresno provides individualized information and assistance in both preparation and filing of forms. The level of services exceeds the Los Angeles program due to a combination of smaller demand and greater staff resources. Even so, as the numbers of those requesting assistance continue to grow in fiscal year 2002–2003, the center has been working toward use of workshops as a viable service delivery method.

Fresno is unique in that the majority of customers are served on an appointment basis. Triage and program administration occur at the main office in Fresno. Only emergency cases and cases involving imminent court deadlines are seen on a walk-in basis at the main Fresno office. All other matters, including services in the outlying areas, are handled by appointment. When there are no-shows for appointments, drop-in customers may be accommodated.



FRESNO COUNTY FY 2001–2002

**6,464
CUSTOMERS**

*SERVICES ARE PROVIDED
AT 6 OUTLYING COURTS
AND REGIONAL CENTERS. A
MOBILE VAN SERVES
ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN
THE COMMUNITY.*

**Sutter County
FY 2001–2002**

**511
CUSTOMERS**

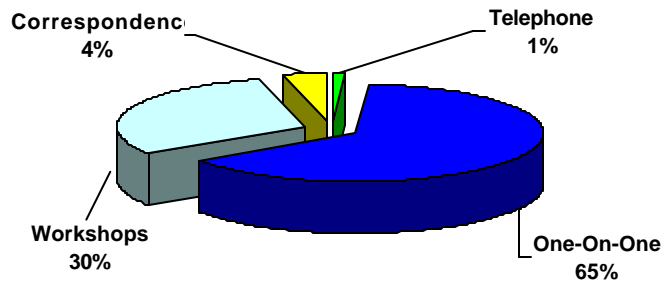
*25% OF THE CENTER'S
CUSTOMERS ARE FROM
YUBA, COLUSA, AND
BUTTE COUNTIES.*

Sutter County

The Sutter County Family Law Information Center provides substantial workshop assistance. Individual assistance is provided to litigants in complex and high-risk cases or where there are other special needs. Workshop topics include: starting a dissolution, answering a petition, modifying child custody, child support issues, and finalizing judgments. No appointment is necessary to attend a workshop. The schedule is published monthly.¹⁰ The child support commissioner, whose courtroom is located in the same facility as the Family Law Information Center, is provided with a monthly workshop schedule and can set litigants up for a workshop directly.

CONTACT TYPES

Sutter



**Total Customers - 495
FY 01/02**

IV. CASE TYPES AND ISSUES

There are four major types of cases in family law. Within each case, there are rules about which issues, such as custody or support of children, may or may not be raised.

Definitions

Dissolution Cases. Traditionally, family law covers several different types of cases. Each case type is defined by the relationship between the parties. For example, cases types involving the marital relationship are dissolution (divorce), legal separation and nullity. In these marital cases, examples of potential issues within them are: custody/visitation, child

¹⁰ The Sutter County Family Law Information Center workshop schedule for November 2002 is attached a Appendix E.

support, spousal support, division of property and debt, and domestic violence restraining orders.

Paternity Cases. If parties are unmarried, but have minor children in common, they may file an action to legally determine parentage. This is called a paternity case and it is filed under the Uniform Parentage Act (UPA). Examples of issues that can be raised in a paternity case are: parentage, child support, custody/visitation and domestic violence restraining orders. Because the parties are not married, they may not raise issues of spousal support or property division within this case type.

Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement Cases. These cases are filed by the State of California through the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS). The purpose of such cases is to establish and collect child support. Parents may be married or unmarried. If they are unmarried the Title IV-D case will seek to establish who the legal parents are. Once parentage has been established, then issues of child custody/visitation, child support and restraining orders may be raised within this type of case.

Domestic Violence Prevention Act Cases. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) allows a victim of domestic violence to seek protective restraining orders without the necessity of filing a dissolution or paternity case within which to raise this issue. The issues of custody/visitation and child support may be raised within a DVPA case as long as parentage has been established elsewhere. The issue of parentage itself will not be heard with in this type of case.

Other Case Types. There are also other types of cases that sometimes appear in the cluster of family law matters. Each has its own set of rules about what issues can be raised. Examples of such cases are: juvenile dependency, probate guardianships, adoptions, name changes, civil harassment restraining orders, petitions for custody/support, and registration of foreign judgments.

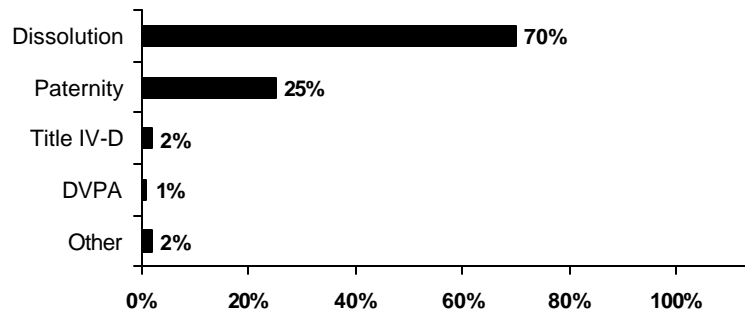
The majority of assistance provided by the Family Law Information Centers was within the four main case types: dissolution, paternity, Title IV-D child support enforcement cases, and Domestic Violence Prevention Act cases.

DISSOLUTION IS THE MOST COMMON CASE TYPE.

“I had some difficult questions pertaining to my divorce and they were answered very well by your staff. I think they are extremely helpful for people going through this difficult and complex legal system.”

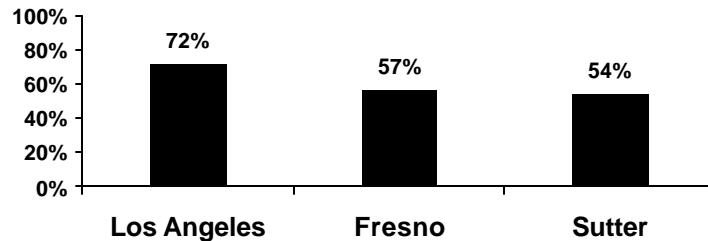
Customer, 2001

Case Types Combined



Dissolution Cases

Dissolution/Legal Separation/Nullity (percent of total cases)



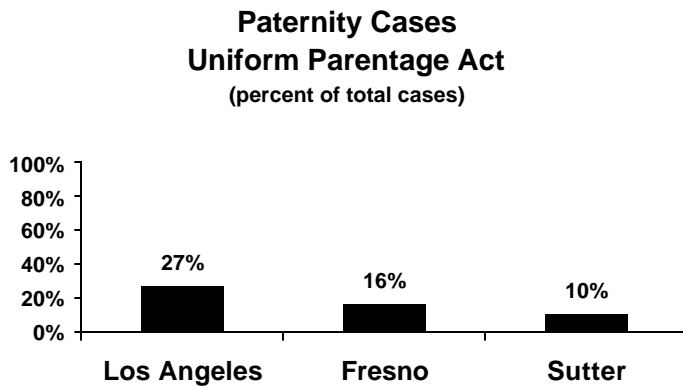
The Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center handles a larger percentage of dissolution cases than the Sutter or Fresno County programs. The family law facilitator in Los Angeles County does not handle any dissolution cases, even when child support is an issue.¹¹ The Family Law Information Center provides the only court-operated source for assistance with dissolution available in either of the program locations in Los Angeles.

In Fresno and Sutter Counties, the family law facilitators’ offices do provide assistance with child support arising in

¹¹ Family law facilitators are only funded to provide services with respect to child support and child support related issues. The focus of the family law facilitators is on child support raised in Title IV-D cases, but facilitators may also provide child support services in other types of cases. If the family law facilitator provides services on any issues other than child support, or child support related matters, the court must contribute the additional funding needed to provide that service.

dissolution cases. The Fresno County and Sutter County courts have provided additional funding to the family law facilitator programs as well as to the Family Law Information Center programs.

Paternity Cases



As with dissolution cases, the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center handles a greater percentage of paternity (UPA) cases than do the Fresno or Sutter County programs. The Los Angeles Family Law Information Center is the only court-operated service available in the program’s locations to help with paternity cases since the family law facilitator does not handle them.

In Fresno and Sutter Counties, the family law facilitators’ offices do provide assistance with child support arising in paternity cases.

Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement Cases

In Los Angeles County, the family law facilitator provides all services related to Title IV-D child support enforcement cases. If customers come to the Family Law Information Center requesting help on a Title IV-D case, they are referred to the family law facilitator.

PATERNITY CASES ESTABLISH THE LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNMARRIED PARENTS.

PATERNITY CASES MAKE UP THE SECOND LARGEST CATEGORY OF CASES HANDLED BY THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS.

“I think it is great you have services like this to help parents who need it.

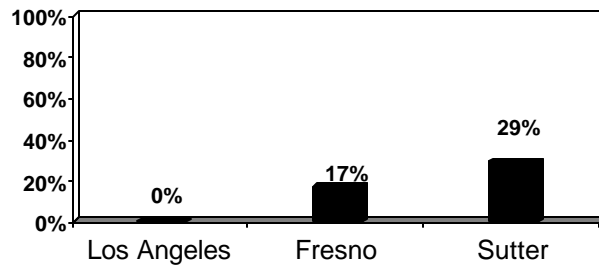
Customer, 2002

FAMILY LAW
INFORMATION CENTERS
WORK IN CLOSE
COLLABORATION WITH
OTHER AGENCIES TO
PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN
CASES INVOLVING
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

*“I needed help to keep my
kids in a safe environment; I
would have been lost without
the Center.”*

Customer, 2002

**Title IV-D
Child Support Enforcement**
(percent of total cases)



In both Fresno and Sutter Counties, the family law facilitators provide most of the services related to Title IV-D child support enforcement cases; however, the Family Law Information Centers also will help in these cases.

Domestic Violence Prevention Act Cases

Because of their emergency nature, domestic violence cases are among the most time-consuming matters for a self-help center to handle. None of the three Family Law Information Center handled a large percentage of domestic violence cases. The Fresno County program (8 percent) had the highest proportion of such cases. All three pilot programs have formed collaborations with community based legal services and domestic violence shelters to serve these cases.

In the central Los Angeles Family Law Information Center, domestic violence cases are referred to the Domestic Violence Project located in the same building and operated by the Los Angeles County Bar Association. Additionally, the Family Law Information Center has developed an interactive, touch-screen self-help kiosk that is available at the Domestic Violence Project located in the courthouse.

In Norwalk, domestic violence cases are referred to a domestic violence clinic in the same facility, operated by the Legal Aid Society of Orange County.

The Fresno County Family Law Information Center sees domestic violence cases on an emergency walk-in basis at the main office in Fresno. The center also conducts domestic violence workshops on alternate Friday mornings and

collaborates with Central California Legal Services and Centro La Familia to assist with domestic violence matters.

The Sutter County program collaborates with a local women’s shelter in the preparation of domestic violence restraining order forms; does document review prior to filing to see that the papers are in order; and works with family court services, located in the same facility, to arrange for mediation if appropriate, and for supervised visitation.

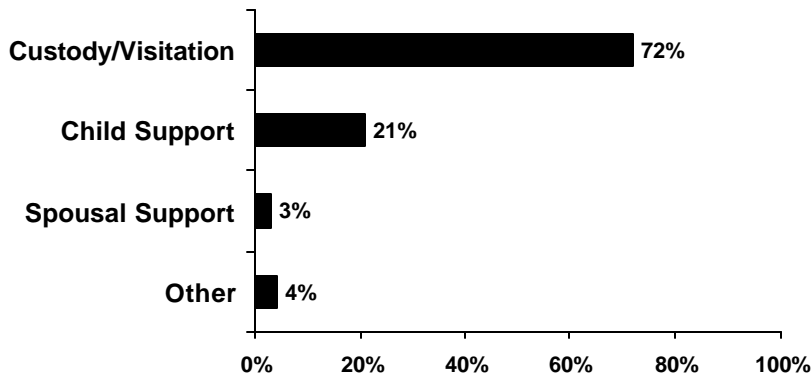
“The Center helps a lot to prevent violent separation in couples.”
Customer, 2002

Other Case Types

The other types of cases in which the Family Law Information Centers provided some assistance constitute less than 3 percent in any one of the programs. All three Family Law Information Centers have created directories of legal and social service and make referrals as needed for additional help.

V. MOST FREQUENTLY RAISED ISSUES WITHIN THE CASE TYPES

The most frequently raised issues within any given case type were child custody and visitation, and child support.



72% OF ALL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE INVOLVE ISSUES OF CHILD CUSTODY AND/OR VISITATION.

Child Custody and Visitation

The Family Law Information Centers each experienced an enormous number of requests for assistance in matters involving child custody and/or visitation.

Los Angeles	78%
Fresno	50%
Sutter	46%

“The Family Law Information Center staff was very helpful, knowledgeable, in giving options and information about avenues a father can take. . . I left with hope at having a father’s chance being a part of my children’s lives.”

Customer, 2000

In Los Angeles County, the Family Law Information Center is once again the only court-operated service available in program locations to provide help. When an individual requests assistance from the Family Law Information Center concerning a child custody matter, the case is first assessed to determine the complexity of the issues and the available remedies and procedures. If the issues are complex, and the person can qualify for a legal service program,¹² a referral is made to the appropriate service. Individuals who do not qualify for legal aid are advised to seek private legal representation. Individuals are informed that if they cannot obtain representation from either legal aid or a private attorney, they should return to the Family Law Information Center to obtain appropriate forms and instructional materials for self-representation.

Instructional packets are provided for married and nonmarried parents. The packets contain samples and specific instructions for the various case types and particular situations. Litigants, who may be either petitioners or respondents, are provided detailed instructions, relative to any case type, on how to obtain an order, to change an order, or to get an emergency protective order for custody. Individuals who already have a case open within which to proceed are so informed and assisted with the proper procedure to obtain an order. Individuals who need to file initial cases are given instructions on how to get that accomplished so that they can proceed to make their request regarding custody. Procedural information is also provided with respect to filing and service of the papers.

Both Fresno and Sutter Counties also assess their cases to determine if any emergency orders are necessary. Services are available to both petitioners and respondents in all case types. The Fresno County and Sutter County programs provide assistance in preparation and filing of paperwork.

Child Support

For all the Family Law Information Center pilots combined, 21 percent of the requests for assistance involved issues of child support.

21% OF ALL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE INVOLVE ISSUES OF CHILD SUPPORT.

¹² Individuals must have income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level to qualify for assistance from legal aid.

Los Angeles	18%
Sutter	33%
Fresno	32%

The Los Angeles Family Law Information Center sees all child support issues in dissolution, paternity and domestic violence cases. In Sutter and Fresno Counties, the Family Law Information Center shares the responsibility of providing assistance in matters of child support with the family law facilitator.

Spousal Support and Other Issues

Spousal support was the least frequently appearing legal matter in all the Family Law Information Centers. In none of the programs were spousal support issues seen more than 5 percent of the time.

There was some variance in the amount of other nonspecified issues seen at the Family Law Information Centers:

Los Angeles	1%
Sutter	16%
Fresno	17%

Other issues that arose in the Family Law Information Centers included the following: requests for mediation of financial issues, help with preparation of mandatory settlement conference statements, grandparent visitation, motions to bifurcate issues for trial, motions to quash service, requests for dismissal, restorations of former name.

Referrals for Additional Services

The Los Angeles County program has developed a system of collaborations with large numbers of service providers to whom referrals can be made. There is a list of nonprofit and lawyer referral service organizations available to the public. The directory of community resources includes domestic violence shelters, parent education, counseling and mental health services, and job placement. An advisor from InfoLine¹³ who is present in the facility in central Los Angeles

¹³ InfoLine of Los Angeles provides information and referrals for more than 4,500 services in the county.

FAMILY LAW
FACILITATORS ARE THE
PRIMARY PROVIDERS
OF TITLE IV-D CHILD
SUPPORT SERVICES.

“I felt overwhelmed with the paperwork needed to get child support, and I got all the information I needed to complete it.”

Customer, 2002

WORKING WITH OTHER
COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS IS
CENTRAL TO FAMILY
LAW INFORMATION
CENTERS.

*“Without the Family Law
Information Center staff, we
never would have figured
anything out.”*

Customer, 2000

several days each week helps connect the customers with appropriate services in the community. The Family Law Information Center also works with the Victim’s Assistance Program of the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office, the Guardianship Volunteer Project, Legal Aid of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Bar Association’s domestic violence project, and Legal Aid Society of Orange County.

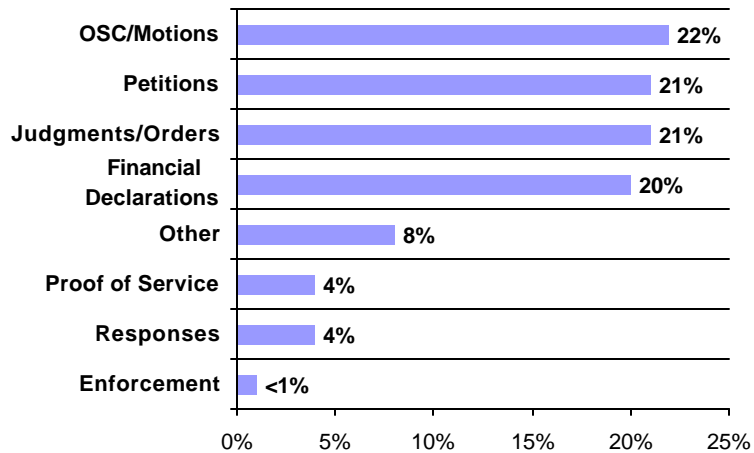
The Fresno Family Law Information Center works with Central California Legal Services (CCLS) to provide a bilingual staff person in the main Fresno office two days per week. CCLS has also accompanied the mobile van to help in the outlying areas, and staffs the Selma Regional Center on Tuesdays each week, when the Family Law Information Center staff are not present. In addition, the program works with Centro La Familia, which has staff in several of the locations to which the mobile van travels.

In Sutter County, the Family Law Information Center provides direct services to most individuals who request them. The program collaborates with the family law facilitators in neighboring Yuba, Colusa, and Butte counties, as well as with California Rural Legal Aid and local domestic violence women’s shelters.

VI. TYPES OF PAPERWORK AND INFORMATION PROVIDED

Litigants without attorneys need assistance at all stages of the legal process.

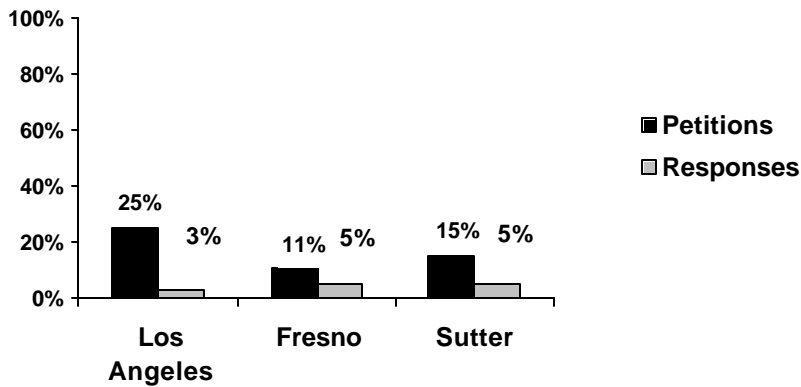
Types of Service Required



Initial Stages of the Proceedings

As previously noted, the majority of litigants request assistance with issues of child custody/visitation and child support. To get a court order on any of these issues, a case must already be on file, or one must be initiated.

Petitions & Responses
Starting A Case
(percent of customers requesting service)



Petitioners in family law actions are far more likely than respondents to seek assistance from the Family Law Information Centers in the initial stages of the proceedings. All of the programs were asked more frequently to help with the filing of petitions than the filing of responses. The Family Law Information Center directors point out that while both the petitioner and the respondent need assistance in the initial stages of an action, the petitioner probably feels the need of assistance more acutely. Initiating the petition is a complicated task requiring thoughtful preparation. Additionally, it is the petitioner whose idea it is to seek intervention by the court system in the first place. While respondents do occasionally seek help to file formal responses, the Family Law Information Centers are far more likely to see respondents in the later stages of the proceedings, frequently through requests for assistance in preparing motions to set aside default orders or to modify orders previously obtained by the petitioner.

Getting or Changing Court Orders

The type of task most frequently required is assistance with respect to the filing of orders to show cause(OSC)/ motions. The preparation and filing of an OSC/motion is necessary in

“The service was helpful because it went beyond the questions I asked and gave the next steps after filing the case.”

Customer, 2002

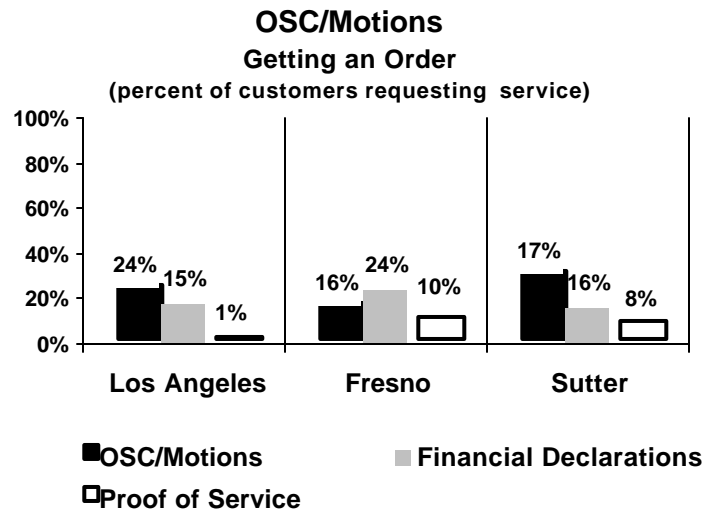
“Wonderful to have this service available because the process is so confusing.”

Customer, 2002

“The staff really assisted me and broke everything down into steps for me.”

Customer, 2002

order to obtain a court date for the purpose of establishing or changing orders for child custody, visitation, child support, spousal support, and many other issues. Custodial parents often seek orders for child support. Noncustodial parents may be seeking orders for visitation with the children or modification of child support orders.



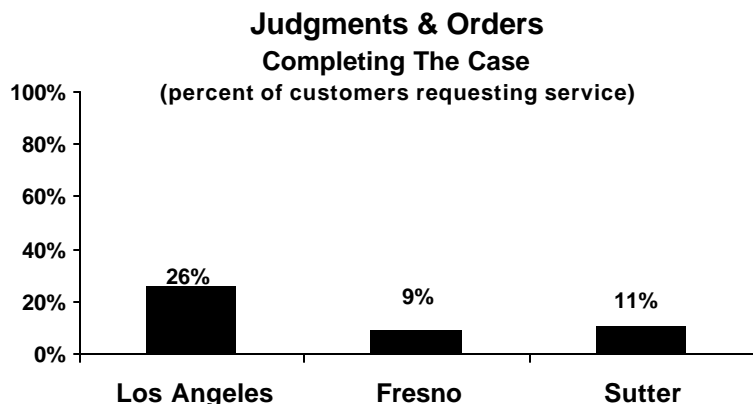
When a litigant appears for his or her hearing without having successfully accomplished effective service or without a completed proof of service, the case will be postponed until a later date or dropped. This will cause distress to the litigant and take valuable court time.

To get an order from the court, not only must the litigant file an OSC/motion, the papers must also be properly served on the opposing party. Historically, this has been a tremendous obstacle to litigants without attorneys, for a variety of reasons. They may not understand that they cannot serve the papers themselves; they cannot find the other party to serve; they do not know they have to have a written proof of service form to present to the court before any order can be made; or they fill out the proof of service incorrectly. Often they are not aware of what alternative service methods may be available or how to access those options. For example, a complicated series of actions is required to accomplish service by publication or by posting. When a litigant appears for his or her hearing without having successfully accomplished effective service or without a completed proof of service, the case will be postponed until a later date or dropped. This will cause distress to the litigant and take valuable court time.

If there are financial issues of any kind involved, such as child or spousal support, the litigants are required to prepare detailed income and expense declarations. Sometimes a simpler form can be used, but often a four-page detailed financial form must be completed. If the financial forms are not completed at the time of the hearing, the case may be postponed to a later date, creating another situation in which

court time is wasted and the litigant is frustrated. Even more financial forms are required if the litigant cannot afford the court's filing fee and must ask to have it waived.

Completing the Case



Each time there is a hearing in a case where the judge makes an order, it needs to be memorialized in writing. It is usually the responsibility of the attorney to prepare the written document, called an order after hearing. Self-represented litigants do not know how to prepare such orders in a manner that will be acceptable to the court and to law enforcement. As a result, frequently litigants without attorneys go without written orders to which they can refer. It is extremely difficult for litigants to be fully aware of their rights and responsibilities arising from the court order without having a written order. Additionally, lack of a written order leaves the court file with only an abbreviated minute order to which the judge can refer when reviewing the file for future hearings.¹⁴ Lack of written orders after hearing creates time loss and frustration for litigants, judges, and law enforcement.

Completing the judgment in a case is often very complicated for a litigant without an attorney. If the respondent has filed a formal response, the litigants must figure out how to get the case onto the court's trial calendar.

Even when there has been no response filed, a default or uncontested judgment may be very difficult to accomplish. In dissolution cases, litigants frequently do not understand that after filing their petition they must take additional steps to

“I had not taken care of my divorce for 3 years because of financial and lack of knowledge in procedures. The Family Law Information Center staff guided me through kindly and intelligently. Extremely helpful. Without it I would have probably just taken the paperwork home and put it aside 3 more years.”

Customer, 2002

¹⁴ A minute order is made by the courtroom clerk. It contains an extremely abbreviated version of the judge's order and is not signed by the judge.

“They are great assistance for individuals who do not understand the legal process and forms.”

Customer, 2001

finish the case. A common error is the perception that the court will automatically enter a judgment six months after the petition is filed as long as the opposing party does not respond. There are additional steps, requiring the preparation and service of complicated disclosure forms prior to entry of a final judgment. And there are several more judgment-related forms that must be completed. Even in uncontested default cases, self-represented litigants frequently have their judgment papers returned to them repeatedly by the court owing to a myriad of possible errors or omissions. Some just give up trying. For those who believe their final judgment has been entered automatically by the court, often problems arise in the context of future marriages based on the erroneous belief that a divorce was finalized.

In Uniform Parentage Act paternity cases, the lack of a judgment can have serious impacts on the minor children. Often the self-represented parent in such an action has filed the initial pleadings to start the case, then made a motion for the desired relief such as custody/visitation or child support, gone to court, and gotten a temporary order on the issues raised. The parent does not think to pursue the case further to the final judgment of paternity. Without the final judgment of paternity, the child will not have inheritance rights or rights to benefits such as social security, as a dependent of the respondent parent.

Enforcement

There was very little demand for services to help with enforcement of judgments. That may be due to two main factors: (1) the Department of Child Support Services is primarily responsible for providing enforcement service in matters of child support, and (2) the most frequent procedure for enforcement of custody/visitation orders is the filing of a motion to modify the existing order. This modification motion would be recorded as an OSC/motion rather than an enforcement action.

Other Requested Services

In Fresno County, other types of services make up 22 percent of the requests for help at the Family Law Information Center. In Sutter County, 15 percent of customers request other types of service, and in Los Angeles County this group makes up 20 percent of customers. Examples of other types of services

requested by Family Law Information Center customers include the following:

- Child abduction;
- Joinder motions;
- Minor's contracts;
- Review of court files;
- Explanation of orders and other documents;
- Providing copies of minute orders;
- Correction of various prior procedural mistakes;
- Financial mediation services; and
- Referrals to community-based services.

All the Family Law Information Center pilots have provided services as set out in Family Code section 15000 et seq. They have also provided an array of additional services as dictated by the needs of the public and the court itself. †

“This is a good system to help individuals dealing with different situations.”

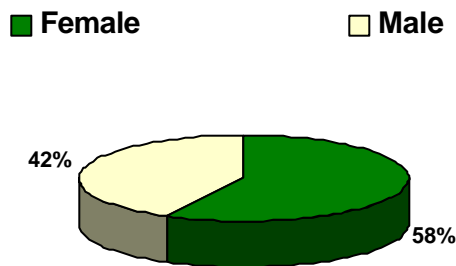
Customer, 2002

Customer Demographics

Demographic information about those seeking assistance from the Family Law Information Centers is taken from data maintained by the pilots for the fiscal year 2001-2002. Fiscal year 2001-2002 was selected as the evaluation year because the pilot programs maintained the most comprehensive and comparable data during this period. There was not data available on all items from all three counties. There are several areas in which data was not available from the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center. In those cases, the reports contain only information from Fresno and Sutter Counties, with the exception of employment data which was reported on the basis of demographic information from the Los Angeles County family law facilitator.

GENDER

All of the Family Law information Centers provided services to both men and women.



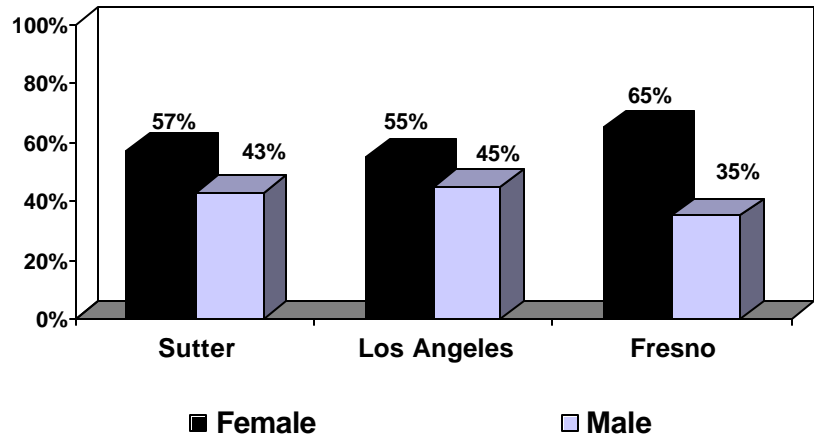
More women requested services than did men. This is not surprising, as the 2000 U.S. Census data¹⁵ for the three Family Law Information Center counties indicates a high poverty level for single mothers, especially those with young children.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *United States Census 2000*, Summary File 3 (SF-3). DP - 3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.

“The Center helped my ex and me. It was nice to have someone neutral.”

Customer, 2000

**Gender:
Program Detail**



According to the 2000 census, families with female householders and no husband present live below the poverty level more frequently than do other families. If such families have minor children, the percentage living below poverty level increases, and if the children are under five years of age, the percentage increases again. The ability of such families to access legal representation would be extremely limited.

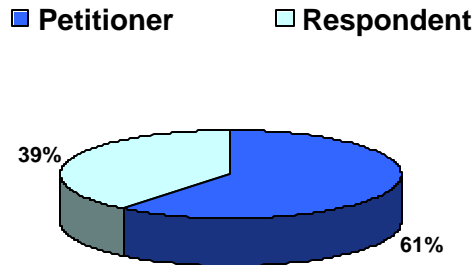
Percent of Families Below Poverty Level

	ALL FAMILIES		FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18	
	Total	Female – no husband present	Total	Female – no husband present
LOS ANGELES	14%	29%	20%	37%
FRESNO	18%	35%	25%	43%
SUTTER	12%	30%	18%	37%

U.S. Census Bureau, *United States Census 2000*, Summary File 3 (SF-3).
DP - 3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics

PETITIONERS AND RESPONDENTS

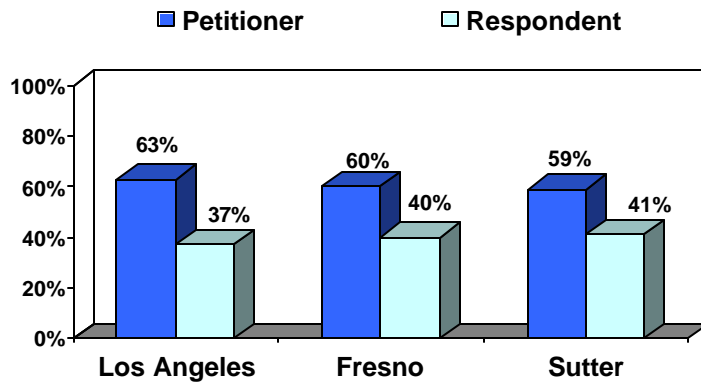
The Family Law Information Centers provided services both to persons starting an action and to persons responding to an action. The overall percentage of each is set out below.



“The Family Law Information Center provides very important information for both parties involved.

Customer, 2002

Petitioners appear to seek help approximately one-third more often than do respondents.



There was very little variance among the Family Law Information Centers with regard to the ratios between petitioners and respondents.

AGE

Only Sutter and Fresno Counties kept information on the ages of those requesting assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. More than 60 percent of customers in those counties were between the ages of 20 and 40 years.

Age Ranges

AGE RANGE	FRESNO	SUTTER
15-19 YEARS	3%	3%
20-29 YEARS	34%	27%
30-39 YEARS	34%	37%
40-49 YEARS	21%	22%
50-59 YEARS	6%	7%
60+ YEARS	2%	4%

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

The largest percentage of Family Law Information Center customers reported having one or two children. The Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center did not keep records regarding numbers of children.

Number of Children

COUNTY	NUMBER OF MINOR CHILDREN				
	None	One	Two	Three	Four +
FRESNO	21%	39%	24%	9%	6%
SUTTER	18%	44%	25%	9%	4%

ETHNICITY

The pattern of ethnicity of those requesting assistance from the Family Law Information Centers is roughly comparable to that of the 2000 census data for each county¹⁶. With the exception

¹⁶ (U.S. Census Bureau, P6. Race-Universe: Total Population; P7. Hispanic or Latino by Race; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

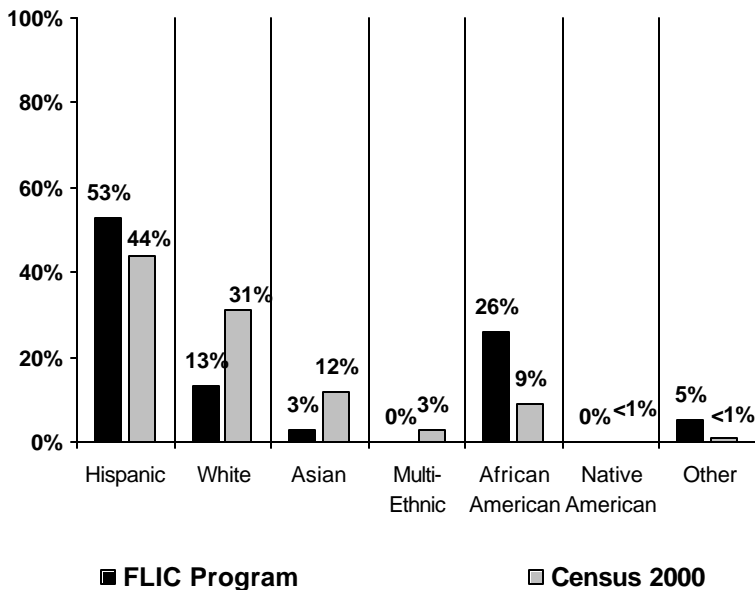
of some variances in Los Angeles County, the ethnic distribution within Family Law Information Center (FLIC) customers did not vary more than 10 percent in any category from the percentages reported for their counties in the 2000 census. The reports from the Family Law Information Centers do not include a “multi-ethnic” category. Those that would otherwise fall into that category were reported as “other.”

Los Angeles County

The Los Angeles County program data has some differences from the 2000 census data related to ethnicity.

Interestingly, in Los Angeles, the percentage of both White and Asian individuals seeking assistance from the Family Law Information Center was smaller than the percentage represented in the population at large. The percentage of Hispanic and African American individuals seeking assistance was greater than the percentage represented in the population at large. These differences may be related to differences in income levels.

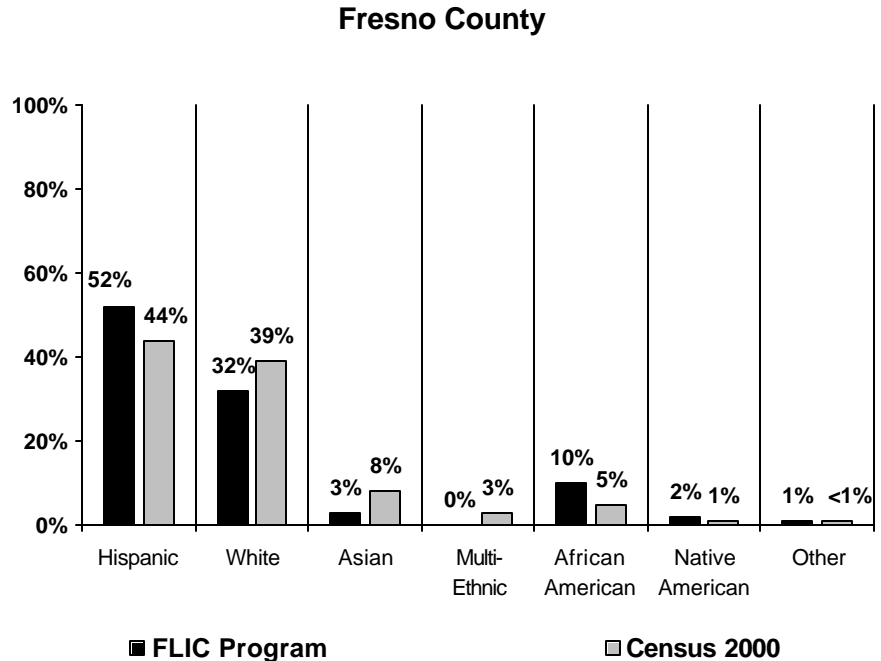
Los Angeles County



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P6. Race-Universe: Total Population; P7. Hispanic or Latino by Race; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)
 Note: The FLIC data has no category for “Multi-Ethnic.” Those customers are reflected in the “Other” category.

Fresno County

In Fresno County, the percentage of both Hispanic and African American individuals seeking help from the Family Law Information Centers was somewhat greater than the percentages represented in the 2000 census. The percentages of Whites and Asians seeking help were somewhat smaller than the percentages represented in the population at large.



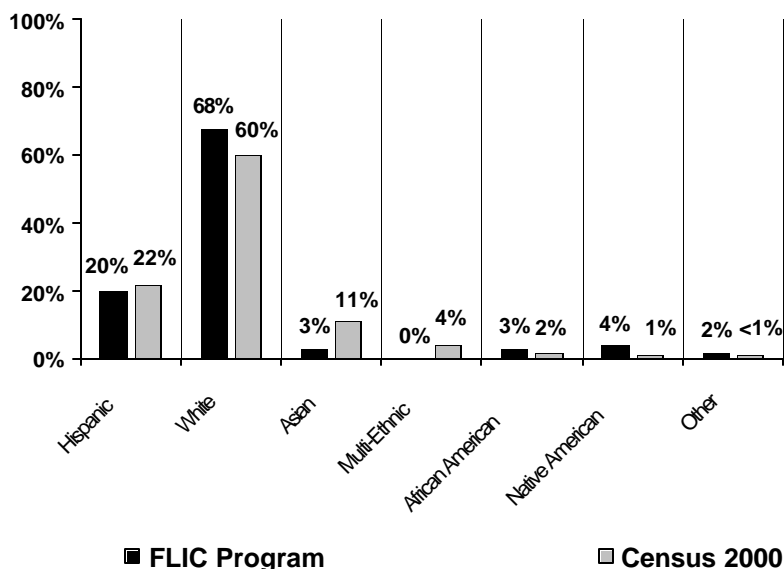
(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P6. Race-Universe: Total Population; P7. Hispanic or Latino by Race; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

Note: The FLIC data has no category for "Multi-Ethnic." Those customers are reflected in the "Other" category.

Sutter County

In Sutter County, the largest difference between the program ethnic distribution and the 2000 census data is in the Asian group. It would appear that in Sutter County members of the Asian community are less likely to seek assistance from the Family Law Information Center than other ethnic groups. Members of other ethnic groups appear to seek assistance from the center in the approximate percentages represented in the total county population.

Sutter County



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P6. Race-Universe: Total Population; P7. Hispanic or Latino by Race; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

Note: The FLIC data has no category for “Multi-Ethnic.” Those customers are reflected in the “Other” category.

LANGUAGE

It appears that the Family Law Information Centers are doing well at providing language services comparable to the distribution of languages within their communities. All programs have bilingual staff to provide services in English and Spanish, or provide interpreters. Informational materials have been translated into several other languages, and referrals to community services are made to provide additional language assistance.

English and Spanish were the primary languages spoken by the customers of the Family Law Information Centers. The degree to which the programs provided language access to their communities is comparable to the 2000 census data. Census data on languages spoken at home was taken from the age group of 18–64 years. The “English” category reflects those who are monolingual English speaking, or who are multilingual but report speaking English “well” or “very well.” The “Spanish” category reflects those who report speaking Spanish at home and speaking English “not well” or “not at all.” The “Other” category represents any other language spoken at home in which the individual reported

speaking English “not well” or “not at all.” In the Family Law Information Center data, the “Other” category reflects all languages other than Spanish or English.¹⁷

LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

LANGUAGE	CENTRAL FLIC	NORWALK FLIC	TOTAL LOS ANGELES	CENSUS 2000
ENGLISH	82%	88%	87%	82%
SPANISH	18%	12%	13%	15%
OTHER*	<1%	<1%	<1%	3%

*Other languages in Los Angeles include Tagalog, Cantonese, Hmong, ASL, Vietnamese, Korean, Mandarin, Assyrian.
 (United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P.19 Age by language spoken at home by ability to speak English;
<http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

FRESNO COUNTY

LANGUAGE	FLIC OUTREACH ATTORNEYS	TOTAL FRESNO FLIC	CENSUS 2000
ENGLISH	82%	90%	86%
SPANISH	17%	9%	12%
OTHER*	1%	1%	2%

*Other languages in Fresno include Hmong, ASL, Punjabi
 (United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P.19 Age by language spoken at home by ability to speak English; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

SUTTER COUNTY

LANGUAGE	SUTTER FLIC	CENSUS 2000
ENGLISH	92%	88%
SPANISH	6%	8%
OTHER*	2%	4%

*Other languages in Sutter include Hmong and Farsi
 (United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File (SF-3) P.19 Age by language spoken at home by ability to speak English; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

¹⁷ (United States Census 2000, Summary File 3 (SF-3). Id., P.19. Age by language spoken at home by ability to speak English;
<http://factfinder.census.gov>, 11/18/02.)

INCOME¹⁸

The Sutter and Fresno County Family Law Information Centers measured income using the same data ranges; however, Los Angeles County used broader ranges. For the purpose of comparison, therefore, the Fresno County and Sutter County data have been collapsed into the Los Angeles County categories.

The vast majority of customers requesting assistance from the Family Law Information Centers had a gross monthly income of under \$2,000 per month, and many of those had monthly incomes of under \$1,000 per month. In Sutter and Fresno Counties, there were significant percentages of customers with incomes under \$500 per month. In Los Angeles, 37 percent of the Family Law Information Center customers have gross monthly incomes of under \$800.

Lowest Income Ranges

	INCOMES UNDER \$500/MO.	INCOMES UNDER \$800/MO.
FRESNO	27%	
SUTTER	21%	
LOS ANGELES		

A comparison of customer incomes in broader range groups at the three Family Law Information Centers is set out below.¹⁹ Data have been set out in alternative presentations to demonstrate the extent of the variances at the higher income ranges.

¹⁸ (U.S. Census Bureau; *Id.*, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

¹⁹ The endpoints of census income categories do not exactly match those of FLIC income categories, so comparisons are only approximate. Monthly incomes as reported on the FLIC survey are aligned with annual incomes as reported on the Census as follows: \$1,000 or under/month ~ \$12,499 or less/year; \$1,001–2,000/month ~ \$12,500–24,999/year; \$2,001–3,000/month ~ \$25,000–34,999/year; and over \$3,000/month ~ \$35,000/year.

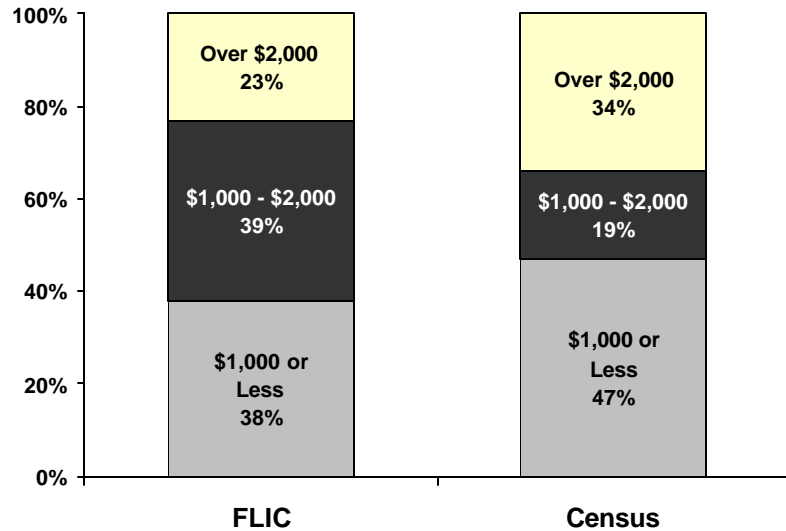
“The service provided and personnel are great. People without a lot of money would be lost.”

Customer, 2002

“It’s great that you allow low income people a chance to understand family law.”

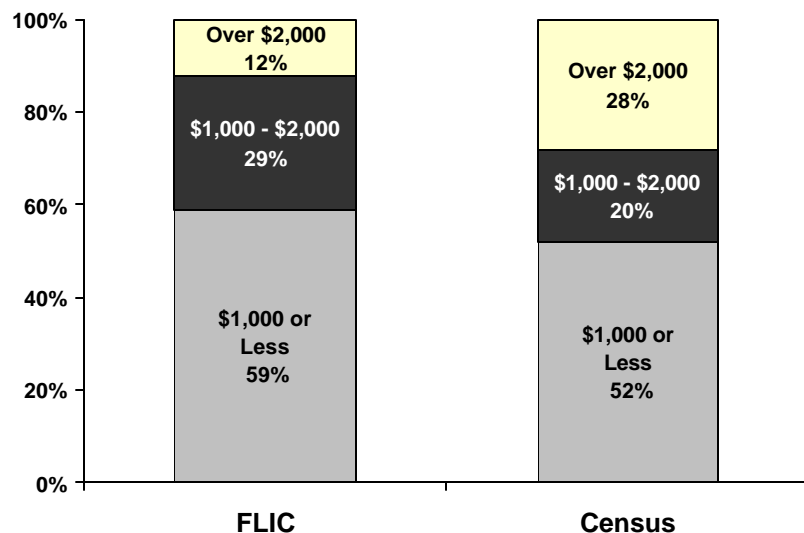
Customer, 2002

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION:
MONTHLY INCOME**



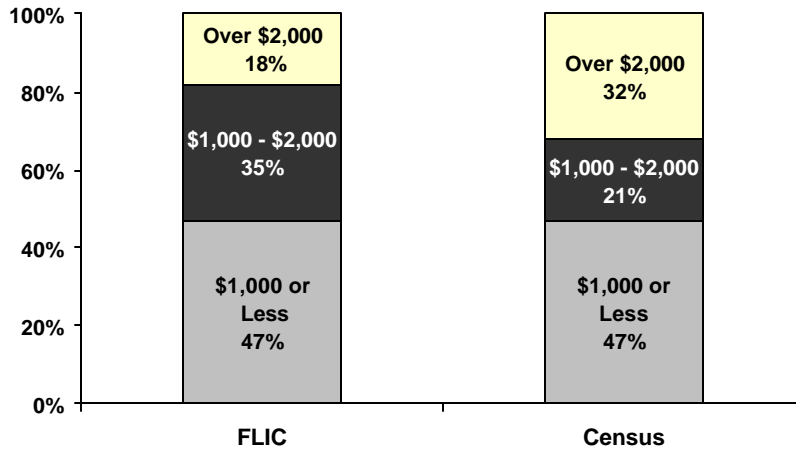
(Unites States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

**FRESNO COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION:
MONTHLY INCOME**



(Unites States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

**SUTTER COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION
MONTHLY INCOME**

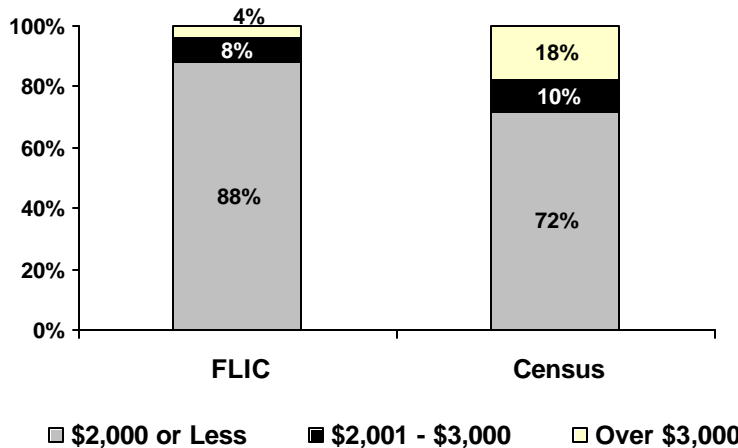


(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

“Thank you so much. Single parents who can’t afford attorneys need this kind of help.”

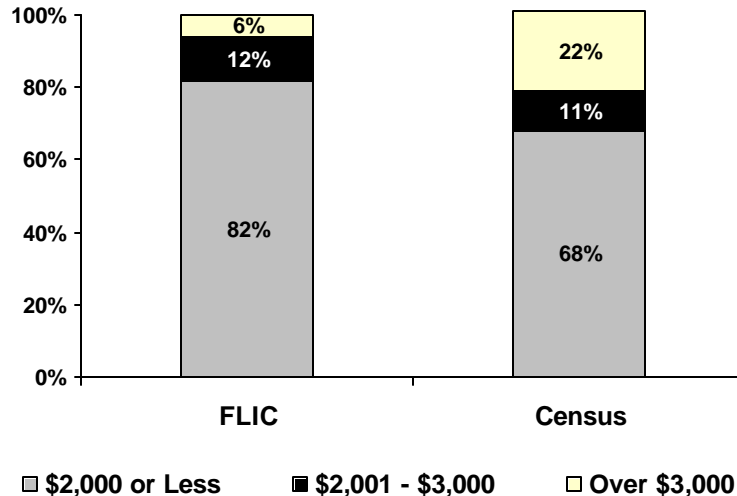
Customer, 2000

**FRESNO COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION:
MONTHLY INCOME (ALTERNATE BREAKDOWN)**



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

**SUTTER COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION:
MONTHLY INCOME (ALTERNATE BREAKDOWN)**



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

Compared to census data, Family Law Information Center customers report monthly incomes between \$1,000 and \$2,000 in greater numbers than are reported for their counties. In Los Angeles, the numbers of Family Law Information Center customers falling into this category was 20% higher than in the census data for Los Angeles County. In the Sutter County program, the number of customers in this category was 14% higher than in the census data for Sutter County. In Fresno County, the number of customers in this group was 9% higher than in the census data.

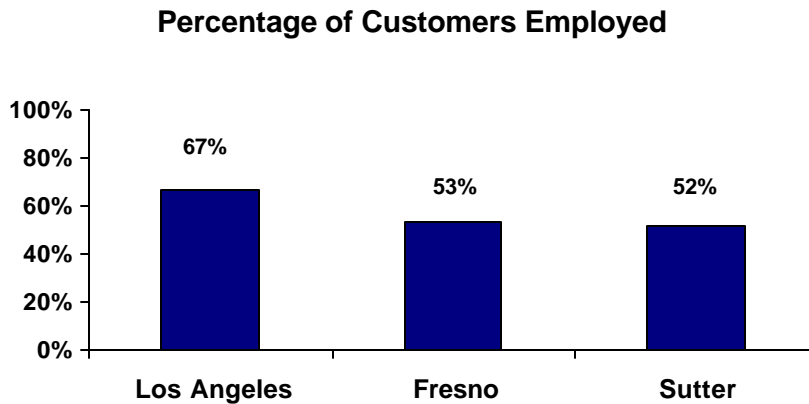
Compared to census data, there are 16% fewer Family Law Information Center customers in Fresno reporting monthly incomes over \$2,000. In Sutter County, 14% fewer Family Law Information Center customers report incomes over \$2,000 per month than in the census data. In Los Angeles County, the number of customers in this group was 9% lower than in the census data.

Less difference was found between Family Law Information Center customers as a group and census data in incomes at the lower levels, \$1,000 per month and less. The pilot programs seem to provide services to individuals whose incomes are slightly above the poverty levels, but almost never over \$3,000 per month. Family Law Information Center customers may

not have enough income to be able to afford full service legal representation; however, they may also fall just above financial eligibility to receive legal aid services.²⁰

Employment

The majority of individuals seeking help from the Family Law Information Centers were employed. Both Sutter and Fresno Counties maintained data on the employment status of the customers. The numbers for Los Angeles County are estimated based on data from the family law facilitator.²¹ Combined with reports from customers with respect to their incomes, employment data suggests that many of the customers of the Family Law Information Centers are working at low paid jobs.



Public Assistance

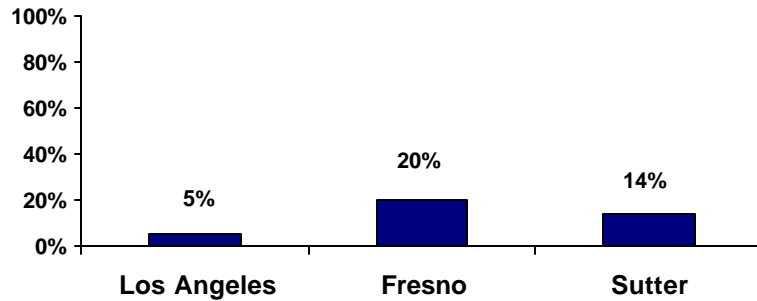
Only a small percentage of Family Law information Center customers report receiving public assistance. The data for Los

²⁰ Income must be 125% of poverty or lower to qualify for legal aid.

²¹ Los Angeles Family Law Facilitator Survey, June 2002 was used as a proxy for the lack of data with respect to source of income specifically from the Family Law Information Center.

Angeles County is estimated from the family law facilitator data recorded in June 2002.

Percentage of Customers Receiving Public Assistance



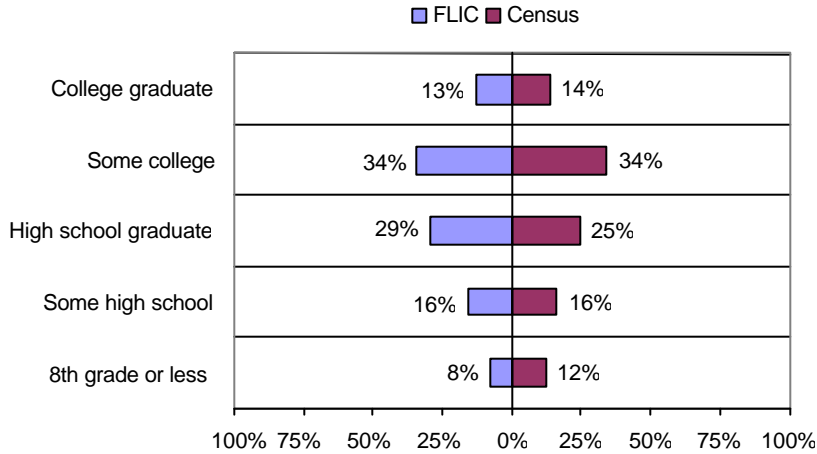
The remaining Family Law Information Center customers received income from unemployment, social security, disability, and help from family and friends.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The majority of Family Law Information Center customers reported at least a high school level education. Data was only available for Sutter and Fresno Counties. A comparison to the 2000 census data is set out below.

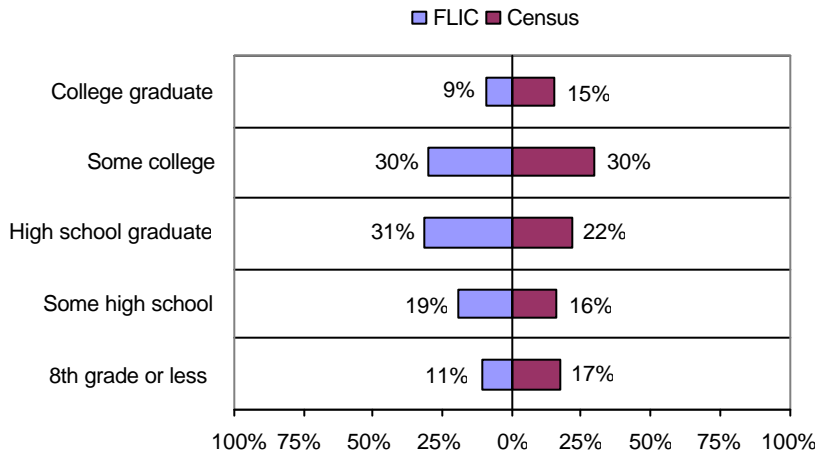
In Sutter County, 76 percent of the Family Law Information Center customers had at least a high school education, and 47 percent had some college. In Fresno County, 70 percent of the Family Law Information Center customers had at least a high school education, and 39 percent had some college. †

SUTTER COUNTY
COMPARISON OF FLIC CUSTOMERS TO GENERAL POPULATION:
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

FRESNO COUNTY
Comparison of FLIC Customers to General Population:
Educational Attainment



(United States U.S. Census 2000 Bureau, Summary File 3 (SF-3) 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 12/3/02.)

CHAPTER 3

Customer Satisfaction

“They made me feel like all was not lost and there was hope, I know now that I do have rights.”

Customer, 2002

A customer satisfaction “snapshot survey” was conducted at all Family Law Information Center pilot locations during the time period from October 21, 2002, through December 31, 2002. The snapshot survey instrument is attached in Appendix F. The survey asked customers about their experience at the Family Law Information Center. Inquiry was made about what services were most helpful, what additional services they would like to see, and whether or not they had previously considered hiring an attorney or sought help from sources other than the Family Law Information Center. The total number of surveys returned was 1,364. There were 148 from Fresno County, 64 from Sutter County and 1,152 from Los Angeles County. Responses are set out below. Comparisons were made on the bases of gender and party status because these demographics were specifically mentioned in Family Code §15101(k) as being of interest to the Legislature. The Los Angeles center has also collected primarily narrative customer satisfaction information from its inception in June of 2000 until the present. Most of the quotations in the margins are derived from these Los Angeles County forms.

“The Family Law Information Center staff person was very kind— she is very patient— there were many people and only her. Everyone left happy because she made all of us feel good, important and smarter.”

Customer, 2000

CUSTOMERS BELIEVE THE ASSISTANCE THEY RECEIVED WAS HELPFUL

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	61%	31%	<1%	<1%	7%
Fresno n=148	85%	14%	<1%	0%	<1%
Sutter n=64	92%	3%	2%	0%	3%
Total N=1,364	65%	28%	<1%	<1%	6%

93% OF ALL CUSTOMERS SURVEYED BELIEVE THE ASSISTANCE THEY RECEIVED WAS HELPFUL TO THEM.

“The quality of service was professional and helpful. It helped me understand all of the steps I must take to accomplish what I need.”

Customer, 2002

“The staff person I worked with was very helpful and answered my questions! She was patient in hearing me out and walked me through what I needed to do. I honestly think you guys are doing a great job.”

Customer, 2002

The Family Law Information Center customers who responded to the snapshot survey were overwhelmingly positive in their belief that the information they received was helpful to them.

In Fresno County, 99 percent of customers felt they had been helped. Women and petitioners were slightly more likely to feel strongly that the assistance they received was helpful.²²

In Sutter County, 95 percent of Family Law Information Center customers felt that the assistance they received was helpful to them.

There was no significant difference in the Sutter County center between male and female customers in their belief that the assistance they received was helpful to them. Nor was there any significant difference between petitioners and respondents.

In the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center, 92 percent of customers agreed that the assistance they received was helpful. The percentage that agreed “strongly,” however, was smaller than in the other two counties. This variance can probably be accounted for by the difference in the level of service provided. Staffs at both the Sutter and Fresno Family Law Information Centers actually help the customers fill out their forms. Forms assistance is provided both one-on-one and in workshop settings. The Los Angeles program, however, was designed to handle an enormous volume of people with a very small staff. They provide the forms with instructions and answer questions, but in most cases litigants are required to fill out their forms on their own. The Family Law Information Center will then go over their work if time permits. Documents are reviewed by staff in about 35 percent of the cases.²³

In Los Angeles County, there were no significant differences between the men and women. Respondents felt somewhat more strongly that the assistance was helpful.²⁴

²² Significant at $p \leq .05$

²³ Estimate by Linda Wright, Director, Los Angeles Family Law Information Center, January 14, 2003.

²⁴ Significant at the $p \leq .05$

CUSTOMERS ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND COURTESY BY THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER STAFF

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	64%	30%		<1%	<1%		5%
Fresno n=148	81%	19%		0%	0%		0%
Sutter n=64	89%	8%		0%	0%		3%
Total N=1,364	67%	28%		<1%	<1%		5%

The Family Law Information Center customers who responded to the snapshot survey were extremely positive in their feelings toward the centers’ staff. Over 95 percent of customers felt well treated by the staff. In fact, the extent of regard for the Family Law Information Center staff was remarkable not just in the high scores given, but also in the narrative comments customers wrote onto their forms. Examples are set out as sidebars and are representative of literally thousands of such comments.

In Fresno County, 100 percent of respondents felt that the staff was courteous and respectful toward them. There was no significant difference between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in their responses

In Sutter County, the customers of the Family Law Information Center felt that they were well treated by the staff 97 percent of the time. There was no difference between the male and female customers, or those who were petitioners or respondents.

In Los Angeles County, 94 percent of customers felt well treated by the Family Law Information Center staff. This is particularly evident in the statements made by numerous customers on the local Los Angeles customer satisfaction questionnaires. There were no significant differences between male and female customers with respect to this question.

95% of all customers surveyed report being treated with courtesy and respect.

“The first and only ray of hope in this entire building. The Family Law Information Center staff is really a blessing!! No one cares about anyone else—but they really do!!”

Customer, 2000

“The workers were very friendly and helpful – didn’t make me feel like a bother.”

Customer, 2000

98% OF CUSTOMERS
REPORT RECEIVING
HELPFUL ASSISTANCE
WITH THEIR FORMS.

“I think the service is a great public service. The Family Law Information Center staff person had a thorough knowledge and understanding of forms, and a very pleasant attitude.”

Customer, 2002

“I think it is useful for those of us who are not familiar with the law proceedings and forms. Top of the line service.”

Customer, 2001

Respondents were slightly more likely to feel strongly that they had been treated with respect and courtesy by the staff.²⁵

CUSTOMERS RECEIVED HELPFUL ASSISTANCE COMPLETING THEIR FORMS

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	56%	34%		2%	<1%		8%
Fresno n=148	78%	18%		0%	0%		4%
Sutter n=64	84%	5%		6%	0%		5%
Total N=1,364	59%	31%		2%	<1%		8%

Customers were asked specifically if the assistance they received with respect to their forms was useful. The vast majority felt that the Family Law Information Centers provided useful forms assistance. Ninety-eight percent of respondents report receiving useful assistance with forms. The difference in responses between the Los Angeles County Family Law Information Center and the other two would again be accounted for by the difference in levels of service provided.

In Fresno County, there was no difference between male and female customers in the belief that the forms assistance they received was helpful. There was also no difference between petitioners and respondents.

In Sutter County, there were no differences between male and female customers or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that the forms assistance they received was useful.

In Los Angeles County, there were no differences between men and women with respect to their belief that the forms assistance was helpful. Respondents were slightly more likely to feel strongly that the forms assistance was helpful.²⁶

²⁵ Significant at $p \leq .05$.

²⁶ Significant at $p \leq .05$.

It is possible that respondents may feel that the forms assistance they receive is more complete, at least in the initial stages of the proceeding. Petitioners have numerous and complicated forms to prepare, while respondents are required to fill out fewer and less complicated sets of forms.

CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND THEIR CASES AND/OR ISSUES BETTER

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	43%	42%		4%	1%		10%
Fresno n=148	67%	33%		0%	0%		0%
Sutter n=64	77%	19%		1%	0%		3%
Total N=1,364	47%	40%		3%	1%		9%

Customers felt that they understood their cases, and/or the issues within their cases, better after receiving assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. Overall, 87 percent of customers felt they understood their cases better after coming to the Family Law Information Centers. The difference in responses between the Los Angeles Family Law Information Center and the other two could again be accounted for by the difference in levels of service.

In Fresno County, there were no differences between the male and female customers in the belief that they understood their cases and/or issues better after visiting the Family Law Information Center. There were also no differences between petitioners and respondents.

In Sutter County, there were no differences found between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents.

In Los Angeles County, there were no differences found between male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents, in the belief that they understood their cases and/or issues better after receiving assistance from the center.

87% OF CUSTOMERS FEEL THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THEIR CASES AND/OR ISSUES BETTER.

“She gave me the information I needed, even though I didn’t want to hear it...she is very good, but most of all honest!”
Customer, 2000

“I like that there is some place to go. The staff makes you feel very good and understand what you are doing.”

Customer, 2001

82% OF CUSTOMERS FEEL BETTER PREPARED TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO THE JUDGE.

“It has been helpful and made me very successful with my case.”

Customer, 2002

CUSTOMERS FELT BETTER PREPARED TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO THE JUDGE

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	38%	42%	7%	<1%	13%
Fresno n=148	53%	42%	3%	0%	2%
Sutter n=64	64%	24%	3%	0%	9%
Total N=1,364	42%	40%	6%	1%	11%

Customers felt that they were better prepared to present their case and/or issues to the judge after receiving assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. The information they received seems to help reduce the anxiety associated with going to court. While 82 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared for the judge, they did not feel as strongly about it as they did about the help they received with the forms and the basic procedural information. This likely indicates the anxiety individuals feel about actually appearing in court and having to speak in public to a judge about issues of enormous personal importance.

Nevertheless, in Fresno, 95 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

No differences were found between Fresno County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they were better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

The vast majority (88 percent) of Sutter County customers also agree that they felt better prepared to present their case to a judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Sutter County petitioners and respondents in the belief that they were better prepared to present their cases to the judge after visiting the Family Law Information Center. Female customers were slightly more

“Answered all my questions and took a little of the stress out.”

Customer, 2002

likely to feel strongly that they were better prepared for court.²⁷

In Los Angeles County, 80 percent of customers agreed that they felt better prepared to present their cases to the judge. The percentage of those who felt strongly about this, however, was smaller than in the other two counties. Once again, this difference is likely to be attributable to the difference in levels of service provided..

In Los Angeles County, females felt slightly more strongly than males that they were better prepared for court.²⁸ There was no difference between petitioners and respondents.

CUSTOMERS FELT THEY UNDERSTOOD BETTER HOW THE COURT WORKS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	36%	45%	7%	1%	11%
Fresno n=148	45%	49%	3%	0%	3%
Sutter n=64	64%	28%	2%	0%	6%
Total N=1,364	38%	45%	6%	1%	10%

The majority of customers (83 percent) felt that they had a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Centers. The responses to this inquiry were not as strong as they were to the question regarding customers’ understanding of their own particular cases and issues. The information given by the Family Law Information Centers tends to be focused, specific, and practical. It relates principally to procedural issues, legal definitions, and options. It is not a primary purpose of the Family Law Information Centers to educate the public about court operations as a whole. Rather, the primary purpose is to

²⁷ Significant at p≤.05.

²⁸ Significant at p≤.05.

83% OF CUSTOMERS REPORT THAT THEY HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE COURT WORKS.

“I am grateful that someone is able to help me understand the court process.”
Customer, 2002

“It’s great help for people who don’t know the law. Great service!!”

Customer, 2002

provide helpful, case-specific information to litigants without attorneys and assist them to move through the family justice system as efficiently as possible. Nevertheless, most customers felt that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works.

In Fresno County, 94 percent of customers agreed that they had a better understanding about how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Fresno County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center.

In Sutter County, 92 percent of customers agreed that they had a better understanding about how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. No differences were found between Sutter County male and female customers, or between petitioners and respondents in the belief that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the center.

Although the Los Angeles customers did not respond as strongly to this inquiry, 81 percent of customers agreed that they had gained a better understanding of how the court works after visiting the Family Law Information Center. Female customers were slightly more likely to feel strongly that they understood the court better.²⁹ There were no differences between petitioners and respondents.

CUSTOMERS DID NOT HAVE TO WAIT TOO LONG

	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	39%	36%		11%	8%		6%
Fresno n=148	62%	36%		1%	1%		0%
Sutter n=64	72%	11%		14%	0%		3%
Total N=1,364	43%	35%		10%	7%		5%

²⁹ Significant at $p \leq .05$.

78% REPORTED RECEIVING REASONABLY PROMPT SERVICE.

Customers frequently remarked that the Family Law Information Centers could use additional staff.

The most frequent comment by customers about how the Family Law Information Centers might improve services was a suggestion to add more staff to answer questions. Having to wait for services was the largest source of complaint. The need for more staff was perceived as the reason that customers are required to wait for services longer than they would like. The length of time customers have to wait for services is more pronounced in the Sutter and Los Angeles County Family Law Information Centers. It appears that waiting is more problematic in these programs, where service is on a first-come-first-served basis, than in Fresno, where service is by appointment. Nevertheless, 78 percent report receiving prompt service.

In Fresno, the 98 percent of customers agreed that they did not have to wait long to receive services from the Family Law Information Center. There were no differences between male and female customers in Fresno, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

In Sutter County, 83 percent of customer agreed that they did not have a long wait for assistance at the Family Law Information Center. A noteworthy minority (14 percent) felt that they had to wait a long time to be served. There were no differences between male and female customers in Sutter County, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

Customers in Los Angeles County were the most likely to mention the need to improve the waiting time in the Family Law Information Centers. Nevertheless, 75 percent felt they had received prompt service given the level of observable resources. Comments about long waiting periods were most frequently accompanied by observations about the need for additional staff and praise for the existing staff for how well they cope with the enormous volume of people coming for help. In fact, the admiration for the staff is noteworthy in the narrative comments customers made about waiting time.

There were no differences between male and female customers in Los Angeles, or between petitioners and respondents, with respect to how they felt about the length of time they waited for services.

“The staff person was very good—very professional—she had 12 people and she was very patient and everyone was happy.”

Customer, 2000

“Very knowledgeable in the midst of a large group.”

Customer, 2001

92% OF CUSTOMERS WOULD RETURN TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER IN THE FUTURE.

CUSTOMERS WILL RETURN TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS IN THE FUTURE

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
Los Angeles n=1,152	60%	31%	1%	1%	7%
Fresno n=148	83%	16%	0%	0%	1%
Sutter n=64	92%	5%	0%	0%	3%
Total N=1,364	64%	28%	1%	1%	6%

“Despite my stress, I felt I could follow-up on procedures to divorce due to good explanations. Satisfied, will be using your services again in the future.”

Customer, 2001

“It is very important to maintain this service because it helps people be responsible for their children.”

Customer, 2002

Overall, 92 percent of customers report that they would use the services of the Family Law Information Center again in the future.

There were no differences between male and female customers in their willingness to use the services of the Family Law Information Center in the future.

There were no differences in Sutter County between petitioners and respondents with respect to their willingness to use the Family Law Information Center again in the future. In Fresno County, there were no differences between petitioners and respondents; however, females were more likely to say they would use the center again.³⁰ In Los Angeles County, respondents were more likely to report a willingness to return to the Family Law Information Center.³¹

DIRECT ASSISTANCE FROM STAFF WAS THE MOST HELPFUL

Customers were asked which of the services they received at the Family Law Information Centers were the most helpful to them. In all locations, direct assistance from staff was reported to be the most helpful.

CUSTOMERS RATE PERSONAL CONTACT WITH STAFF AS MOST HELPFUL.

³⁰ Significant at $p \leq .05$.

³¹ Significant at $p \leq .05$.

What Type of Assistance Was Most Helpful

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Staff to assist filling out forms	47%	31%	39%
Staff to answer procedural questions	42%	33%	22%
Forms packets w/written instructions	8%	8%	25%
Referrals to get help elsewhere	3%	8%	9%
Other information brochures	0%	9%	4%
Computer use	0%	1%	1%

FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS COULD IMPROVE BY PROVIDING MORE STAFF TO ASSIST LITIGANTS AND HAVING SIMPLIFIED FORMS

Customers were asked how the Family Law Information Centers could improve their services to the public. Responses to this inquiry seem clearly related to the specific needs of the three programs. For example, in Sutter County, where the customer volume is the lowest, an increase in staff is not ranked as most urgently needed by the Family Law Information Center. The opposite is true of the Los Angeles County centers, where the number of people seeking help is overwhelming. In Sutter County, the focus of the customers is directed more toward the complicated nature of the required forms in family law. And Fresno customers, like those in Los Angeles, most frequently identify increasing staff as the way the center could improve services. Fresno customers' designations of needs, however, are more balanced among the various categories of possible improvements.

“The staff explained everything perfectly; first time I got to talk to someone this way at court.”

Customer, 2001

“Very good they explained everything . . . they helped me and gave me hope to bring my family back together.”

Customer, 2001

“She [staff] knows how to help you. I was afraid until she talked to me.”

Customer, 2002

CUSTOMERS CAN'T AFFORD LAWYERS.

“They are vitally needed because many can't afford attorneys. It was very helpful. Gave me the vital information I needed to ensure proper completion of my papers.”

Customer, 2002

Best Way to Improve Service

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
More staff to help	22%	22%	47%
Simplified forms with instructions	13%	31%	14%
Help in more languages	17%	17%	4%
More information about other services	20%	9%	7%
Referrals to attorneys	13%	17%	8%
Provide services closer to home	12%	4%	13%
More website information	3%	0%	7%

FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER CUSTOMERS CANNOT AFFORD ATTORNEYS

The majority of Family Law Information Center customers report that they have not considered hiring an attorney. In Fresno County this group makes up 77 percent of the customers; in Sutter County, 54 percent, and in Los Angeles County, 74 percent. Those customers were then asked why they had not considered hiring counsel.

Reason for No Attorney Representation

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Unable to afford	80%	79%	78%
Choose to represent self	8%	17%	13%
Don't know how to find an attorney	8%	2%	5%
Other	4%	2%	3%
Already have an attorney	0%	0%	1%

There was very little difference among the counties. Most Family Law Information Center customers felt they could not afford to hire an attorney.

MANY CUSTOMERS HAD TRIED TO FIND HELP BEFORE COMING TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

A large percentage of Family Law Information Center customers had tried to find help prior to coming to these programs. In Fresno, 44 percent of the customers had tried to find help previously; in Sutter 52 percent had tried to find help; and in Los Angeles 55 percent had sought help elsewhere.

Those who sought help prior to coming to the Family Law Information Centers were asked where they had looked for assistance

Previous Attempts to Get Help

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Friend/relative	27%	29%	19%
Private attorney	8%	21%	12%
Paralegal	19%	12%	9%
Legal Aid	6%	3%	18%
Family Law Facilitator	11%	5%	8%
Another self-help center	11%	3%	5%
Attorney referral	6%	3%	5%
Websites	5%	6%	9%
Self-help books	1%	9%	6%
Other	5%	9%	4%
Library	1%	0%	5%

A large percentage of customers indicated they had sought help from family and friends. Many had also tried to use self-

“I think that your services provided are helpful especially to low income families.”
Customer, 2001

CUSTOMERS OFTEN HAD NOT FOUND HELP ANYWHERE ELSE.

“The only agency that has tried to help me, which I feel is fantastic.”
Customer, 2001

“I have been all over the county courthouse and the only help I received was from the Family Law Information Center. The court should have everybody explain things as clear as the person who helped me.”
Customer, 2002

CUSTOMERS SEND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS TO THE CENTERS TO GET HELP.

help books. Others had tried to get help from a private attorney, legal aid or the family law facilitator.

CUSTOMERS HEAR ABOUT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS MOST FREQUENTLY FROM FRIENDS AND RELATIONS

Interestingly, the largest percentage of customers report hearing about the Family Law Information Centers from friends and relatives. This piece of information suggests that news about the services of the Family Law Information Centers is spreading by word of mouth in the communities in which the centers work. Not surprisingly, the second largest numbers of customers were referred to the Family Law Information Centers by other court personnel.

How Heard About Center

	Fresno	Sutter	Los Angeles
Friend/relative	35%	31%	25%
Court personnel	15%	31%	24%
Other	16%	5%	15%
Other service agency	9%	14%	5%
Family Law Facilitator	9%	7%	5%
Legal Aid	5%	0%	10%
Used the center before	5%	5%	5%
Another self-help center	1%	2%	3%
Private attorney	2%	3%	1%
Websites	0%	2%	3%
Paralegal	3%	0%	1%
Library	0%	0%	3%

“Excellent service, In fact, I already told friends about the excellent service and friendly people. Thank you so much!”
Customer, July 2002

Judicial Survey

JUDICIAL INTERVIEWS

Twenty-five judges³² were interviewed by the program evaluation consultant using the questionnaire attached in Appendix G.³³ The judges were selected on the basis of their assignment to family law departments within the Family Law Information Center pilot counties. The interviews were conducted by phone, and most of the respondents had received a copy of the questions ahead of time enabling them to organize their thinking in advance of the call. Interviews varied in length from 15 to 30 minutes.

A presiding judge reported that he did not presently hear any family law cases. The information he had about the Family Law Information Center was gained from conversations with colleagues who did hear such cases. His responses were, therefore, omitted. The number of judges whose responses are included is twenty-four (24).

Several of the judges in Los Angeles County found it difficult to respond to certain questions because they felt they could not be sure where the pro per litigants had received help. For example, a litigant in central Los Angeles may have received assistance from the Family Law Facilitator or from the Domestic Violence Project operated by the Los Angeles County Bar Association. In the Norwalk location, litigants may have received assistance from the Family Law Facilitator or the Legal Aid Society of Orange County's domestic violence program. In both locations, litigants may also have received assistance from the Family Law Information Centers. Most of the judges, however, believed that they could make good estimates about the impact that the Family Law Information Centers had on both the litigants and the court.

“They don’t have a clue what they need. The Family Law Information Center helps clarify their needs, condenses their complaint, and gets it before the court. They sort it out.”

“They get a fair hearing, they feel confident that they are being heard and getting a fair shake.”

³² Includes judges and commissioners.

³³ Question No. 10 was omitted. Respondents indicated they couldn't answer the question because, for the most part, they did not see litigants again after their hearings.

NUMBER OF CASES HEARD AS A JUDGE

The number of cases heard each week by the 24 respondents ranges from 46 to 400.³⁴ All those reporting more than 100 cases a week are in Fresno or Sutter Counties.

CASES HEARD IN A TYPICAL WEEK

NUMBER OF CASES	JUDGES
200+	5
100-199	5
50-99	13
<50	1

PREVALENCE OF PRO PERS

Estimates about the proportion of people appearing in court pro per ranged from under 5 percent to 99 percent; the average was 60 percent. There was a difference in the estimates of commissioners and judges: commissioners reported that, on average, 70 percent of the people appearing before them are pro per while the judges' estimated mean is 60 percent.

PERCENT OF PEOPLE ESTIMATED TO APPEAR PRO PER

PER CENT	JUDGES
85%+	5
70-84%	5
50-69%	8
-50%	6

FAMILIARITY WITH THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER

All 24 judges said they were familiar with the local Family Law Information Center. Most gave detailed descriptions of the services provided by the centers. One judge reported not being able to describe the difference between the services of

³⁴ The 400 case count includes defaults signed by a child support commissioner.

ALL JUDGES INTERVIEWED WERE FAMILIAR WITH THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS IN THEIR COURTS.

the Family Law Information Center and the family law facilitator.

REFERRALS TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER

All of the judges who hear family law cases refer litigants to the Family Law Information Center. Two refer to the family law facilitator and let the facilitator make the referrals to the Family Law Information Center. One judge indicated that his courtroom clerk actually makes the referrals, as she has first contact with the litigants.

To underscore their responses, many of the survey respondents provided information about frequency or numbers of people referred.

VOLUNTEERED FREQUENCY OF REFERRALS

- About 30 a week
- We send everyone to them
- Quite a bit
- 80%
- Often
- All the time
- Several times a day
- Every day
- A lot
- Two of the seven seen by 10 AM today
- Several a day
- Two to five times a day

Some judges in all three counties also spoke of printed materials (e.g., brochures, clinic schedules, flyers, and directions) about the local Family Law Information Center and its services that they give to litigants or have available in the court.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

Many responses to the question about why litigants are referred to the Family Law Information Centers yielded a list of specific issues or tasks, but some judges talked more about process and outcome

ALL JUDGES INTERVIEWED REFER LITIGANTS TO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

“I refer them for just about everything because I’m not in the explaining business; I’m in the deciding business.”

“I refer for settlement of cases, getting them through the process, finishing the cases.”

88% OF JUDGES BELIEVE THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS ARE EFFECTIVE IN HELPING LITIGANTS GET CORRECT PAPERWORK FILED.

“This is a major area of improvement the Family Law Information Center has brought about.”

“This is a real benefit; they get the right stuff properly filed.”

“Looking back over the last 10 years, one now rarely sees a proof of service missing any more whereas it used to be a very common problem.”

“Things that come up from down there are done right.”

REASONS JUDGES MAKE REFERRALS

- Getting questions answered
- Concluding documents [orders and judgments]
- Child support, license revocation, set asides
- General information or answers to questions
- Custody/visitation
- Wage assignments or revisions
- Dissolution of marriage
- Referrals to legal or social services
- Orders after hearing, responses, service information
- Getting cases started
- Arrears
- Paternity action
- Settlement of cases
- Preparation of declarations
- Orders to show cause
- Income and Expense Declarations

DO FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS HELP LITIGANTS PROVIDE CORRECT PAPERWORK TO JUDGES?

	Fresno and Sutter Counties	%	Los Angeles County	%	Total	%
Yes	9	100%	12	80%	21	88%
Don't know	0	0%	3	20%	3	17%
No	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	9	100%	15	100%	24	100%

There was great unanimity about the helpfulness of the Family Law Information Centers’ services with regard to the work they do providing and helping prepare paperwork. This also is the area in which respondents were most enthusiastic in their comments.

Three of the judges in Los Angeles County reported that they couldn't tell for sure where the litigants had received assistance.

Of those judges who felt they could respond, 100 percent felt that the Family Law Information Center helped the litigants get the correct paperwork to the court.

DO THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS HELP LITIGANTS BECOME MORE PREPARED TO PRESENT THEIR CASES TO THE JUDGES?

	Fresno and Sutter Counties	%	Los Angeles County	%	Total	%
Yes	9	100%	9	60%	18	75%
Don't know	0	0%	4	27%	4	17%
No	0	0%	2	13%	2	8%
Total	9	100%	15	100%	24	100%

Most of the judges thought that the services of the Family Law Information Centers help litigants be more prepared to present their cases in court. Several respondents noted that having the correct paperwork was significantly related to the ability of the pro per to present his or her case in court. Most respondents felt there was a more direct effect.

Three judges did not feel they could tell where the litigants had received assistance. One judge stated that he wasn't sure if the litigants were better prepared for court by the Family Law Information Center.

Of those judges that felt they could respond to the question, 90 percent believed that the Family Law Information Centers helped the litigants become more prepared to present their cases in court.

One judge reported that it was not the job of the center to help the litigants prepare for court. Another stated that even with

75% OF JUDGES BELIEVE THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER HELPS LITIGANTS BE BETTER PREPARED FOR COURT.

“If they have helped with the paperwork, they have helped the litigants be better prepared to present their case.”

“In the process of attending training sessions or classes, they learn about the multiple factors that can influence a child support order that they may never have considered before (e.g., union dues, other children supported). Litigants often want to focus on other things (such as presenting themselves in a positive light) but the Family Law Information Center staff helps get them focused on what is essential.”

“For instance, they now know they need to bring pay stubs with the wage declaration form.”

67% OF JUDGES REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS HELP LITIGANTS UNDERSTAND HOW THE LAW AND COURT PROCEDURES ARE APPLIED IN THEIR CASES.

“The typical person has two or three issues he is concerned with (or that are inter-related). A good facilitator, in talking with the litigant, identifies those issues and can thus more fully prepare the litigant for court.”

“The litigants better understand procedures. They seem to better understand my limitations, what I can and cannot do.”

the correct paperwork, the pro pers remain fairly “clueless” about presenting their cases; but pointed out that this was not the fault of the Family Law Information Center.

Fresno and Sutter County respondents were more likely than Los Angeles County respondents to say that the Family Law Information Center helps litigants be more prepared to present their cases. Here it seems that the difference in responses tends to reflect differences in the range of services provided by the three centers.

DO FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS HELP LITIGANTS UNDERSTAND HOW THE LAW AND COURT PROCEDURES ARE APPLIED IN THEIR CASES ?

	Fresno and Sutter Counties	%	Los Angeles County	%	Total	%
Yes	8	88%	8	54%	16	67%
Don't know	1	12%	5	33%	6	25%
No	0	0%	2	13%	2	8%
Total	9	100%	15	100%	24	100%

The majority of judges believe that the Family Law Information Centers help litigants better understand how the law and court procedures are being applied to their cases.

The Sutter County respondents and most Fresno County respondents were certain that the Family Law Information Center helps litigants gain a better understanding of how the law and court procedures are applied in their cases. Several of the Fresno judges emphasized that the litigants seem more prepared with respect to processes and procedures than with understanding of the law.

Three of the Los Angeles judges did not feel they could tell where the litigants had received assistance. Three of the other judges were not certain whether or not the Family Law Information Center improved litigant understanding of law and procedure involved in their cases. One of those three

reported having a sense that it was true, but no real data. Two of the judges did not think the Family Law Information Center provided this sort of assistance at all.

Of those judges that did respond to the question, 89 percent felt that the Family Law Information Centers helped litigants to better understand how the law and procedures are applied in their cases.

DO FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS SAVE TIME YOU OTHERWISE WOULD SPEND ANSWERING PRO PER QUESTIONS?

	Fresno and Sutter Counties	%	Los Angeles County	%	Total	%
Yes	9	100%	12	80%	21	88%
Don't know	0	0%	2	13%	2	8%
No	0	0%	1	7%	1	4%
Total	9	100%	15	100%	24	100%

All but three of the judges interviewed were certain that the availability of the Family Law Information Centers saves court time they otherwise would have to spend answering questions for pro per litigants. Responses to this question also identify time saved by pro pers being better prepared for court hearings as a result of assistance from the centers. Judges were fairly specific in detailing how the centers save valuable time for courts with heavy calendar loads.

Two judges again responded that they did not know who had been to the Family Law Information Center.

Of those judges that felt they could respond to the question, 96% reported that the Family Law Information Center saved them valuable court time.

One judge remarked that it did not save time because he does not answer questions for pro pers.

88% OF JUDGES REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS SAVE THEM VALUABLE COURT TIME.

“.75 of a day a week that we used to spend answering questions and providing information”

“5-10 minutes per client otherwise spent on trying to figure out what the issue is.”

88% OF JUDGES REPORT THAT THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS EXPEDITE FAMILY LAW CASES FOR PRO PER LITIGANTS.

“Couples who have gone through the process of the paperwork can settle faster and the judge can take less testimony.”

“They ask fewer questions, are more informed, and they are better able to stay on point.”

“The Family Law Information Center staff explains the process, give litigants an idea of what to expect”

DOES THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER HELP EXPEDITE PRO PER CASES ?

	Fresno and Sutter Counties	%	Los Angeles County	%	Total	%
Yes	8	88%	13	87%	21	88%
Don't know	1	12%	2	3%	3	12%
No	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	9	10%	15	100%	24	100%

Eighty-eight percent of the survey respondents said that the Family Law Information Center expedited cases involving pro pers. Three judges said they do not have data to support any opinions they may have.

Of the judges that felt they could respond to the question, 100% believed that the Family Law Information Centers help expedite pro per cases in family law.

Many of the survey respondents attributed the positive effect to the fact that, with the help of the Family Law Information Center, pro pers come to court prepared to present their cases. Others made reference to the reduced likelihood that cases in which Family Law Information Center help has been involved will be postponed because they are not ready to be heard. Two of the judges pointed out that Family Law Information Center services can actually lead to some cases not going to court at all, because the parties end up resolving things themselves.

SERVICES MOST USEFUL TO JUDGES

The most frequently mentioned benefit of the Family Law Information Center is that paperwork is improved. This was closely followed by the opinion that the centers' answering questions and providing information for litigants was extremely useful to judges. Four judges specifically mentioned that helping pro pers prepare for court was also beneficial to the bench. Three judges simply said that "everything" the Family Law Information Center did for a litigant was also helpful to them.

HOW THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS COULD BE MORE HELPFUL TO JUDGES

When asked how the Family Law Information Centers could be more helpful to them, judges tended to give a response fitting into one of two general categories: extension of existing services or expansion of services provided.

Extend Existing Services

- Increase staff and time; offer more help with forms;
- Extend services to more rural areas;
- Offer more outreach to the public;
- Extend service hours; and
- Extend language capacity.

Expand Services

- Be available in court;
- Make all litigants pass through Family Law Information Center before getting into court;
- Do a readiness review of files prior to hearing; and
- Additional help with guardianships and adoptions.

GREATEST BENEFITS TO LITIGANTS

In answer to a question about which Family Law Information Center services were most beneficial to litigants, the majority of judges referred to specific activities.

Some judges emphasized the importance of interaction between the litigants and Family Law Information Center staff.

Specific benefits included the following:

- Improved paperwork;
- Useful information;
- Increased perceptions of fairness because someone will listen to them;
- Basic access to the court process;
- Referrals; and
- Getting them started.

BENEFITS TO JUDGES :

“I often cannot even figure out what a case is about when the paperwork is prepared by a pro per without help of Family Law Information Center.”

“They come in ready to proceed.”

“They are better able to stay on point.”

BENEFITS TO LITIGANTS:

“They are taking a day off work and we want to minimize that. They have families, sometimes two, to support so we want them to keep their jobs.”

“The ability to sit down with someone who can provide guidance.”

“Having a live person who pays attention to them and provides accurate information.”

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
FROM JUDGES :**

“We would be in a world of hurts without the Family Law Information Center.”

“I would not want to return to the bad old days.”

“It’s great to be able to send someone to a specific location. It’s like having a prescription.”

“The alternative to referring litigants to the Family Law Information Center would be to tell them to leave court and figure out what to do.”

“Don’t let them take it away. Expand it. It is a valuable service and a useful investment of the State’s money.”

“If they eliminate Family Law Information Center, I hope they have enough money for about five new judges.”

HOW THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS COULD BE MORE HELPFUL TO THE LITIGANTS

As to what might make the Family Law Information Centers more helpful to litigants, responses mirrored those regarding helpfulness to judges. One judge thought the Family Law Information Center should give legal advice.

Extend Existing Services

- Increase staff;
- Increase outreach to the public;
- Extend service hours; and
- Extend language capacity.

Expand Services

- Be available in court;
- Help complete forms;
- Offer clinics;
- Additional help with guardianships and adoptions; and
- Establish a full-service center.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM JUDGES

The judges were given the opportunity to add to what they had said in response to the survey questions.

The judges wanted to make clear that the services of the Family Law Information Centers were extremely valuable to the court.

They also wanted to be clear that the Family Law Information Centers were equally valuable to the litigants.

Finally, they expressed serious concerns that the service may not be maintained owing to funding issues, and wanted to go on record as strongly opposing such cuts. Many judges pointed out the fiscal value of the Family Law Information Centers to the court as expressed in significant time savings for other departments, such as courtroom staff and judges. |

CONCLUSION

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Pursuant to Family Code section 15010(k), the Family Law Information Centers were evaluated for the purpose of compiling a report to the legislature. That evaluation has been completed.

The Family Law Information Center Act as cited above states that these pilot projects shall be deemed a success if

- They assist at least 100 low-income families per year;
- A majority of judges surveyed in the pilot project court believe the Family Law Information Center helps expedite cases with pro per litigants; and
- A majority of Family Law Information Center customers evaluate the Family Law Information Center favorably.

The pilot projects have clearly met these criteria for success.

SERVICES

The Family Law Information Centers in all three counties provided services far in excess of the 100 customer per year criteria set out in the Family Code. The evaluation year was fiscal year 2001–2002, in which the programs serviced more than 45,000 people. Data indicate that the numbers of customers were comparable to the numbers served the previous fiscal year.

The volume of customers seeking services from the Family Law Information Centers was extremely large. This was particularly true in Los Angeles. The design of the program in Los Angeles was intended to address the anticipated volume and therefore provided less intensive service than was provided in the smaller two counties.

The type and character of services provided were basically similar among the counties. Assistance in cases of divorce and paternity was the most common. Assistance was also provided with Title IV-D child support enforcement and domestic violence cases. Customers came to the Family Law

Information Centers asking about an array of issues and subissues within these case types. Customers were most frequently having problems with issues related to custody/visitation and child support most frequently. Issues related to domestic violence, spousal support, and enforcement of orders were also presented to the centers.

The procedural information and guidance requested of the Family Law Information Centers included help in starting a case, responding to a case, making motions within cases for specific orders such as custody or support, accomplishing effective service of process, and completing judgments and orders after hearings. Referrals were also made to various community-based organizations for additional legal or social service help.

WHO USED THE FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTERS

Family Law Information Centers served men and women, and petitioners and respondents. There were more women and more petitioners who requested assistance from the pilot programs.

Customers were mostly between 20 and 40 years of age, and reported having one or two children. The ethnic and language diversity of the customers roughly matched the demographic data for the pilot counties in the 2000 census.

The majority of customers reported being employed and making under \$2,000 per month. The percentage of those with incomes under \$2,000 per month was greater than that of the general population in those counties according to the 2000 census. The majority of customers also reported being at least high school graduates.

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES

Customers of the Family Law Information Centers are extremely satisfied with the services they receive. This was true across all three programs, regardless of program design.

The customers rated their interaction with Family Law Information Center staff as the most valuable aspect of the service they received. Narrative comments written by customers onto their satisfaction forms express gratitude,

admiration, and even affection for the staff. Many such comments are included in the margins of this report.

- 93% felt the service was helpful;
- 95% felt they had been treated with courtesy and respect;
- 90% got effective help with forms;
- 87% felt they understood their case better;
- 82% felt better prepared to go to court;
- 83% believed they had a better understanding of the court;
- 78% reported receiving prompt service; and
- 92% would use the center again.

About one-half of the customers had tried to find help prior to coming to the Family Law Information Center. They indicated that they had heard about the services of the Center most frequently from friends or relatives. Most indicated that they could not afford legal representation.

Asked how the centers could best improve services to them, customers most frequently asked for additional staff to answer questions and help them with their paperwork. They also often mentioned a desire for simpler forms and procedures.

JUDGES SURVEY

Structured interviews with 24 judges from the pilot counties were conducted.

The vast majority reported that the Family Law Information Center services result in valuable time savings to the court.

- 88% reported that the Family Law Information Centers help expedite cases with pro per litigants; and
- 88% reported that the Family Law Information Centers save courtroom time.

All were aware of the Family Law Information Centers and made referrals to the Centers on a frequent and regular basis. Some commented that they did not know how they had gotten along before without the services of the Family Law Information Centers.

- 88% reported that the centers help litigants provide correct paperwork to the court;

CUSTOMERS EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE FOR THE HELP THEY RECEIVED:

“This is excellent service. . . . I want to say thank you very much.”

“I really appreciate the much needed service.”

“I really want to thank the staff for all the great help they gave me.”

“Thanks a lot . . . without the help of the staff I wouldn’t know what to do.”

“This helps a lot when you don’t know what to do. So thank you very much.”

“The Center has helped me since day one. I am very thankful.”

“The process here was very smooth. Thank you very much for your help.”

“I believe and know that everyone one of you are outstanding. Thank you.”

- 75% said they believe that the centers help the litigants become better prepared for court; and
- 67% said they believe that the centers help people understand how the law and court procedures are being applied in their cases

The fact that the Family Law Information Centers answer questions for litigants and help them to provide correct paperwork to the court are of enormous benefit to judges.

Judges believe that the Family Law Information Centers should be funded to expand existing services and extend to other services that would expedite pro per cases. Examples include the following:

- Staff in courtrooms;
- Case management and coordination; status conferences;
- Readiness file reviews prior to hearings; and
- Expansion of the types of cases served.

Judges also point out that litigants benefit from their interaction with the Family Law Information Center staff with the result that they feel more fairly treated by the court.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The experience of the three pilot Family Law Information Centers has clearly established the need for such programs, both to serve the public and to expedite court processes.

Family Law Information Center customers indicate that they have gained a better understanding of their cases and feel better prepared to present their cases to the court. This perception is shared by judges, who believe that the services received by litigants at the Family Law Information Centers saves valuable courtroom time and expedites the case process overall. Correct paperwork, better understanding by litigants about their particular cases, and more clarity about court processes as a whole contribute to the benefits for the court.

Based on the evaluation of the three Family Law Information Center pilot programs, we conclude the following:

1. The three Family Law Information Centers have clearly met the criteria set out in Family Code

section 15010(k) and are found to be successful in the mission set for them by the Legislature.

2. The evaluation data suggest that the Family Law Information Centers serve to reduce costs for the courts in processing pro per family law cases. This aspect should be studied in more detail, and consideration given to expanding the Family Law Information Centers as a method of cost savings for the courts.
3. Data suggest that funding for the Family Law Information Centers should be sufficient to allow adequate staffing to provide direct assistance with forms preparation, and document review.
4. Subject matter workshops are an efficient method of providing assistance with forms preparation.
5. Telephone help-line assistance is effective in increasing access for those who cannot get to the courthouse during business hours.
6. Timely scheduled appointments can increase customer satisfaction with respect to time spent at the Family Law Information Centers.
7. Further study should be conducted to determine whether courtroom and/or financial mediation services for pro per litigants might further expedite case processing in family law cases.

Judges believe that interaction with the Family Law Information Centers increases the trust and confidence of the public in the court. Comments from the customers seem to bear this out.

These judges emphasize that the family law courts are distinguished by the huge percentage of pro per litigants, and that the development of optimal court management systems for cases in which pro pers are the norm requires creative solutions. They believe that the Family Law Information Centers are a core function of the modern family law court. †

APPENDIX A

Family Code Section 15000 et seq.: The Family Law Information Center Act

Family Law Information Center Act

15000. (a) The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(1) A growing number of family law litigants are unrepresented in family law proceedings, and the primary reason for the lack of representation in these matters is their inability to afford legal assistance.

(2) The failure to have access to legal resources prevents low-income litigants from fully understanding their rights and remedies in family law proceedings, thereby restricting their access to justice.

(3) There is a compelling state interest in ensuring that all family law litigants better understand court procedures and requirements and all litigants have more meaningful access to family court.

(4) It is the public policy of this state to maximize the opportunity for low-income persons to receive fair and just treatment by the family court and to decrease inequities resulting from an unrepresented party's limited legal skills and knowledge.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to create information centers to help all low-income family law litigants better understand their obligations, rights, and remedies and to provide procedural information to enable them to better understand and maneuver through the family court system.

15010. (a) (1) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this section to establish a pilot project to be administered by the Judicial Council for the purpose of providing information to unrepresented low-income family law litigants.

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature, in creating this pilot project, to determine the most effective service delivery model to provide family law information and services to unrepresented litigants.

(3) It is the intent of the Legislature that all family law services available to litigants in the superior court of each county strive to adopt policies to most effectively coordinate their activities to ensure ease of access to unrepresented litigants and to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and administrative oversight by the Judicial Council or other oversight agencies.

(b) (1) The pilot project shall consist of three pilot project courts that shall be selected by the Judicial Council from those courts that apply to participate in the pilot project. No court shall be required to apply for the project.

(2) The pilot project courts shall establish a family law information center located in the superior court, that shall be supervised by an active member of the State Bar in good standing.

(3) In superior courts with a family law facilitator, the pilot project shall coordinate its services with the services of the family law facilitator, and in at least one pilot project court, the family law facilitator shall staff and provide the services of the family law information center.

(4) In selecting the pilot project courts, the Judicial Council shall give priority to courts in counties that the Judicial Council determines are most underserved.

(5) The pilot project courts shall determine the composition and number of additional staff necessary to provide the services mandated by this section.

(c) The family law information center shall provide, to unrepresented low-income litigants, information and services, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Information as to the nature of various types of relief available through the family court, including restraining orders, marital dissolution or legal separation, paternity, child or spousal support, disposition of property, and child custody and visitation, and the method to seek that relief.

(2) Information as to the pleadings necessary to be filed for relief and instructions on the proper completion of those pleadings, including information as to the importance of the information called for by the pleadings.

(3) Information concerning the requirements for proper service of court papers.

(4) Assistance in preparing orders after court proceedings consistent with the court's announced orders.

(5) Information concerning methods of enforcing court orders in family law proceedings.

(6) The family law information center shall maintain a directory of community resources, including, but not limited to, low-cost legal assistance, counseling, domestic violence shelters, parenting education, mental health services, and job placement programs.

(7) The family law information center shall encourage parties to seek legal advice and assistance from an independent attorney.

(d) For purposes of this division, "low-income" shall mean individuals whose net monthly income, after deduction of mandatory court ordered payments, is 200 percent or less of the current monthly poverty line annually established by the Secretary of Health and Human Services pursuant to the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended. Family law litigants, prior to receiving the services of the family law information center, shall be required to sign a declaration attesting to their financial eligibility to

receive those services. No other efforts to verify financial eligibility shall be necessary.

(e) The family law information center shall provide interpreter services, to the extent available in the pilot project courts, and allow the use of translators to facilitate the services provided pursuant to subdivision (c).

(f) The Judicial Council shall promulgate guidelines for the operation of the family law information center in accordance with the Rules of Professional Conduct.

(g) The family law information center shall not represent any party. No attorney-client relationship is created between a party and the family law information center as a result of any information or services provided to the party by the family law information center pursuant to subdivision (c). The family law information center shall give conspicuous notice that no attorney-client relationship exists between the center, its staff, and the family law litigant. The notice shall include the advice that the absence of an attorney-client relationship means that communications between the party and the family law information center are not privileged, and that the family law information center may provide services to the other party.

(h) A person employed by, or directly supervised by, an employee of the family law information center shall not make any public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in the court as provided by paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics. All persons employed by, or directly supervised by, an employee of the family law information center shall be provided a copy of paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics, and shall be required to sign an acknowledgment that he or she is aware of its provisions.

(i) The Judicial Council shall create any necessary forms to advise the parties of the types of services provided, that there is no attorney-client relationship, that the family law information center is not responsible for the outcome of any case, that the family law information center does not represent any party and will not appear in court on the party's behalf, and that the other party may also be receiving information and services from the family law information center.

(j) A pilot project court may contract with a private nonprofit entity to staff and provide the services of the family law information center; however, the family law information center must be located, and the services provided, in the superior court.

(k) The Judicial Council shall conduct an evaluation of the pilot project and shall report to the Legislature, no later than March 1, 2003, on the success of the pilot project. The evaluation shall include outcome measures that address increased access to the courts

for low-income litigants and any reduced burden on the courts by having the services of the family law information center available. The evaluation shall include an assessment of the number of people using the services of the family law information center, categorized by gender and by type of information sought, including information regarding marital dissolution, paternity, or domestic violence prevention proceedings, or relating to child custody, visitation, child support, or spousal support. The evaluation shall also assess the frequency with which people seek information from the family law information center to initiate an action or to respond to an action. The pilot project shall be deemed a success if, among other things, the pilot project court assists at least 100 low-income family law litigants in each year of its operation, a majority of the judges surveyed in the pilot project court believe the family law information center helps to expedite family law cases with pro per litigants, and a majority of the persons using the family law information center evaluate the services of the family law information center favorably.

15012. This division shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2004, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute deletes or extends that date.

APPENDIX B

Family Law Information Center Disclosure Form

FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER DISCLOSURE

The Family Law Information Center is available to help both parents and other parties who are Low income and have questions about family law issues and how to proceed with a legal action regarding a family law matter. The Family Law Information Center can help you in preparing your own forms and can give you general information. The Family Law Information Center staff cannot go with you to court.

The attorney at the Family Law Information Center IS NOT YOUR LAWYER, but is a neutral person who does not represent any parent or party. There is no attorney-client relationship between you and any person at the Family Law Information Center.

The Family Law Information Center may provide information and services to the other party in your case.

Communications between you and the Family Law Information Center staff are not confidential. You should consult with your own attorney if you want personalized advise or strategy, to have a confidential conversation, or to be represented by an attorney in court.

The Family Law Information Center is not responsible for the outcome of your case.

I have read the *Disclosure* or have had it read to me. I understand this document.

Date:

_____ ? _____
 (TYPE OF PRINT NAME) (SIGNATURE)

I have translated or read the statement to the person requesting services.

Date:

_____ ? _____
 (TYPE OF PRINT NAME) (SIGNATURE)

APPENDIX C

Guidelines for the Operation of Family Law Information Centers and Family Law Facilitator Offices

California Rules of Court

Appendix

Division V

Guidelines for Operation of Family Law Information Centers and Family Law Facilitators Offices

(1) (*Independence and integrity*) An attorney and other staff working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should, at all times, uphold the independence and integrity of the center or office in conjunction with its role within the court and the legal system.

(2) (*Role as representative of the court*) An attorney and other staff working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should recognize that they are representatives of the court and, as such, should avoid all acts of impropriety and the appearance of impropriety at all times.

(3) (*Impartiality and diligence*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should perform his or her duties impartially and diligently. Impartiality means delivering services to all eligible litigants in a neutral manner. Diligence requires that the attorney provide the litigants with pertinent information to allow them to bring their matter before the court. This may include appropriate referrals to other resources as well as direct information and assistance at the center or office. The attorney should require similar conduct of all personnel.

(4) (*Respect and patience*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should be aware of the social and economic differences that exist among litigants and maintain patience with and respect for the litigants who seek the services of the center or office. The attorney should require similar conduct of all personnel. However, if a litigant becomes unruly or disruptive, the attorney may ask the litigant to leave the center or office.

(5) (*Bias and prejudice*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should assist the litigants who seek assistance without exhibiting bias or prejudice based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or other similar factors, and should require similar conduct of all personnel.

(6) (*Competent legal information*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office and his or her staff should provide the litigants who seek assistance with procedural and legal information and education so that the litigants will have increased access to the court. Family law information centers and family law facilitator offices are not intended to replace private counsel.

(7) (*Full notification of limits of service*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office should ensure that conspicuous notice is given, as set forth in [Family Code section 15010\(g\)](#) or [Family Code section 10013](#), respectively, that no attorney-client relationship exists between the center or office, or its staff, and the family law litigant. The notice should include the advice that the absence of an attorney-client relationship means that communications between the party and the family law information center or family law facilitator office are not privileged and that the services may be provided to the other party. Additionally, the family law information center must use Judicial Council form 1294.5, *Family Law Information Center Disclosure*, or provide similar notice of the warnings set forth in [Family Code section 15010\(i\)](#). The family law facilitator office must use Judicial Council form 1294, *Office of the Family Law Facilitator Disclosure*, or provide similar notice of the warnings set forth in [Family Code section 10015](#).

(8) (*Public comment*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office and his or her staff must at all times comply with [Family Code section 15010\(h\)](#) or [Family Code section 10014](#), respectively, and must not make any public comment about the litigants or about any pending or impending matter in the court.

(9) (*Gifts or payments*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office and his or her staff should not accept any gifts, favors, bequests, or loans from the litigants whom they assist, since this may give the appearance of impropriety or partiality--except for nominal gifts such as baked goods, as allowed by local rules.

(10) (*Communications with bench officers*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office and his or her staff should avoid all ex parte communications with a bench officer, except as provided in accordance with [Family Code section 10005](#). In addition, an attorney should avoid all communications with a bench officer in which he or she offers an opinion on how the bench officer should rule on a pending case. Communications about purely procedural matters or the functioning of the court are allowed and encouraged.

(11) (*Communications with represented litigants*) An attorney working in a family law information center or family law facilitator office and his or her staff should not assist a litigant who is represented by an attorney unless the litigant's attorney consents or the court has referred the litigant for assistance.

(Adopted, eff. Jan. 1, 2002.)

APPENDIX D

Statement Regarding Public Comment

STATEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENTS

As a staff member or volunteer in the Family Law Information Center, you have certain ethical duties as part of the court.

Family Code section 15010(h) provides that:

A person employed by, or directly supervised by an employee of the Family Law Information Center shall not make any public comment about a pending or impending proceeding in the court as provided by paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics. All persons employed by, or directly supervised by, an employee of the Family Law Information Center shall be provided a copy of paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics, and shall be required to sign an acknowledgment that he or she was aware of its provisions.

Paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics states:

A JUDGE SHALL NOT MAKE ANY PUBLIC COMMENT ABOUT A PENDING OR IMPENDING PROCEEDING IN ANY COURT, AND SHALL NOT MAKE ANY NONPUBLIC COMMENT THAT MIGHT SUBSTANTIALLY INTERFERE WITH A FAIR TRIAL OR HEARING. THE JUDGE SHALL REQUIRE SIMILAR ABSTENTION ON THE PART OF COURT PERSONNEL SUBJECT TO THE JUDGES' DIRECTION AND CONTROL. THIS CANON DOES NOT PROHIBIT JUDGES FROM MAKING STATEMENTS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR OFFICIAL DUTIES OR FROM EXPLAINING FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION THE PROCEDURES OF THE COURT, AND DOES NOT APPLY TO PROCEEDINGS IN WHICH THE JUDGE IS A LITIGANT IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY.

Other than cases in which the judge has personally participated, this Canon does not prohibit judges from discussing in legal education programs and materials, cases and issues pending in appellate courts. This educational exemption does not apply to cases over which the judge has presided or to comments or discussions that might interfere with a fair hearing of the case

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge that I have read and am aware of the provisions of paragraph (9) of subdivision (B) of canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Ethics.

I understand that they are binding on me in the scope of my employment or volunteer assignment by the Office of the Family Law Information Center.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Employee Volunteer

Directions: Original should be placed in administrative files of the Family Law Information Center, copy to be given to the employee or volunteer.

APPENDIX E

Sutter County Sample Workshop Schedule (November 2002)

2002 REV.
10/7/02



NOVEMBER



Call ahead to confirm
clinic dates and times.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					<p><u>BEGIN PATERNITY (UPA) PETITION</u> 1</p> <p>IF THERE IS <u>NO</u> PRIOR EXISTING ORDER FOR THE SAME CHILD(REN).</p>	2
3	4	<p>BEGIN DISSOLUTION (DIVORCE)/LEGAL SEPARATION/NULLITY PROCEEDINGS *</p> <p>BRING DISSOLUTION PACKET</p>	<p><u>ANSWER/RESPONSE & FEE WAIVER</u> 5</p> <p>BRING A COPY OF WHATEVER YOU WERE SERVED WITH.</p>	<p>MODIFY CUSTODY, VISITATION, CHILD SUPPORT, JOINDER; OTHER ISSUES *</p> <p><u>MUST BRING COPY OF CURRENT ORDER</u> 6</p>	<p><u>CHILD SUPPORT SET-ASIDES</u> 7</p> <p>AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE FACILITATOR IS RECOMMENDED</p>	8
10	<p>HOLIDAY VETERANS DAY</p>	<p><u>FINAL DISSOLUTION/LEGAL SEPARATION JUDGMENT BY DEFAULT ONLY *</u> 11</p> <p>PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!</p>	<p>UPA JUDGMENTS BY DEFAULT/ FINDINGS & ORDERS AFTER HEARING</p> <p>DEFAULT PATERNITY JUDGMENTS; FORMAL ORDERS AFTER</p>	<p><u>MOTIONS-MODIFY SUPPORT ONLY CHILD OR SPOUSAL</u> 13</p> <p>NO OTHER ISSUES; <u>MUST BRING COPY OF CURRENT ORDER TO BE MODIFIED</u> 14</p>	<p><u>ENFORCEMENTS OF JUDGMENTS BY WRIT OR WAGE ASSIGNMENT *</u> 15</p>	16
17	<p><u>ANSWER/RESPONSE & FEE WAIVER</u></p> <p>BRING A COPY OF WHATEVER YOU WERE SERVED WITH</p>	<p>BEGIN DISSOLUTION (DIVORCE)/LEGAL SEPARATION/NULLITY PROCEEDINGS *</p> <p><u>BRING DISSOLUTION PACKET</u> 18</p>	<p><u>ANSWER/RESPONSE & FEE WAIVER</u> 19</p> <p>BRING A COPY OF WHATEVER YOU WERE SERVED WITH.</p>	<p>MODIFY CUSTODY, VISITATION, CHILD SUPPORT, JOINDER; OTHER ISSUES *</p> <p><u>MUST BRING COPY OF CURRENT ORDER</u> 20</p>	<p><u>FINAL DIVORCE BY MARITAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (MSA)*</u> 21</p> <p>PRESIGN-UP <u>REQUIRED</u>, FACILITATOR APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDED</p>	22
24	<p>BEGIN DISSOLUTION (DIVORCE) /LEGAL SEPARATION /NULLITY PROCEEDINGS *</p>	<p><u>FINAL DISSOLUTION/LEGAL SEPARATION JUDGMENT BY DEFAULT ONLY *</u> 25</p> <p>PREREGISTRATION IS <u>REQUIRED!</u></p>	<p><u>REQUEST FOR HEARING ON WAGE ASSIGNMENTS</u> 26</p> <p><u>NOTE: DOES NOT CHANGE AMOUNT OF CHILD SUPPORT OWED</u></p>	<p>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY 27</p>	<p>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY 28</p>	29
						30

ABOUT CLINICS

Most clinics are conducted on a first-come, first-served basis with a limited capacity. **It is important that you arrive 15 minutes early** and sign in. **No-one will be admitted to a clinic once it has begun.** Late arrivals will need to come to the next scheduled clinic of the same type. **However,** the Concluding Dissolution clinics require pre-registration. At the time that you call, please have your dissolution court case number available as your court file must be pulled in preparation for the clinic. Clinics indicated with a star (★) on the calendar are subject to financial qualification. Appointments with the Facilitator regarding these issues are also subject to the same financial qualification. Call ahead or ask the clerk.

A **self help** Domestic Violence Restraining Order lab is available for use in our self help resource room.

What do I bring? In general, bring with you any paperwork that pertains to your case and what you want to do. Required forms and file copies can be obtained at the Civil Division of the Sutter County Superior Court, 463 Second Street, Room 211, Yuba City, CA.

-Motions (support, custody/visitation and other issues): bring with you a copy of the most recent order that you are trying to change, and/or other pertinent court documents and information. Also pick up a “motions packet” from the Civil Division court clerk’s office

-Beginning dissolution: You will need a “Dissolution packet” for families with children or families without children, depending on if there are minor children of the marriage. You will need to know the date you were married and the date you separated from your spouse. You will also need to know your children’s birth dates and have in mind what kind of parenting plan and property division you would like the Court to order.

-Concluding dissolution by Default: You will need the remaining forms from your Dissolution packet, the original Proof of Service (if not already filed), and possibly a Judgment/Order After Hearing packet. (Reminder, you must call ahead to sign up and to give us your case number.)

-Final Divorce by Marital Settlement Agreement: Pre-signup is required for this class as well. An appointment with the Facilitator is recommended before signing up for this class. The Facilitator can help determine if this class is right for your situation.

-Petition for Paternity: You will need a “Uniform Parentage packet”.

-Judgment/Order after Trial/Hearing: Bring a copy of the minutes from the hearing or trial and an Order/Judgment packet. These can be obtained from the Court Clerk’s Office; you may have to pay fifty cents per page for your minute order.

-Enforcement of Judgments: Bring a copy of the Judgment/Order you are interested in enforcing.

-Request for Hearing on Wage Assignment Orders: Bring a copy of the Wage Assignment currently in effect, and a copy of your court order. The *Request for Hearing on Wage Assignment* does **not** modify the ongoing support order, but may help you adjust the monthly amount being garnished from your wages towards back child support. It can also assist if your wages are being garnished and you are not the person named in the judgment or order for support.

-Modification of Support Only: strictly to modify current child or spousal support only. If you wish to address any other issues, including support arrears, custody, visitation, or property, you will need to attend the next *Motions* clinic.

-Application for Waiver of Court Fees can be obtained from the Civil Division of the court as well.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL FAMILY COURT SERVICES AT (530) 822-7333

APPENDIX F

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Family Law Information Centers

- The information in this form is confidential
- You may skip questions if you want to.
- Please use the No 2 pencil provided. Fill in the entire bubble or box, and erase any errors completely.

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements made about the services you received at the Family Law Information Center?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I did not have to wait a long time to be served.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The staff was courteous and respectful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The assistance provided was helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I was given useful help in completing my forms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I feel like I understand my case or issue better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I feel like I can present my case better to the judge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. I feel like I understand how the court works better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. I would come back to the Family Law Information Center in the future for assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Check All That Apply On Every Question)

2. What was the most helpful service you received at the Family Law Information Center?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff To Answer Procedural Questions | <input type="checkbox"/> Forms Packets With Written Instructions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff To Assist Filling out Forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Get Help Elsewhere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers to use | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Information Brochures |

Comments: _____

3. How could the Family Law Information Center improve its services to you?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More staff to help | <input type="checkbox"/> Simplified Forms with Instructions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help in More Languages | <input type="checkbox"/> Referrals to Attorneys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More Website Information | <input type="checkbox"/> More Information about other Community Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide Services Closer to Your Home | |

Comments: _____

4. Have you considered hiring an attorney?

- Yes No

If not – why not?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to Afford | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose to Represent Self | <input type="checkbox"/> Already Have An Attorney |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know how to find/hire an attorney | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

5. Did you try to find help before coming to the Family Law Information Center?

Yes No

If "yes," where did you try to find help previously?

- Legal Aid Private Lawyer Websites
- Family Law Facilitator Friend/Relative Paralegal
- Lawyer Referral Library Self-Help Books
- Another Self-Help Center Other: _____

6. How did you find out about the Family Law Information Center?

- Legal Aid Private Attorney Family Law Facilitator
- Other Court Personnel Friend/Relative Paralegal
- Other Service Agency Library Another Self-help Center
- Used the Center Before Websites Other _____

7. Do you use Computers?

Yes No

If "yes," check the phrases that apply to your computer experience:

- I know how to use Microsoft Windows I have used legal software like TurboTax

8. Where do you use computers?

- Home Library Friend's house
- Courthouse Legal Services office School
- Work Community center Other _____

9. Do you use the Internet?

Yes No

If yes: Do you look for information on the Internet?

Yes No

During a typical week, how many times do you use the internet? _____

Demographic Information:

Age Group?

- Under 18
- 18 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- Over 60

Highest Level of Education Completed?

- None
- Grade School (grades 1 – 4)
- Middle School (grades 5 – 8)
- Graduated High School or GED
- Some College
- College Graduate or more

What is your race or ethnic group?

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Native American/Eskimo/Aleut
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Other _____

Customer Gender: Female Male
 Petitioner/Moving Party Responding Party

Residence (City): _____

(FOR STAFF USE ONLY)

CASE TYPES:
 Divorce Paternity DVPA TitleIVD Other: _____

ISSUES:
 Child Custody Child Visitation Child Support Spousal Support Other: _____

TYPE OF SERVICE:

Drop-In One-on-One By Appointment
 Workshop/Clinic Telephone Customer used Computer

Provided Procedural Information: Provided Court Forms:
 Service of Process Information Provided forms with packets of instructions
 Enforcement Information Helped complete the forms
 Provided Informational Materials Prepared Order After Hearing/Judgment

Made Referrals:
 Attorney/Legal Service Other Community Service

APPENDIX G

Judicial Survey Questions

Family Law Information Centers Judicial Survey

1. How many cases do you hear as a judge in a typical week?
2. What proportion of those people appear pro per?
3. Are you aware of the Family Law Information Center in your court?
4. What services are provided by the Family Law Information Center in your court?
5. Do you refer litigants to the Family Law Information Center for help?
6. For what problems do you most frequently refer litigants to the FLIC?
7. Do you think the FLIC helps pro pers to get the correct paperwork filed?
8. Do you think the FLIC helps litigants be more prepared to present their case to you?
9. Do you think the FLIC helps litigants to gain a better understanding of how the law and court procedures are applied in their cases?
10. Do you think the FLIC helps litigants understand what their court orders mean and what their obligations are?
11. Do you think that the availability of the FLIC saves court time you would have to otherwise spend answering pro per questions?
12. Do you think that the FLIC helps expedite family law cases involving pro pers?
 - a. If so, in what ways does it help?
13. What services of the FLIC are most useful to you as the judge?
14. How could the FLIC be more helpful to you as the judge?
15. What services of the FLIC do you think are most helpful to the litigants?
16. How could the FLIC be more helpful to the litigants?

APPENDIX H

Methodology Detail

METHODOLOGY DETAIL

The evaluation was designed to address the specific requirements of Family Code §15000 et seq. The specific case types, issues, and types of services covered in the evaluation were defined by the Family Law Information Center Act. Contact types were discussed in response to the mandate that the Family Law Information Centers experiment with methods of service delivery to increase access and expedite cases. An analysis of customer satisfaction data and a judicial survey were also mandated. Analysis of the data other than for mandated purposes has been deferred for the purposes of this legislative report. Only the categories of gender and party status have been explored as they were expressly mentioned in the statute as being of interest to the Legislature.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND PROCESS INFORMATION

Staff and evaluators from the Center for Families, Children & the Courts made three rounds of site visits to the Family Law Information Center programs in 2000, 2001, and 2002. Focus groups were held with pilot program directors and staff to gather information about what the programs were doing, how implementation was proceeding, and what design changes were made. In the final round of focus groups the participants discussed lessons learned, current program design, obstacles and sources of satisfaction. Program staff also provided detailed written program descriptions for use in the evaluation.

SERVICE STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Statistics on services and customer demographics are derived from administrative data kept by the Family Law Information Centers. The data collection period was July 2001 to June 2002. All three pilot programs collected data on all customer contacts during the study period.

The Sutter and Fresno County Family Law Information Centers reported data on customers and services using the common format used by the family law facilitator programs in California (Attachment A). In this system a data collection form is filled out for every customer contact with the program. The customer fills out information on demographics and services needed, and the Family Law Information Center staff member fills out information on the services provided to the customer. Forms are either scanned through a centralized facilitator SCANTRON system, or entered into a database at the Family Law Information Center locally. Evaluation project staff cleaned and merged the reported data. In August 2001, changes were made to the family law facilitator reporting form used by the Family Law Information Center programs. Any collapsed categories are reported in Attachment B.

In Fresno County, detailed information on contacts (case type, issues raised, and paperwork and informational services provided) was reported for a sub-group of customers: those served by the Family Law Information Center attorneys who provided service in outlying areas.

The Los Angeles County Family Law Information Centers are designed to triage, interview, assess and hand out forms packets with instructions. Los Angeles County did not use the client

contact reporting forms used by Sutter and Fresno Counties. Instead, the Los Angeles County programs measured case types and issues by logging the packets of forms that were handed out. The very specific nature of the forms packets allowed the program to log detailed case types and issues. In addition, Los Angeles County kept detailed reports on the contact types (telephone, walk-in, etc.)

Case types from the two reporting systems outlined above were collapsed according to the schema in Attachment B. Detailed contact numbers are reported in the reference tables in Attachment C.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

A Family Law Information Center Customer Satisfaction Survey was designed by evaluation project staff at the Center for Families, Children & the Courts and given to the Family Law Information Center programs for distribution in November and December, 2002. (See Appendix F for a copy of the customer satisfaction survey instrument.)

In Fresno County, the surveys were distributed to customers by the two attorneys who served outlying areas. These customers represent 21 percent of the total customers of the Fresno Family Law Information Center. Customers using the downtown Fresno location were not surveyed. Of the customers served in outlying areas, 210 were seen by the attorneys and offered the survey forms during the survey period. A total of 170 survey forms were actually distributed to customers, and 148 were returned. There was a response rate of 70 percent of customers offered forms.

In Sutter County, the survey forms were made available to all customers at the Center during the survey period. In this period, 83 customers used the Family Law Information Center. All received surveys, and 64 were returned. There was a response rate of 77 percent.

In Los Angeles County, customers at the triage window who had quick “yes” or “no” questions did not receive survey forms. Telephone help-line customers also did not receive survey forms. These two groups of customers were not required to complete financial eligibility forms for the Family Law Information Centers. Those customers that did have to qualify financially for services were all surveyed. These were customers who required more detailed levels of assistance. During the survey period, Los Angeles served 1,647 customers who were required to complete financial eligibility forms. A total of 1,410 forms were distributed, and 1,152 were returned. There was a response rate of 70 percent of customers offered forms.

JUDICIAL SURVEY

The Family Law Presiding Judges and FLIC staff in the three pilot locations created a list of judges and commissioners for the evaluators to interview. Twenty-seven judges and commissioners were suggested – 2 from Sutter County, 7 from Fresno County, and 18 from Los Angeles County. All but 3 were interviewed by the evaluation consultant. Interviews were conducted by telephone and took approximately 30 minutes each. (See Appendix G for a copy of the judicial survey questions.)

ATTACHMENT A

Family Law Facilitator Survey Form

◦ Please answer all of the following questions to the best of your abilities.
 ◦ Your answers will be used to determine whether we are effectively serving the community.
 ◦ Keep in mind that all of your answers will remain confidential. They will be reported in summary form only and you will **never** be personally identified.
 ◦ Please use the No 2 pencil provided. Fill in the entire bubble and erase any errors completely. Just fill in this side of the form.
 ◦ Thank you for your cooperation!

(1) What language are you most comfortable speaking?

CHECK ONLY ONE:

- English
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Armenian
- Assyrian
- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- Other: _____
- Don't Know
- Vietnamese
- Tagalog
- Korean
- Cambodian
- Hmong
- Farsi
- Sign
- Refused

(2) Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Don't Know
- Refused

(3) HOW MANY CHILDREN UNDER 19 FROM THIS OR ANY OTHER RELATIONSHIP DO YOU HAVE?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more
- Don't
- Refused

(4) What is your age group?

- Under 18
- Between 18 and 29
- Between 30 and 39
- Between 40 and 49
- Between 50 and 59
- Over 60
- Don't Know
- Refused

(5) WHAT IS YOUR RACE OR ETHNIC GROUP?

MARK ALL THAT APPLY

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Native American/ Eskimo/Aleut
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Other _____
- Don't Know
- Refused

(6) What is your individual monthly income before taxes?

- \$0 - \$500
- \$501- \$1000
- \$1001- \$1500
- \$1501- \$2000
- \$2001- \$2500
- \$2501- \$3000
- \$3001 and over
- Don't Know
- Refused

(7) What are all of your sources of income? MARK ALL THAT APPLY

- No income -- Incarcerated
- No income -- Disabled
- No income -- Unemployed
- Receiving SSI, TANF, GA or other public assistance
- Employed
- Self-Employed
- Receiving Unemployment
- Retired
- On Disability/Worker's Comp
- Help from Family & Friends
- Receiving Child/Spousal Support
- Student
- Don't Know
- Refused

(8) WHAT IS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETED?

- None
- Grade School (grades 1 – 4)
- Middle School (grades 5 – 8)
- Some High School (grades 9 - 12)
- Graduated High School or GED
- Vocational or Trade School
- Some College
- College Graduate
- Post-Graduate
- Don't Know
- Refused

(9) WHO REFERRED YOU?

MARK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Judge/Commissioner
- Court Staff
- Clerk's Office
- DA/ Local Child Support Agency
- Attorney
- Friend
- Family Court Services
- Other Facilitator
- Facilitator Pamphlets
- Child Protection Services
- Law Enforcement
- Other: _____
- Don't Know
- Refused

(10) You are here regarding: MARK ALL THAT APPLY:

- Child Support
- Determining Child Support / Arrears
- Getting Back Your License
- Spousal Support
- Child Custody
- Child Visitation
- Physical Violence/ Restraining Order
- Divorce
- Establishing Paternity
- Responding to Papers you were served
- Guardianship
- Don't Know
- Refused

(11) NOT INCLUDING TODAY, HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU VISITED A FACILITATOR?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more
- Don't Know
- Refused

(12) IS THE LOCAL CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY OR DA INVOLVED IN YOUR CASE?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
- Refused

(13) WHAT IS YOUR ZIP CODE?

- Don't Know
- Refused

(14) WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY RESIDE?

- In This County
- In Another County in CA
- In Other State
- In Other Country
- Don't Know
- Refused

Once more thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey!

(1) Case Types:

- FLA
- UPA
- DVPA
- GOVERNMENTAL / DCSS
- OTHER: _____

(2) Total Number of Cases Discussed with Facilitator:

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six or More

(3) Issue:

- Establish Paternity
- Child Support
- Spousal Support
- Wage Assignment
- Support Arrears
- Getting Back License
- Child Custody
- Child Visitation
- Time Share Log
- Divorce
- DV
- Foster Care/ Guardianships
- Adoption
- Set Asides - Paternity
- Set Asides - VDOP
- Set Asides - Child/Spousal Support
- Set Asides - Other
- Other: _____

(4) How many children are involved in this case?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

(5) Is the Local Child Support Agency / DA involved with this case?

- Yes
- No

(6) Staff Category:

- Facilitator / Asst Facilitator
- Paralegal/ Legal Assistant
- Clerk
- Volunteer Attorney
- Intern / Volunteer
- Translator
- Other: _____

(7) Time Spent with the Customer:

- 0-15 min.
- 16-30 min.
- 31-60 min.
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4 + hours

(8) Type of Service Delivery:

- At the Courthouse
- At a Jail / Prison
- Education & Community Outreach
- Telephone
- Individual Drop-In
- Individual Appointment
- Workshop Drop-In
- Workshop Appointment
- Fax/ Mail/ Email

(9) Forms and Documents:

- Fee Waiver
- Petition/Complaint
- OSC / Motion: Initial CS Order
- OSC / Motion: Modification of CS
- OSC / Motion: Other Initial Order
- OSC / Motion: Other Modification
- Income & Expense Declaration
- Answer
- Responsive Papers
- Stip & Order
- OAH
- Wage Assignment / Enforcement
- Case Registry
- Ex Parte
- License Revocation Review
- Prepare Settlement Conference Stmt
- Judgment
- Proof of Service
- Other: _____

(10) Referrals to:

- Child Protective Services
- Family Court Services
- Local Child Support Agency / DA
- Abduction Unit
- Private Attorney
- Legal Aid
- Lawyer Referral
- DV Advocate
- Other FLF
- Other: _____

(11) Tasks Performed / Assistance Provided:

- Prepare CS Calculation
- Mediate Issues of Support
- Draft Stipulations
- Court File Review
- Prepare Order
- Special Master Services
- Assist Court with Research
- Provide Educational Materials
- Distribute Court Forms
- Assist in Completing Forms
- Referrals
- Conform & File
- Contact w/ LCSA / DA
- Contact w/ Other FLF
- Contact w/ Other Agencies
- Other Financial Mediation
- Other: _____

(12) As a result of your services, how many issues were resolved without a court hearing?

- All
- Some
- None

(13) Number of attendees at group Presentation:

(14) Mon Day Year

(15) Site ID:

ATTACHMENT B

SCHEMA OF COLLAPSED CASE TYPES AND ISSUES

SCHEMA OF COLLAPSED CASE TYPES AND ISSUES

Case types and issues were recorded in Los Angeles County based on the forms packet the customer received. From Fresno and Sutter Counties this information is based on the standard form (see Attachment A). For the evaluation these two sources were collapsed into the categories and sub-categories shown below. Items from Fresno and Sutter Counties that are marked “old” refer to data elements that were changed between July and August, 2001, and collapsed for the purpose of this evaluation.

	Los Angeles	Fresno and Sutter
A. Case Types		
Dissolution/Legal Separation/Nullity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DISSOLUTION ACTION • SUMMARY DISSOLUTION • RESTORATION OF FORMER NAME 	FLA (all categories)
Paternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PATERNITY ACTION 	UPA (all categories)
Domestic Violence Prevention Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESPONSIVE DECLARATION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE • OSC TO TERMINATE DV ORDERS • DECLARATION 	DVPA (all categories)
Title IVD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	DA (all categories)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PETITION FOR CUSTODY AND SUPPORT ACTION – all items • CIVIL HARASSMENT • OUT OF STATE REGISTRATION 	Other (all categories)
B. Categories of Services		
Petition/Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DISSO ONE – WITH CHILDREN • DISSO ONE – WITHOUT CHILDREN • ESTABLISHING PATERNITY • PETITION FOR CUSTODY AND SUPPORT • SUMMARY DISSOLUTION • MOTION TO QUASH • CIVIL HARASSMENT • 	Petition/Complaint
Answers/Responsive Pleadings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESPONSE TO DISSO • RESPONSE TO PATERNITY • RESPONSIVE DECLARATION TO OSC • RESPONSIVE DECLARATION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 	Answer Responsive Papers
OSC/Motions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORDERS TO SHOW CAUSE RE CUSTODY • ORDERS TO SHOW CAUSE RE: CUSTODY (WITH TROS) • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE WITH CUSTODY & NON-CSSD SUPPORT • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE SUPPORT (NON-CSSC) 	OSC/Motion: Initial CS Order OSC/Motion: Mod of CS Order OSC/Motion: Other Initial Order OSC/Motion: Other Modification Ex Parte License Revocation Review OSC/Motion (Old)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3130 EXPARTE ORDER/EXPARTE DOCUMENTS • MOTION TO CHANGE VENUE • OSC TO TERMINATE D.V. ORDERS • DECLARATION • RE-ISSUANCE • MOTION TO BIFURCATE • 	
Proofs of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROOF OF SERVICE OF FORMS • NOTICE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT • 	Proof of Service
Financial Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRELIMINARY DECLARATION OF DISCLOSURE • FEE WAIVERS • INCOME AND EXPENSE DECLARATION • SDT • NOTICE TO PRODUCE AT TRIAL • DISSOMASTER • 	Income & Expense Declaration Fee Waiver
Judgments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEFAULT PACKET/FORMS (DISSO) • REQUEST FOR TRIAL/DEFAULT SETTING • TRIAL BRIEF (DISSO) • WITNESS LIST • EXHIBIT LIST • DISSO JUDGMENT (WITH CHILDREN) – UNCONTESTED • DISSO JUDGMENT (WITH CHILDREN) – NO SIGNATURES • DISSO JUDGMENT (WITHOUT CHILDREN) – UNCONTESTED • DISSO JUDGMENT (WITHOUT CHILDREN) – NO SIGNATURES • DISSO JUDGMENT (FORMS ONLY) • DEFAULT PACKET/FORMS (PATERNITY) • REQUEST FOR TRIAL/DEFAULT SETTING (PATERNITY) • UNCONTESTED PATERNITY JUDGMENT • DEFAULT/UNCONTESTED PATERNITY JUDGMENT • DEFAULT PACKET (PETITION FOR CUSTODY SUPPORT) • REQUEST FOR TRIAL/DEFAULT SETTING (PET FOR C&S) • UNCONTESTED JUDGMENT (PETITION FOR CUSTODY & SUP) • DEFAULT/CONTESTED 	Prepare Settlement Conf Stmt Judgment

	<p>JUDGMENT (PET. FOR CUS. & SUP.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OUT OF STATE REGISTRATION • NOTICE OF ENTRY 	
Orders After Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STIPULATION FOR CUSTODY, SUPPORT, MISC. • STIPULATION AND ORDER FOR SPOUSAL SUPPORT/FAMILY SUPPORT • FINDINGS AND ORDER AFTER HEARING • GENETIC TESTING STIPULATION 	<p>Stip & Orders OAH</p> <p>Draft Stipulations Prepare Order</p>
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAGE ASSIGNMENT • WRIT OF EXECUTION • CONTEMPT FORMS • 	<p>Wage Assignment/ Enforcement Case Registry</p>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS • NOTICE OF FAMILY COURT SERVICES MEDIATION APPOINTMENT • NOTICE OF CONTINUANCE • MINORS' CONTRACT • ABDUCTION PACKET • SUBSTITUTION OF ATTORNEY • RESTORATION OF FORMER NAME • JOINDER DOCUMENTS • REQUEST FOR DISMISSAL 	<p>Other</p>
<i>C. Contact Types</i>		
Telephone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phones 	<p>Telephone Contact (old) Telephone</p>
Face to Face: Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OFF. ASST. • WALK-INS • 	<p>Contact: Individual Appt (old) Contact: Drop-in (old) Court (old) Service types: Individual Drop-In, Individual Appointment, At a Jail, At the Courthouse, Education and Comm. Outreach</p>
Face to Face: Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORKSHOP 	<p>Contact types: Workshop (old) Service types: Workshop drop-in, Workshop appt.</p>
Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CORRESPONDENCE 	<p>Contact Type: Fax/Mail (old) Service Type: Fax/Mail</p>
<i>D. Issues</i>		
Child Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE CUSTODY & NON-CSSC SUPPORT • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE SUPPORT (NON CSSD) • RESPONSIVE DECLARATION TO OSC • STIPULATION FOR CUSTODY, SUPPORT, MISC. 	<p>Old Forms: ISSUES: Child support Time share Calcs Health Insurance Support Arrears Day Care Expenses Multi-Jurisdictional OTHER CHILD SUPPORT: Juvenile Dependency</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FINDINGS AND ORDER AFTER HEARING • INCOME & EXPENSE DECLARATION • WAGE ASSIGNMENT • DISSOMASTER • WRIT OF EXECUTION 	<p>Juvenile Delinquency Foster Care Guardianship Other</p> <p>New Forms: ISSUES: Child Support Wage Assignment Support Arrears Driver's License Time Share Log Foster Care/Guardian Set Aside Paternity Set Aside VDOP Set Aside Support Set Aside Other</p>
Spousal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE SUPPORT (NON-CSSD) • STIPULATION AND ORDER FOR SPOUSAL/FAMILY SUPPORT • 	Spousal Support
Child Custody/Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PETITION FOR CUSTODY & SUPPORT – ALL ITEMS • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE: CUSTODY • ORDER TOP SHOW CAUSE RE CUSTODY (WITH TROS) • ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE RE CUSTORY & NON-CSSD SUPPORT • 3130 EX PARTE ORDER/ EXPARTE DOCUMENTS • STIPULATION AND ORDER FOR CUSTODY, SUPPORT, MISC. • FINDINGS AND ORDERS AFTER HEARING • NOTICE OF FAMILY COURT SERVICES MEDIATION • ABDUCTION PACKET • UCCJEA • JOINDER DOCUMENTS 	<p>Time Share Calc (old)</p> <p>Child Custody Child Visitation</p>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIVIL HARASSMENT • REQUEST FOR DISMISSAL • RESTORATION OF FORMER NAME • MOTION TO BIFURCATE • MOTION TO QUASH 	<p>Old Forms: Other Child Support: Juvenile Dependency Juvenile Delinquency Foster Care Guardianship Issues: Other</p> <p>New Forms: Issues: Foster care/Guardian Adoption Other</p>

ATTACHMENT C

Reference Tables

SERVICE STATISTICS

Table 1. Contact types³⁵

	Telephone		In-Person- One-on-one		Workshops		Correspondence		Totals
	No. of customers	%	In-Person- One-on-one	%	No. of customers	%	No. of customers	%	No. of customers
Los Angeles	15,005	<i>39</i>	23,364	<i>61</i>	0	<i>0</i>	152	<i><1</i>	38,521
Fresno	56	<i>1</i>	6105	<i>94</i>	194	<i>3</i>	109	<i>2</i>	6464
Sutter	5	<i>1</i>	330	<i>65</i>	156	<i>30</i>	20	<i>4</i>	511
Totals	15,066	<i>33</i>	29,799	<i>65</i>	350	<i>1</i>	281	<i>1</i>	45,496

Table 2. Case Types³⁶

	Dissolution	%	Paternity	%	Title IVD	%	DVPA	%	Other	%	Totals
Los Angeles³⁷	10,290	<i>72</i>	3816	<i>27</i>	0	<i>0</i>	51	<i><1</i>	174	<i>1</i>	14,331
Fresno³⁸	761	<i>57</i>	219	<i>16</i>	232	<i>17</i>	105	<i>8</i>	33	<i>2</i>	1,350
Sutter	296	<i>54</i>	54	<i>10</i>	156	<i>29</i>	23	<i>4</i>	18	<i>3</i>	547
Totals	11,347	<i>70</i>	4,089	<i>25</i>	388	<i>2</i>	179	<i>1</i>	225	<i>2</i>	16,228

³⁵ Figures represent total number of customers served from July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002.

³⁶ Customers can have more than one case type

³⁷ Los Angeles did not record telephone or short answer contact.

³⁸ Fresno only recorded outlying areas served by Family Law Information Center attorneys.

Table 3. Issues raised within the Case Types³⁹

	Custody/Visitation	%	Child Support	%	Spousal Support	%	Other	%	Totals
Los Angeles ⁴⁰	7,114	78	1,682	18	273	3	49	1	9,118
Fresno ⁴¹	843	50	538	32	28	1	284	17	1,693
Sutter	345	46	242	33	40	5	121	16	748
Totals	8302	72	2462	21	341	3	454	4	11,559

Table 4. Paperwork & Informational Services⁴²

	Petitions	%	Responses	%	OSC/ Motions	%	Proof of Service	%	Financial Statements	%	Orders/ Judgments	%	Enforcement	%	Other	%	Totals
Los Angeles ⁴³	7,135	25	933	3	6,798	24	372	1	5,025	18	7,465	26	71	1	476	2	28,275
Fresno ⁴⁴	1,475	11	633	5	2,159	17	1,363	10	3,207	24	1,141	9	205	2	2,945	22	13,128
Sutter	127	15	44	5	252	30	63	8	128	15	86	11	8	1	126	15	834
Totals	8,737	21	1,610	4	9,209	22	1,798	4	8,360	20	8,692	21	284	<1	3,547	8	42,237

³⁹ More than one issue can be raised within a case type and customer can have more than one issue.

⁴⁰ Los Angeles did not record telephone or short answer contact.

⁴¹ Fresno only recorded outlying areas served by Family Law Information Center attorneys.

⁴² Customers can receive more than one service type.

⁴³ Los Angeles did not record telephone or short answer contact.

⁴⁴ Fresno only recorded outlying areas served by Family Law Information Center attorneys.