



Dane County Family Court Services

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Equity and Inclusion Plan

Family Court Services

- ▶ When Dane County has jurisdiction, Family Court Services (FCS) provides mediation and evaluation services, to assist in resolving custody and physical placement disputes in both divorce and paternity cases. We also conduct a bi-monthly Parent Orientation, as mandated by state statute.
- ▶ Custody refers to decision making, while physical placement describes where the child(ren) spend time.
- ▶ In addition to these services, FCS also offers a resource booklet available free online or for \$3.00 at the Courthouse, which further explains the Family Court system.
- ▶ Parents are referred to FCS by a Circuit Court Commissioner or a Judge.

Family Court Services

- ▶ Family Court Services is located on second floor in the courthouse. We are staffed by eight counselors, a director, two full time clerical staff and two Limited Term Employees.
- ▶ FCS operations are overseen by the Family Section Judge, the Presiding Dane County Judge, and the Chief Judge of the Fifth judicial District.
- ▶ Our Department is accountable to the Public Protection and Judiciary Committee in addition to the Dane County Board of Supervisors.

Family Court Services

- ▶ **Brand and visibility**

Parents access FCS only via court order. This often leaves them feeling like the process is a win or lose situation. Parents who are happy with the outcome are not typically sharing the great joy they experienced working with FCS. However the unhappy parents can be quite expressive.

- ▶ Biases people bring before they even get here
 - ▶ Moms are given preferential treatment
 - ▶ Staff are biased
 - ▶ The system stacked against them
 - ▶ Staff don't understand DV issues

Family Court Services

Brand and visibility cont.

- ▶ Confusion regarding the role of FCS vs Child Protective Services and/or child support
- ▶ Nothing is going to help
- ▶ Will hurt position to share mental health or addiction issues
- ▶ Immigration concerns
 - ▶ Possible deportation
 - ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Expense
 - ▶ Fees set by household income
 - ▶ Adjustments/waivers available

Family Court Services

- GOAL:

- Continue to put a positive face to our agency utilizing areas of opportunity
 - Organizational Commitment
 - Leadership Development
 - Program Innovation
 - Collaboration
 - Resource Mobilization

Family Court Services

► Organizational Commitment

- Statement – We strive to ensure equal access, and the experience of fair, and respectful treatment.
- We work to help parents maximize their parenting potential by creating plans that build on family strengths and address children’s needs.
- FCS is committed to creating an environment which is welcoming, respectful, and helpful to those who seek out our services.
- We work to be keenly sensitive to the stress that the family may be experiencing in the court system.

Family Court Services

- ▶ How is our progress?
 - ▶ Welcoming Environment
 - ▶ Friendly Reception **[Emerging]**
 - ▶ Information Brochures in two languages: Immigration; Domestic Violence; Legal Assistance **[Emerging]** – additional languages beginning
 - ▶ Newspapers and magazines **[Emerging]**
 - ▶ Community Resource Booklets – also available on line **[Emerging]**
 - ▶ Web based department information and fillable forms for families **[Advanced]**
 - ▶ Office space art work reflects the diversity of our county **[Beginning]**
 - ▶ Beverages for the comfort of our clients **[Beginning]**
 - ▶ On-call counselor available for walk-in or phone questions **[Advancing]**
 - ▶ Increase signage **[Beginning]**

Family Court Services

- ▶ Students
 - ▶ Continue working with OEI to consider future Boys & Girls Club internship opportunities. **[Beginning]**
 - ▶ Provide information about our services to upper level college students majoring in a behavioral sciences/ family law. **[Beginning]**
 - ▶ Offer opportunities to observe a counselor at work conducting our Parent Education Program, Mediations or Custody and Placement Studies. **[Beginning]**

Family Court Services

► Leadership Development

- Conduct Annual Staff Training Event featuring Equity component
 - 2018 Staff Training was conducted by Theola Carter, Manager of Policy and Program Improvement, and Carrie Braxton, Manager for Equal Employment Opportunity. Both presenters are from the Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion. **[Advancing]**
- Dane County Manager's Training on Implicit Bias.
 - Information shared with staff. **[Emerging]**
- Quarterly Staff Diversity presentations
 - Recently Myra McNair, LMFT presented on therapy options for people of color. **[Emerging]**
- Staff and the community
 - Many staff members are involved in various community activities that provide them a cross-section of the dynamic population that makes up Dane County. **[Emerging]**

Family Court Services

- ▶ Leadership Development cont.
 - ▶ Staff working to incorporate Racial Equity values into our office culture through discussion and implementation. *[Emerging]*
 - ▶ Recruitment – work with Rodrigo Valdivia, Recruitment Specialist at OEI
 - ▶ Using phrases in position descriptions that appreciate life experiences. *[Emerging]*
 - ▶ Develop position interview questions that are reflective of diversity in our county; *[Beginning]*
 - ▶ Selecting graders who are culturally competent. *[Emerging]*
 - ▶ Expand advertising area beyond normal range to elicit more diverse applicants. *[Advancing]*
 - ▶ Community
 - ▶ Recommence the conversation about Supervised Placement & Safe Exchange. *[Beginning]*
 - ▶ Encouraging staff self-care
 - ▶ Provide self-care information and techniques through staff training presenters. *[Advancing]*

Family Court Services

- ▶ **Program Innovations**
 - ▶ Options for employment in office other than counselors
 - ▶ Clerical staff; LTE workers *[Emerging]*
 - ▶ Educational opportunities
 - ▶ Parenting class on conflict resolution *[Beginning]*
 - ▶ Potentially co-sponsoring with other departments
 - ▶ Behavioral Health Student to assist
 - ▶ Involve Domestic Violence community in initiative
 - ▶ Visitation/Exchange Center
 - ▶ Community partners *[Beginning]*
 - ▶ Disability Access
 - ▶ Administrative partners *[Beginning]*

Family Court Services

▶ Resource Mobilization

- ▶ Recruit multilingual staff *[Emerging]*
- ▶ Website to include bilingual information and fillable forms that can be emailed to the office. *[Emerging]*
- ▶ Insure playroom and displays are reflective of population served *[Beginning]*
- ▶ Displays that positively depict children and adults of color *[Beginning]*
- ▶ Water cooler in waiting area *[Beginning]*
- ▶ Visitation/Exchange Center *[Beginning]*
- ▶ Spanish lessons for staff *[Beginning]*

Family Court Services

► Collaboration

- Urban League *[Beginning]*
- DAIS (Domestic Abuse Intervention Services) *[Emerging]*
- Family Advocate, Greg Jones at the NAACP *[Beginning]*
- Judges *[Advanced]*
- AFCC (Association of Family and Conciliatory Courts) *[Advanced]*
- WIPCOD (Wisconsin Inter-Professional Committee on Divorce) *[Advanced]*
- UW Law School *[Advanced]*
- WISPIC (UW Department of Psychiatry) *[Advanced]*
- LaSup Latino Support Network *[Beginning]*
- DCDHS (Dane County Department of Human Services) *[Emerging]*
- Other Dane County Departments *[Beginning]*
- UW Social Work School *[Emerging]*
- Edgewood College *[Emerging]*
- Madison College (MATC) *[Emerging]*

Family Court Services

Family Court Services is dedicated to participation in Dane County's Racial Equity Social Justice Initiative. We are constantly improving our processes to better meet the goals of our Equity Inclusion Plan.