

## FACT SHEET

### MEDIATION SERVICE MODELS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION I

Data Source: California Family Court Services Snapshot Study (June 1991)

Representative cross section of all court-based mediation clients (82 percent of all mediations statewide)  
(Response rate on client satisfaction items=72% of all clients) Includes 1,388 families seen in 75 courts  
across 51 counties

#### Client Evaluation of Mediation Services

Widespread client satisfaction with service

MEASURES	% CLIENTS SATISFIED
Helpfulness	63-93%
Opportunity to discuss issues	84-92%
Overall satisfaction	76-82%

#### Authorizing Recommendations from Mediators to the Court: Impact on Client Evaluation of Mediation Services

Courts in 32 counties authorize mediators to make custody and visitation recommendations when  
parents do not reach an agreement about custody or visitation.

The 32 "recommending" courts serve an estimated 56 percent of all mediation clients.

There is no empirical support for the notion that most clients are dissatisfied with mediation services  
when they are seen in a court in which mediators are authorized to make recommendations to the  
court.

MEASURES	% CLIENTS SATISFIED	
	Authorizes Recommendations	Doesn't Authorize
Helpfulness	61-93%	65-94%
Opportunity to discuss issues	81-90%	88-95%
Overall satisfaction	74-81%	78-84%

#### Steps Following Impasse: Impact on Client Evaluation of Mediation Services

There is no empirical support for the notion that most clients are dissatisfied with mediation services  
when a mediator makes a recommendation to the court.

Of all families seen during the study, 12% returned to court without agreements but with a  
recommendation from a mediator; 8% returned to court without agreements or recommendations.

#### MEASURES

	% IMPASSE CLIENTS SATISFIED	
	Received Recommendation	No Recommendation
Helpfulness	59-89%	57-91%
Opportunity to discuss issues	75-83%	86-92%
Overall satisfaction	64-73%	55-63%

#### Conclusions

Satisfaction with mediation is reported by a high proportion of clients who are seen in courts that authorize recommendations as well as those who actually receive recommendations.

Statewide prevalence data show that, regardless of the service model employed, a high proportion of mediation clients reported that mediation was helpful, gave them an opportunity to discuss issues, and produced satisfactory results. Service modifications designed to address complaints from a minority of clients who express dissatisfaction should be considered within this general context of user satisfaction.

#### Footnotes

1 Data are taken from two research reports issued by the California Statewide Office of Family Court Services: (January 1993). California Family Court Services Snapshot Study: Report 1: Families, Cases, and Client Feedback; and (April 1993). California Family Court Services Snapshot Study: Report 3: Mediation Service Models and Client Satisfaction.