



Research Update

Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts

March 2003

Difficult Cases in California Court-Based Child Custody Mediation

Family dynamics, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic status affect both the difficulty of resolving child custody and visitation issues through court-based mediation and the resources necessary to do so. This research update examines the characteristics of court-based child custody mediation cases in California. It also examines the relationship between issues involved in a case, the mediator's rating of difficulty, and the resolution of the case in mediation. The findings have implications for the resource needs of Family Court Services (the agency that provides court-based child custody mediation in the state), the implementation of California Rules of Court requiring intake and assessment for mediation, and the design of mediation and related services.

California law mandates that all family law cases in which there is a dispute over child custody or visitation be set for mediation. The courts, through their Family Court Services units, provide mediation at no charge to the parties. Although the proportion of all cases involving child custody that proceed to this court-based mediation service is not measured, it is estimated to be about 20 to 25 percent. In most cases, the parties reach agreements on their own – with or without the assistance of an attorney or private mediator – or file uncontested petitions for custody. This research update reports on data that were collected only for cases that participated in court-based child custody mediation.

The findings in this research update indicate the high level of difficulty of many of the cases that court-based custody mediators work with. As part of the study described, mediators rated the difficulty of the issues that they worked on with each case. The rating scale ranged from 1 (not at all difficult) to 10 (extremely difficult). In 1999, mediators rated 23 percent of cases as a 9 or higher and 39 percent of cases as an 8 or higher. A sizeable proportion of these “difficult cases” do not reach resolution of all their case issues in one mediation session; therefore, they may require more time and resources to investigate.

Data Come From a Statewide Survey

The findings in this publication come from data collected by California's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as part of the 1999 Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS). The SUSRS consists of data collected through representative samplings of contested child custody cases across all California counties. Data are collected through surveys of the mediators, mothers, and fathers in these cases, on topics such as family characteristics, issues involved in the case, and the outcome of the mediation session. The methodology section on page 9 of this report describes the study in more detail.

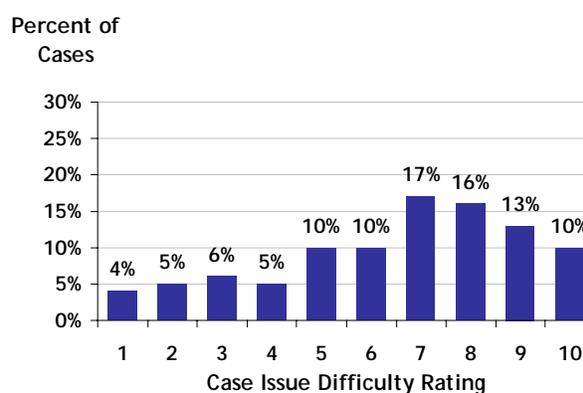
During a two-week period, throughout the California court system, the SUSRS surveys mediators after each session about the difficulty of the issues in the case, family problems that were raised during the session, and the outcome of the session. Parents are surveyed about their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, parental cooperation, issues related to their children, current custody arrangements, and any history of interparental violence in their relationship.

Mediators Rated Most Cases as at Least Somewhat Difficult

After each session, mediators provide an overall rating of the difficulty of the issues they worked on. The rating scale is from 1 (not at all difficult) to 10 (extremely difficult). This “case issue difficulty” scale was selected as the key indicator of case difficulty.

Figure 1 and **Appendix Table A¹** show the distribution of the issue difficulty ratings for all cases surveyed by the SUSRS in 1999. The distribution of ratings is skewed toward the high-difficult end of the scale. Mediators gave 66 percent of all cases issue difficulty ratings between 6 and 10; the average rating was 6.5. Four percent of cases were rated as not at all difficult, and 10 percent were rated as extremely difficult. The skew of the distribution is not surprising. In California, parties may agree on custody arrangements through private ordering. Only when the parties cannot reach an agreement does the court intervene. The first point of this intervention is child custody mediation.

Figure 1. Distribution of Case Issue Difficulty Ratings



Source: 1999 Counselor Report (n = 2,812)

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Parents Often Raised Issues of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse

Mediators reported that the issues that mediation clients raised most commonly before or during mediation were domestic violence (29 percent of cases), drug or alcohol abuse (25 percent), and maligning the other parent (21 percent). Although these issues may not be central to the dispute over custody and visitation, they could create conflict during the session. (See column 1 of **Table 1** for frequency of issues raised in all cases.) The SUSRS does not ask how mediators obtained this information, so the methods they used may not be systematic. Therefore, the high frequency of reports about domestic violence and substance abuse could indicate either that these problems are more prevalent in these cases or that mediators more frequently ask parents about these issues.

Different Issues Were Raised About Fathers and Mothers

Mediators also indicated which parent these issues were raised about. Columns 2 and 3 of **Table 1** show the distribution of issues raised about mothers and issues raised about fathers. Domestic violence, harassment, and substance abuse were raised as issues about fathers more often than about mothers.

¹ Data source for all figures and charts: Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System, 1999 Client and Counselor Baseline Study.

Child neglect and psychological disorders were raised as issues about mothers more frequently than about fathers. All other issues were more commonly raised about fathers than about mothers.

Case Difficulty Ratings Were Higher When Certain Issues Were Raised

Cases in which the parents raised relatively serious issues also had the highest average difficulty ratings of all cases. For example, cases in which the parents raised issues of child sexual abuse received an average difficulty rating of 8.5; cases in which the parents raised issues of child abduction received an average difficulty rating of 8.0; and cases in which the parents raised issues of child abuse or stalking received an average difficulty rating of 7.9. However, it is important to keep in mind that these serious issues were also the least frequently reported. (Between 3 percent and 14 percent of cases reported one of these issues).

Therefore, the high level of case issue difficulty reported for the small number of cases surveyed that involved these issues may not be representative of all cases that involve these issues. (See [Figure 2](#) and [Appendix Table B](#) for issue difficulty and issues raised.)

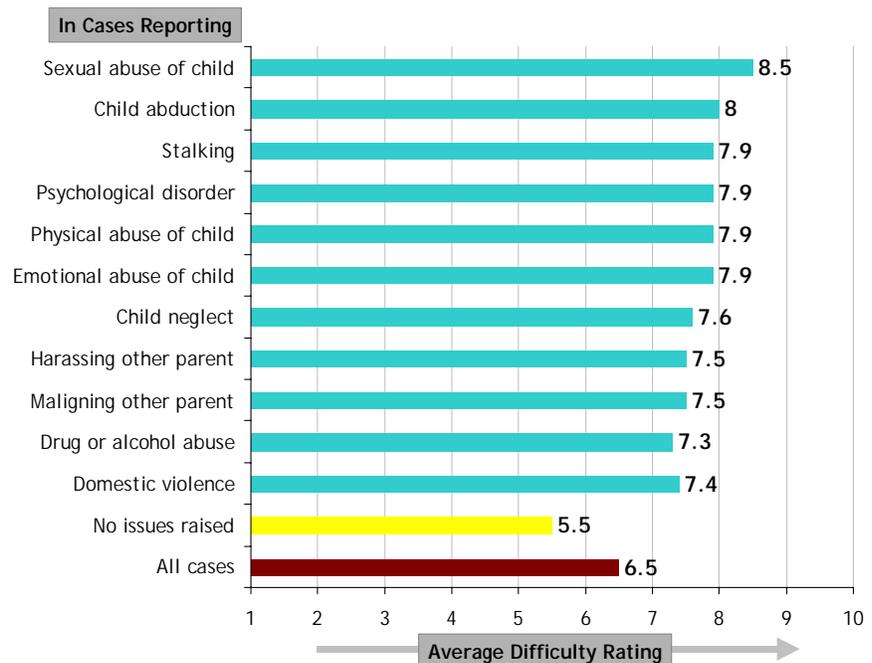
Mediators may rate cases involving these issues as more difficult because these types of

Table 1. Issues Raised by Cases in Mediation (as reported by mediator)

Issues Raised	Total		About Mother		About Father	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Any issues raised	1,595	57%	985	35%	1,326	47%
Multiple issues raised	1,073	38	528	19	811	29
Domestic violence	810	29	262	9	740	26
Drug or alcohol abuse	711	25	326	12	532	19
Maligning the other parent	582	21	364	13	424	15
Harassing the other parent	534	19	226	8	438	16
Emotional abuse of child	395	14	209	7	283	10
Child neglect	381	14	256	9	161	6
Physical abuse of child	248	9	134	5	143	5
Psychological disorder	233	8	151	5	117	4
Stalking the other parent	139	5	28	1	116	4
Child abduction	125	4	56	2	75	3
Sexual abuse of child	97	3	37	1	64	2

All data are from the 1999 Counselor Report (n = 2,812). "About Mother" categories of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of the child include abuse committed by the mother or mother's associate. "About Father" categories of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of the child include abuse committed by the father or father's associate.

Figure 2. Issues Raised in Mediation and Average Issue Difficulty



All data are from the 1999 Counselor Report (n = 2,812)

issues often have no clear resolution, and they may create conflict between the parents during the session.

Parents Raised Multiple Issues in Mediation

In 38 percent of cases, mediators reported that the parents raised more than one issue before or during the session. On average, mediators reported that the parents in a case raised 1.8 issues. Domestic violence was the most common single issue raised, and it was raised in conjunction with other issues, including substance abuse (13 percent), harassment (13 percent), and maligning (11 percent). Although substance abuse was the second most common issue raised by parents, it was not usually raised with any issue other than domestic violence.

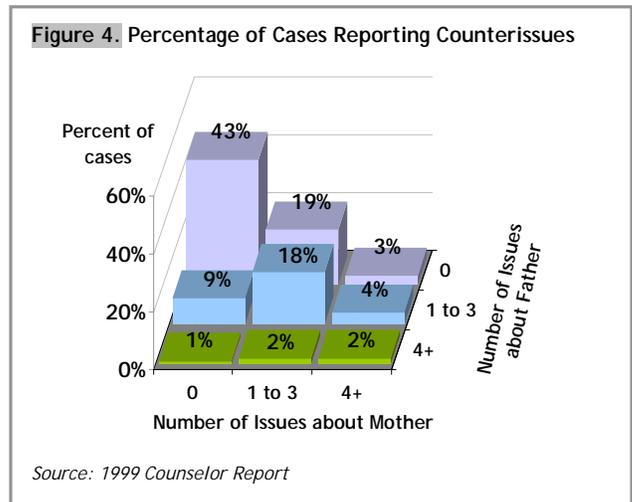
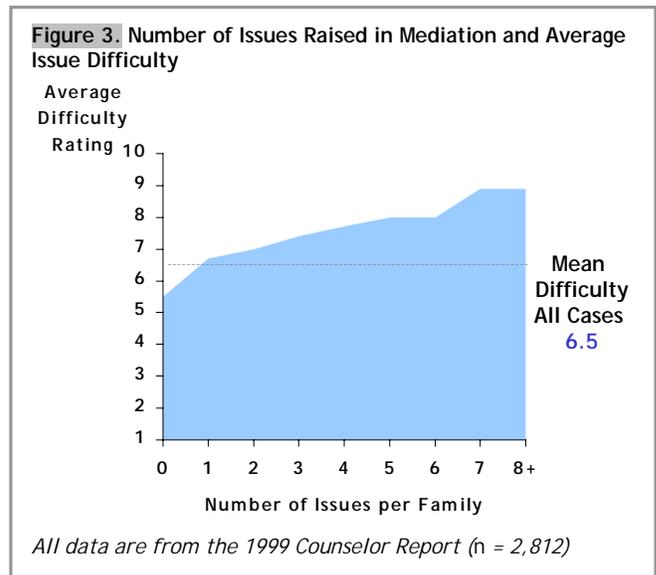
The More Issues Raised in Mediation, the Higher the Case Issue Difficulty Rating

The number of issues the mediator reported and case issue difficulty were positively correlated ($r = .36$). See [Figure 3](#) and [Appendix Table C](#) for the relationship between the number of issues raised in mediation and the average case issue difficulty rating. Cases that did not report any issues (43 percent) had lower-than-average issue difficulty ratings (5.5). Cases that reported any issue (57 percent) had higher-than-average issue difficulty ratings. Cases in which the mediator reported that parents had raised eight or more issues had an average case issue difficulty rating of 8.9 out of 10. Cases that raised only four issues had an average case issue difficulty rating of 7.7.

Mediators may find cases involving multiple issues to be more difficult than cases involving single issues, because the greater number of issues may create more opportunity for conflict between the parties and they may make the case more complicated and difficult to resolve.

In Almost A Quarter of Cases, Issues Were Raised about Both Parents

Issues raised by one parent about the other are referred to in this analysis as *counterissues*. Most of the time, no issues were raised about either parent in a case. In 43 percent of cases, no issues were raised about either parent; this group of cases had the lowest average case issue difficulty rating (5.5). In 32 percent of cases, all of the issues were raised about one parent. The difficulty ratings in these cases ranged from 6.7 to 7.8. In 26 percent of cases, issues were raised about both parents. The difficulty ratings in these cases ranged from 7.3 to 8.5. See [Figure 4](#) for the numbers of cases in which issues and counterissues were raised and [Appendix Table I](#) for the average case issue difficulty ratings in these cases.



The number of counterissues may indicate the level of conflict or complexity in the case – the more counterissues raised, the higher the level of conflict or complexity. Therefore, mediators may find cases raising counterissues more difficult to work with. However, more analysis would need to be done to distinguish the number of issues from the number of counterissues and the effect of each on the difficulty rating.

Lack of Parental Cooperation Was Reported in Most Cases

Before mediation, mothers and fathers completed separate surveys and reported on current parental cooperation. They indicated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a series of statements indicating lack of parental cooperation. This analysis considered a case to have reported an indicator of lack of parental cooperation if one or both parents in the case strongly agreed with a statement indicating lack of parental cooperation.

Sixty-six percent of cases reported at least one indicator of lack of parental cooperation. The most common indicators of lack of cooperation reported in cases were not working together as parents (35% of all cases), not being able to talk to the other parent about their children (33%), and children in the middle of disputes (31%). Every indicator of lack of parental cooperation was reported more frequently by mothers than by fathers. See [Table 2](#) for the frequency of reports of lack of parental cooperation in

Measures of Lack of Parental Cooperation	Total		Reported by Mother		Reported by Father	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Any measures reported	1,647	66%	1,256	54%	991	45%
Multiple measures reported	1,242	50	846	37	646	29
We usually do not manage to work together as parents. *	881	35	564	24	477	22
I cannot talk to the other parent about our child(ren). *	816	33	536	23	414	19
Our child(ren) are caught in the middle of our disagreements.	771	31	455	20	410	19
I feel that my child(ren) are not safe in the other parent’s home.	731	29	468	20	335	15
We basically disagree about our child(ren)’s needs. *	665	27	431	19	342	16
The other parent tries to turn our child(ren) against me.	607	24	425	18	235	11
These days, I feel angry toward the other parent.	544	22	354	15	235	11

Source: 1999 Client Report (n = 2,500 total families; n = 2,317 mothers; n = 2,201 fathers). Starred questions are reverse-coded.

cases.

Half of Cases Reported More Than One Indicator of Lack of Parental Cooperation

Cases in contested custody mediation reported an average of two indicators of lack of parental cooperation. Thirty-seven percent of mothers and 29 percent of fathers reported more than one indicator. Not working together as parents was the most common indicator reported, and it was the one most often raised along with other indicators. The indicators most commonly reported together were not working together as parents and not being able to talk to the other parent about their children (26 percent of all cases).

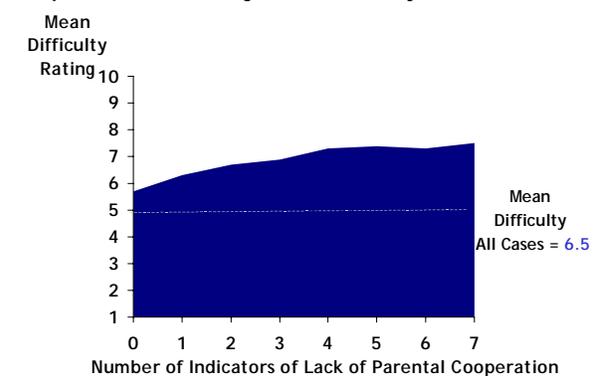
Mediators Rated Cases Reporting Lack of Parental Cooperation as More Difficult than Average

The case report of lack of parental cooperation and the mediator's rating of difficulty are provided independently, meaning that it is less likely they would be related than two measures provided by the same person. Cases in which parents did not report any lack of parental cooperation (34 percent of all cases) had a lower-than-average difficulty rating (5.7). Cases reporting *any* lack of parental cooperation had an average difficulty rating of 6.9 (see [Appendix Table H](#)). These cases may have a higher-than-average difficulty rating because the lack of parental cooperation may make the attempt to reach an agreement on custody or visitation issues during the mediation session more challenging. Some of the indicators also demonstrate that one parent may not trust the other's parenting skills, which would also set up roadblocks to forging a mutually acceptable plan.

Cases with Low Levels of Parental Cooperation Had High Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

In 14 percent of cases, parents reported five or more indicators of lack of parental cooperation. The number of indicators and the case issue difficulty rating were positively correlated ($r = .25$). Cases that reported two indicators of lack of parental cooperation received an average difficulty rating of 6.7, whereas cases reporting all seven possible indicators received an average rating of 7.5. See [Figure 5](#) and [Appendix Table D](#) for the relationship between the number of indicators of lack of parental cooperation that a case raised and the average case issue difficulty rating.

Figure 5. Number of Indicators of Lack of Parental Cooperation and Average Issue Difficulty



All data are from the 1999 Counselor Report (n = 2,812)

Parents in Most Cases Reported Issues with Their Children

Before the mediation session, each parent indicated which issues involving the children he or she had come to mediation to discuss.

Possible issues included emotional adjustment, child safety, behavior problems, school problems, a child's refusal to visit, and medical problems. [Table 3](#) presents the frequency of issues with children reported by all cases, by mothers, and by fathers.

Sixty-seven percent of cases reported at least one issue with children. The most common issues reported were emotional adjustment (41 percent of all cases), child safety (39 percent), and behavior problems (21 percent).

Table 3. Issues with Children (reported by the parents)

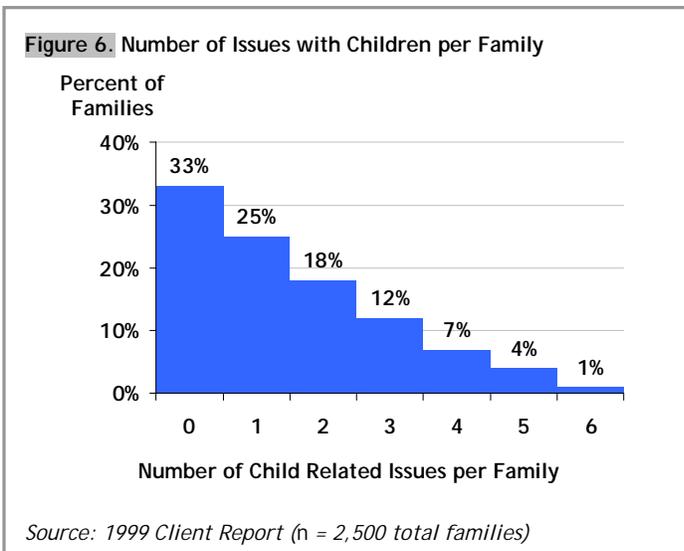
Issue with Children	Total		By Mother		By Father	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Any problems	1,686	67%	1,251	54%	944	43%
Multiple problems	1,061	42	856	37	646	29
Emotional adjustment	1,024	41	723	31	477	22
Child safety	981	39	641	28	468	21
Behavior problems	528	21	328	14	247	11
School problems	508	20	280	12	290	13
Child refuses to visit	397	16	290	13	173	8
Medical problems	383	15	242	10	173	8

1999 Client Report (n = 2,500 families; n = 2,317 mothers; n = 2,201 fathers).

Every issue with children except school problems was reported more frequently by mothers than by fathers. **Figure 6** and **Appendix Table E** present the frequencies of cases in which issues with children were reported, according to the number of issues raised.

Mothers and Fathers Often Reported More Than One Child-Related Issue

An average of 1.5 issues with children were reported for each case. Thirty-seven percent of mothers and 29 percent of fathers reported multiple issues with children. The pairs of problems most commonly raised together were emotional adjustment and safety (22 percent of all cases) and emotional adjustment and behavior (17 percent). Emotional adjustment was the most common child-related issue reported and was the most common issue raised in combination with other child-related issues.

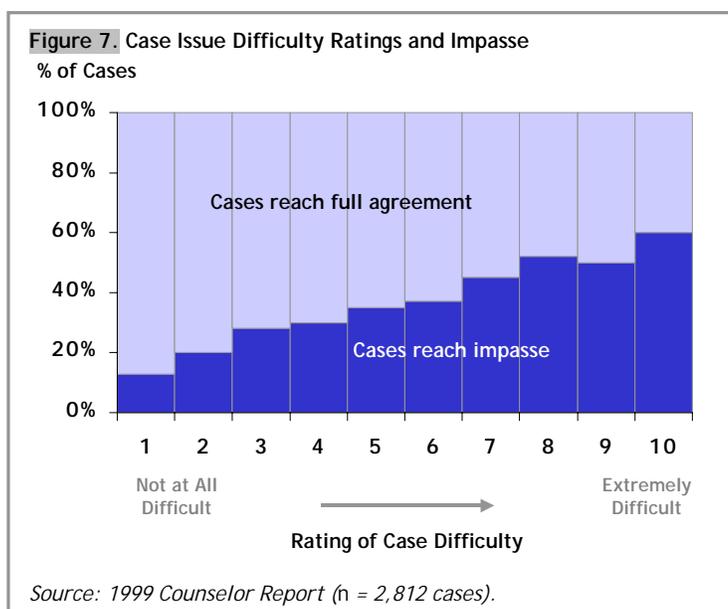


Number of Issues with Children Was Somewhat Related to Case Issue Difficulty

Cases in which any child-related issues were reported had higher-than-average case difficulty ratings. Twelve percent of cases reported four or more issues with children. There was a small positive correlation between the number of issues with children and case issue difficulty ($r = .15$). The average case issue difficulty rating of cases that reported no issues with their children was 5.8, and the average difficulty rating of cases that reported six child issues was 8.0. See **Appendix Table F** for an illustration.

Impasse Is More Common among Cases with High Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

This analysis defines *impasse* as the failure to reach full agreement on the case during mediation. In 1999, 42 percent of all cases reached met this definition of impasse. Although case difficulty and impasse are related, it is possible that different factors drive the two outcomes. Cases with high difficulty ratings reached impasse more frequently than did cases with low issue difficulty ratings. Only 30 percent of cases with a difficulty rating of 4 reached impasse, whereas 60 percent of cases with a difficulty rating of 10 reached impasse. See **Figure 7** and **Appendix Table G** for the relationship between case issue difficulty ratings and impasse.



Conclusions and Implications for Service Delivery

A high proportion of cases in court-based custody mediation are resource-intensive.

In California, the majority of cases that involve child custody never participate in court-based mediation, because custody is not in dispute or because the parties resolve their dispute through other means. The families that come to court-based mediation often present extremely difficult problems to the mediator and ultimately to the judicial officer. In almost one-quarter of cases, mediators reported multiple issues and rated the difficulty of the session as very high. These cases involved issues ranging from domestic violence and substance abuse to emotional abuse, physical abuse, and neglect of children. Over one-half of cases that mediators rated as very difficult did not come to an agreement on all issues during mediation. These cases place numerous resource demands on family courts, increasing the need for specialized training, post-mediation investigation and evaluation, services in addition to mediation, and additional judicial officer time.

These data demonstrate the need to implement and refine processes for intake and screening.

Since these data were collected in 1999, California Rules of Court² have been implemented that require Family Court Services to conduct a differential case assessment for domestic violence and safety-related issues. Rule 5.215 also requires the use of an intake process that screens for and informs staff about domestic violence and other safety-related issues, as well as screening for a history of these issues throughout the process.

The data described in this report support placing a high priority on implementing intake and assessment procedures because they show a relationship between particular types of issues and the mediator's assessment of the difficulty of the case. Intake and screening procedures used to implement Rule 5.215 may also be useful in determining the level of difficulty of a case so that these cases can be handled appropriately.

Parties in these difficult cases, which involve serious issues, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse, also may be involved in other cases in family court or in other court divisions, such as juvenile court. Counties around the state are developing methods for identifying and coordinating information about multiple cases within and between court divisions in order to reduce the duplication of services and increase the efficiency of case resolution. Intake and case screening to identify service needs and additional cases are also key components of these processes.

Effort should continue to focus on the development of intake and screening procedures, coordination of information about related cases, and effective and efficient methods for addressing child custody disputes in the context of problems as severe as abuse, violence, and substance abuse.

The variety of issues in these cases demonstrates the need for a continuum of services.

The need for a continuum of services is borne out by the range of severity of issues in the cases seen in mediation and the correlation of issue severity with impasse. In fact, courts across the state have developed a range of family dispute resolution services, including mediation, emergency assessments, investigation, settlement conferences, case management, review, and specialized courts. A working group of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee of the Judicial Council is currently examining best practices in the use of a range of services for resolving custody disputes. The findings in this research update suggest that one service model is unlikely to meet the diverse needs of the cases

² Cal. Rules of Court, rules 5.210 and 5.215(2002).

referred to child custody mediation. Courts vary in the services they provide; in some courts, mediation is the sole court-based service for parties who are unable to resolve custody disputes on their own³. As shown in this research update, many cases with serious issues do not reach resolution of all custody and visitation issues through one mediation session. Although current budget constraints may preclude the development of new services, work can proceed to examine the range of family dispute resolution services offered in different counties around the state. Future research should focus on which services work best from the perspective of clients, judicial officers, and court staff; which produce good outcomes for families and children over time; and how well these services meet the best interest criteria over time.

³ Only 35% of courts (representing 56% of court-based mediations conducted statewide) provide a range of services including intake and assessment, orientation, mediation, follow-up or review mediation, and investigation or evaluation (Continuum of Services Survey, CFCC, April 2002).

Methodology

The data presented in this report come from the Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS), a series of studies conducted by the AOC's, Center for Families, Children & the Courts. The SUSRS consists of a network of discrete but interlocking studies containing representative and longitudinal data from over 18,000 child custody cases. Data were collected in 1991, 1993, 1996, and 1999. The 1999 Client Baseline Study collected information about 3,038 Family Court Services sessions (79 percent of all covered types of sessions conducted during the two-week study period). The four client baseline studies all used the same basic methodology: during a designated two-week study period, information was collected about every child custody and visitation mediation session offered in the state. For each mediation session conducted during the study period, both the parents and the mediator completed surveys.

- In most cases, both the mother and father in a family filled out surveys. Surveys were completed by parents in 2,500 cases. In 2,018 of those cases (81 percent), both the mother and father completed surveys; in 299 (12 percent), only the mother completed a survey; and in 183 (7 percent), only the father completed a survey.
- In 1999, 2,812 mediators completed SUSRS surveys. In 312 cases, mediators completed surveys but neither parent completed a survey.

For more information on the 1999 studies, see *Data Collection Methods*, Center for Families, Children & the Courts (March 2001). www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfc/pdffiles/dcm99ss.pdf

Levels of Analysis

Each parent filled out the Client Profile before the mediation session, and mediators completed the Counselor Report just after the session. Data are aggregated to several levels of reporting:

- **Case level (mediator report).** Percentages of cases are based on the total number of Counselor Reports collected ($n = 2,812$ cases in 1999).
- **Parent (individual) level.** Percentages for this category are based on the total number of Client Profiles collected ($n = 2,317$ mothers and 2,201 fathers, representing 2,500 families).
- **Case level (family report).** Percentages for this category are based on combined Client Profiles from mothers and fathers in a family ($n = 2,500$ families in 1999). When both parents report, both responses are used. If one parent does not complete the survey, a "family" response consists of the report from one parent. A "yes" response at the family level includes instances when the mother reports yes, the father reports yes, or both parents report yes.

Description of Selected Variables

Issue difficulty rating. The mediator, just after the mediation session, provides a rating in response to the following question: "We worked on issues that were: [rating scale is from 1 to 10, with 1 = not difficult at all and 10 = extremely difficult]."

Issues raised in mediation. The mediator reports that before or during the session, at least one parent raised any of a set of possible issues. Issues asked about are domestic violence, substance abuse, maligning, harassing, emotional abuse, child neglect, physical abuse, psychological disorder, stalking, child abduction, and sexual abuse.

Number of issues. Total number of issues reported by the mediator to have been raised by one or both parents before or during the mediation session. The numbers of issues raised per case ranged from 0 to 9.

Pairs of issues. Pairs of issues reported by the mediator to have been raised by the parents before or during mediation (e.g., domestic violence and substance abuse).

Lack of cooperation between parents. Parents indicate on the Client Profile whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with the following statements:

- "We basically disagree about our child(ren)'s needs."*
- "These days, I feel angry toward the other parent."
- "The other parent tries to turn our child(ren) against me."
- "Our child(ren) are caught in the middle of disagreements."
- "We usually do not manage to work together as parents."*
- "I cannot talk to the other parent about our child(ren)."
- "I feel that my child(ren) are not safe in the other parent's home."

If either parent strongly agrees with a statement, the case is counted as reporting that indicator of lack of cooperation.

Number of points of conflict. Total number of points of parental conflict reported by the case (by mother or father). The numbers of issues reported by cases ranged from 0 to 7.

Pairs of Issues. Pairs of issues of parental conflict raised by the case (by mother or father) (e.g., "We basically disagree about our child(ren)'s needs" and "These days, I feel angry toward the other parent").

Issues with children. Parents report on the Client Report that they are at the mediation session to discuss one or more of the following problems with their children: emotional adjustment, child safety, behavior problems, school problems, child refuses to visit, or medical problems.

Number of issues. Number of issues with children raised in the case (by mother or father). The numbers of issues reported by cases ranged from 0 to 6.

Pairs of issues. Pairs of issues with children raised by the case (by mother or father) (e.g., emotional adjustment and child safety).

Impasse. If the mediator reports in the Counselor Report that the parents failed to reach full agreement on all issues discussed in the mediation session, the case is considered to be at impasse.

* *Questions were reverse-coded for the analysis.*

APPENDIX TABLES

Table A. Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

Case Issue Difficulty Rating	<i>n</i>	%
Total	2,812	
1	114	4%
2	137	5
3	172	6
4	141	5
5	281	10
6	294	10
7	465	17
8	461	16
9	367	13
10	282	10
Missing	98	3

Source: 1999 Counselor Report

Table B. Issues in Mediation and Average Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

Issues Raised in Mediation	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,812		6.5
Any issues raised	1,595	57%	7.3
Domestic violence	810	29	7.4
Drug or alcohol abuse	711	25	7.3
Maligning the other parent	582	21	7.5
Harassing the other parent	534	19	7.5
Emotional abuse of child	395	14	7.9
Child neglect	381	14	7.6
Physical abuse of child	248	9	7.9
Psychological disorder	233	8	7.9
Stalking the other parent	139	5	7.9
Child abduction	125	4	8.0
Sexual abuse of child	97	3	8.5
No issues raised	1,217	43	5.5

Source: 1999 Counselor Report

Table C. Number of Issues and Case Issue Difficulty Rating

Number of Issues Raised in Mediation	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,812		6.5
Any issues raised	1,595	57%	7.3
1	522	19	6.7
2	369	13	7.0
3	276	10	7.4
4	181	6	7.7
5	127	5	8.0
6	66	2	8.0
7	29	1	8.9
8 or more	17	1	8.9
No issues raised	1,217	43	5.5

Source: 1999 Counselor Report

Table D. Number of Indicators of Lack of Parental Cooperation and Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating

Number of Indicators of Lack of Parental Cooperation	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,500		6.5
Any issues	1,647	66%	6.9
1	405	16	6.3
2	346	14	6.7
3	295	12	6.9
4	225	9	7.3
5	182	7	7.4
6	135	5	7.3
7	135	2	7.5
No issues	853	34	5.7

Source: 1999 Client Report

Table E. Number of Issues With Children

Number of Issues With Children	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,500		6.5
Any issues raised	1,686	67%	6.8
1	625	25	6.7
2	455	18	6.7
3	297	12	6.8
4	179	7	7.0
5	101	4	6.7
6	29	1	8.0
No issues raised	814	33	6.5

Source: 1999 Client Report

Table F. Issues With Children and Average Case Difficulty Ratings

Issues With Children	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,500		6.5
Any issues	1,686	67%	6.8
Emotional adjustment	1,024	41	6.8
Child safety	981	39	7.1
Behavior problems	528	21	6.7
School problems	508	20	6.8
Refuses to visit	397	16	7.0
Medical problems	383	15	6.7
No issues raised	814	33	5.8

Sources: 1999 Client Report and 1999 Counselor Report

APPENDIX TABLES

Table G. Case Difficulty Ratings and Impasse

Case Difficulty Rating	<i>n</i>	%	% of Cases at Impasse
Total	2,812		42%
1	114	4%	13
2	137	5	20
3	172	6	28
4	141	5	30
5	281	10	35
6	294	10	37
7	465	17	45
8	461	16	52
9	367	13	50
10	282	10	60

Sources: 1999 Client Report and 1999 Counselor Report

Table H. Indicators of Lack of Parental Cooperation and Average Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

Indicators of Lack of Parental Cooperation	<i>n</i>	%	Average Case Issue Difficulty Rating
Total	2,500		6.5
Any measures reported.	1,647	66%	6.9
We usually do not manage to work together as parents.*	881	35	7.1
I cannot talk to the other parent about our child(ren).*	816	33	7.1
Our child(ren) are caught in the middle of our disagreements.	771	31	7.1
I feel that my child(ren) are not safe in the other parent's home.	731	29	7.2
We basically disagree about our child(ren)'s needs.*	665	27	7.2
The other parent tries to turn our child(ren) against me.	607	24	7.1
These days, I feel angry toward the other parent.	544	22	7.0
No measures reported.	853	34	5.7

Source: 1999 Counselor Report

* Reverse-coded and worded.

Table I. Number of Counterissues in Mediation and Average Case Issue Difficulty Ratings

		Number of issues about father		
		0	1 to 3	4 +
Number of issues about mother	0	5.6	6.7	7.8
	1 to 3	6.9	7.3	8.1
	4 +	7.8	7.9	8.5

Numbers in cells are mean rating of case difficulty.

Source: 1999 Counselor Report

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The AOC's Center for Families, Children & the Courts generates and distributes research-based information that has promise for informing the work of Family Court Services in California and nationwide. To learn more about the work of our office and to see more research updates, visit our Web site:
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