

2003 Stat Sheet: Domestic Violence in Court-Based Child Custody Mediation in California

This stat sheet highlights the prevalence of violence among parents in court-based child custody mediation in California. Data on domestic violence between the parents in these cases come from surveys administered to parents and to mediators by the California Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as part of the Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS). These data were collected in 2003. At that time, 2,691 mothers and fathers and 1,585 mediators from a representative sample of cases were surveyed in 56 of California's 58 county court systems. Interparental violence in the 2003 SUSRS is defined as physical violence, threats of violence, or any restraining orders between the parents in the case. A case report of interparental violence means that either the mother, the father, or both parents reported that it had occurred at some time in the relationship. More detailed tables can be found in [SUSRS 2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings](#), Table 4, pages 9-11.

Key Findings

- Violence between parents was reported in about two-thirds of the cases. In 65 percent of cases, at least one parent reported that interparental violence had occurred in the relationship.
- More cases reported that there had been physical violence in the relationship (53 percent) than reported that there had been threats of violence (48 percent). Additionally, 42 percent of the cases reported a restraining order (application in progress, present, or past).
- In 38 percent of all cases, at least one parent reported that a child had witnessed violence between the parents.
- Mothers were more likely to report that physical violence had occurred between the parents than were fathers (49 percent versus 31 percent, respectively).
- In 35 percent of all cases, at least one parent reported the need for supervised visitation.
- In 63 percent of the cases in which at least one parent reported a current domestic violence restraining order, the mediator met with the parties separately.

Methodology

Data presented in this report come from the Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS), a series of studies conducted by the California Administrative Office of the Courts, Center for Families, Children & the Courts. Data were collected in 1991, 1993, 1996, 1999, and 2003. The 2003 Client Baseline Study collected information about 1,585 family court services sessions (85 percent of all mediation sessions conducted during the one-week study period). The five client baseline studies all used the same basic methodology: during the designated 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. Each parent was given a survey to fill out before the mediation session, and surveys were received from 2,691 parents: 1,375 mothers and 1,316 fathers representing 1,509 families or 95 percent of all sessions where a mediator survey was received. Parent surveys from sessions where no mediator survey was received were not used.

Level of Analysis

Data are aggregated in two levels:

Parent level. Parent level data reports mother (n=1,375) and father (n=1,316) survey responses separately.

Case level. Case level reports combine the responses of the mother and the father in a case (n=1,509).

For more information on the 2003 SUSRS studies, please see CFCC publications at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/resources/publications/articles.htm.

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