

ResearchUpdate



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
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CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN
& THE COURTS

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Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System

2003 Client Baseline Study

Summary Findings

Judicial Council of California
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Center for Families, Children & the Courts
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2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

The following tables summarize the findings of the Statewide Uniform Statistical Reporting System (SUSRS), 2003 Client Baseline Study, conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC).

The SUSRS is designed to be an authoritative source of state-level data on contested child-custody cases. Since 1991 the SUSRS has reported on the demographics, parenting concerns, domestic violence histories, attorney representation, and other characteristics of parents in court-based child-custody mediation. The SUSRS has also reported on the court's mediation process, including orders sought, issues raised during mediation sessions, and agreements reached.

The 2003 Client Baseline Study surveyed the parents and mediators of all court-based child-custody mediation sessions in California during the week of October 20–24, 2003. This Research Update presents key indicators from the 2003 study. Please consult page 14, “Interpretation of Tables”, for important background on reading the tables. You are also encouraged to consult the CFCC Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc for updates and changes to these tables. Additional results and research updates derived from the 2003 Client Baseline Study will be made available on the CFCC Web site as they are released.

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Table 1. Mediation Process

Session Level (Mediators)					
Family seen before for mediation			Family has another court case		
	N	%		N	%
Yes	749	47%	Yes	189	12%
No	766	48%	No	891	56%
Don't know	31	2%	Don't know	450	28%
Missing	39	2%	Missing	55	3%
Total	1,585	100%	Total	1,585	100%
Number of times family seen by Family Court Services (FCS)			Mediator's background on case¹		
	N	%		N	%
No prior FCS visits	766	48%	None	203	13%
Number of prior FCS visits:			FCS case file/intake	1,155	73%
1 prior FCS visit	309	19%	Court file	554	35%
2 prior FCS visits	173	11%	Met with family before	369	23%
3 prior FCS visits	92	6%	Police records check	89	6%
More than 3 prior FCS visits	101	6%	CLETS ² check	86	5%
Unknown	74	5%	DMV ³ check	42	3%
Don't know	31	2%	Other	82	5%
Missing	39	2%	Missing	1	0%
Total	1,585	100%			
Where service took place					
	N	%			
Family Court Services office	1,465	92%			
Other court office or room	83	5%			
Private office	13	1%			
Hallway or non-private space	12	1%			
Other	11	1%			
Missing	1	0%			
Total	1,585	100%			

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the session level (n=1,585). See p.14 for a description of the analysis.

Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 1. Mediation Process (*continued*)

Session Level (Mediators)					
Type of orders sought			Agreements reached		
	N	%		N	%
Legal custody only	8	1%	Legal custody		
Physical custody only	30	2%	Initial order sought		
Visitation only	302	19%	Agreement	367	63%
Seeking all three orders	835	53%	No agreement	192	33%
Physical custody and visitation	245	15%	Missing	21	4%
Legal custody and visitation	56	4%	Total ⁴	580	100%
Legal and physical custody	41	3%	Modified order sought		
No orders sought	51	3%	Agreement	132	37%
Missing	17	1%	No agreement	205	57%
Total	1,585	100%	Missing	23	6%
			Total ⁵	360	100%
Initial or modified order					
	N	%	Physical custody		
Initial orders only	637	40%	Initial order sought		
Modified orders only	834	53%	Agreement	353	60%
Initial and modified orders	46	3%	No agreement	218	37%
No orders sought	51	3%	Missing	17	3%
Missing	17	1%	Total ⁶	588	100%
Total	1,585	100%	Modified order sought		
			Agreement	195	35%
			No agreement	339	60%
			Missing	29	5%
			Total ⁷	563	100%
			Visitation		
			Initial order sought		
			Agreement	383	61%
			No agreement	229	37%
			Missing	15	2%
			Total ⁸	627	100%
			Modified order sought		
			Agreement	320	39%
			No agreement	454	56%
			Missing	37	5%
			Total ⁹	811	100%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the session level (n=1,585). See p.14 for a description of the analysis.

Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 2. Client Demographics

Individual Level (Parents)					
Age			Monthly income ¹¹		
	N	%		N	%
15 to 18 years	29	1%	None	200	7%
19 to 29 years	761	28%	Under \$500	151	6%
30 to 39 years	988	37%	\$500 to \$1,000	439	16%
40 years and over	745	28%	\$1,001 to \$2,000	788	29%
Missing	168	6%	\$2,001 to \$3,000	390	14%
Total	2,691	100%	\$3,001 or more	448	17%
			Missing	275	10%
			Total	2,691	100%
Race/ethnicity ¹⁰					
	N	%	Employment		
White or European-American	1,114	41%		N	%
Hispanic or Latino	801	30%	Employed full time	1607	60%
Black or African American	232	9%	Employed part time	331	12%
Asian or Pacific Islander	95	4%	Not employed	630	23%
Native American	77	3%	Missing	123	5%
Other	80	3%	Total	2,691	100%
More than one ethnicity	106	4%			
Missing	186	7%			
Total	2,691	100%			
Education					
	N	%			
8th grade or less	68	3%			
Some high school	284	11%			
High school diploma	664	25%			
Some college	1,151	43%			
Bachelor's degree or more	399	15%			
Missing	125	5%			
Total	2,691	100%			

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis. Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 2. Client Demographics (*continued*)

Family Level (Parents)					
Relationship to other parent			Number of children parents had together ¹²		
	N	%		N	%
Never married	531	35%	One	816	54%
Divorced	426	28%	Two	440	29%
Still legally married	520	34%	Three	134	9%
Missing	32	2%	Four or more	49	3%
Total	1,509	100%	Missing	70	5%
			Total	1,509	100%
Current living situation with other parent			Families with at least one child under five years of age ¹²		
	N	%		N	%
No longer live together	1,297	86%	Child under five years	620	41%
Never lived together	129	9%	No child under five	819	54%
Still living together	47	3%	Missing	70	5%
Missing	36	2%	Total	1,509	100%
Total	1,509	100%			
Self-representation			Age of children in families ¹²		
	N	%		N	%
At least one parent self-represented	1,040	69%	0 to 4 years	691	30%
Neither parent self-represented	448	30%	5 to 12 years	1182	52%
Missing	21	1%	13 to 17 years	421	18%
Total	1,509	100%	Total	2,294	100%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis. Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 3. Language Used in Mediation

Individual Level (Parents)			Session Level (Mediators)		
Comfortable in language or languages			Language or languages used in session		
	N	%		N	%
English only	2,240	83%	English only	1,399	88%
Spanish only	204	8%	Spanish only	87	5%
English and Spanish	167	6%	English and Spanish	64	4%
English and other non-Spanish language	46	2%	English and other non-Spanish language	5	0%
Other non-Spanish language only	21	1%	Other non-Spanish language only	10	1%
Missing	13	0%	Missing	20	1%
Total	2,691	100%	Total	1,585	100%
Comfortable in language¹			Language used in session¹		
	N	%		N	%
English	2,453	91%	English	1,468	93%
Spanish	371	14%	Spanish	151	10%
Tagalog	13	0%	Vietnamese	5	0%
Vietnamese	8	0%	Other ¹⁴	11	1%
American Sign Language	8	0%	Missing	20	1%
Other ¹³	41	2%			
Missing	13	0%			
Interpreter would be helpful			Language services received		
	N	%		N	%
Yes, to self or other party	339	13%	No services	1,364	86%
No	2,302	86%	Any court-based services	153	10%
Missing	50	2%	Missing	68	4%
Total	2,691	100%	Total	1,585	100%
			Language assistance in mediation (details)¹		
				N	%
			No language services	1,364	86%
			Bilingual mediator	94	6%
			Court interpreter	55	3%
			Interpretation from family	14	1%
			Other ¹⁵	5	0%
			Missing	57	4%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and session level (n=1,585). See p.14 for a description of the analysis.

Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 4. Domestic Violence and Supervised Visitation

Individual Level (Parents) ¹⁶			Family Level (Parents)		
Threats of violence			At least one parent reports threats of violence		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Reported by mothers		
Yes	587	43%	Yes	721	48%
No	658	48%	No	723	48%
Missing	130	9%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,375	100%	Total	1,509	100%
Reported by fathers			Reported by fathers		
Yes	301	23%	Yes	721	48%
No	859	65%	No	723	48%
Missing	156	12%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,316	100%	Total	1,509	100%
Violence in the relationship (index)¹⁷			At least one parent reports violence in the relationship (index)¹⁷		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Reported by mothers		
Yes	675	49%	Yes	804	53%
No	580	42%	No	640	42%
Missing	120	9%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,375	100%	Total	1,509	100%
Reported by fathers			Reported by fathers		
Yes	404	31%	Yes	804	53%
No	747	57%	No	640	42%
Missing	165	13%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,316	100%	Total	1,509	100%
Children witnessed violence			At least one parent reports that children witnessed violence		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Reported by mothers		
No violence reported	580	42%	No violence reported	640	42%
Violence and child witnessed	466	34%	Violence and child witnessed	568	38%
Violence and child did not witness	180	13%	Violence and child did not witness	203	13%
Not reported	29	2%	Not reported	33	2%
Missing	120	9%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,375	100%	Total	1,509	100%
Reported by fathers			Reported by fathers		
No violence reported	747	57%	No violence reported	640	42%
Violence and child witnessed	232	18%	Violence and child witnessed	568	38%
Violence and child did not witness	149	11%	Violence and child did not witness	203	13%
Not reported	23	2%	Not reported	33	2%
Missing	165	13%	Missing	65	4%
Total	1,316	100%	Total	1,509	100%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis. Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 4. Domestic Violence and Supervised Visitation (*continued*)

Individual Level (Parents) ¹⁶			Family Level (Parents)		
Restraining order			At least one parent reports restraining order¹⁸		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Yes		
Application in progress	43	3%		640	42%
Yes, at present	254	18%	No		
No, but in the past	218	16%		792	52%
No, never	713	52%	Missing		
Don't know	21	2%		77	5%
Missing	126	9%	Total		
Total	1,375	100%		1,509	100%
Reported by fathers					
Application in progress	27	2%			
Yes, at present	196	15%			
No, but in the past	168	13%			
No, never	695	53%			
Don't know	68	5%			
Missing	162	12%			
Total	1,316	100%			
Concern for future violence			At least one parent reports concern for future violence		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Yes		
Very concerned	247	18%		581	39%
Somewhat concerned	199	14%	No		
Slightly concerned	215	16%		845	56%
Not concerned	559	41%	Missing		
Missing	155	11%		83	6%
Total	1,375	100%	Total		
				1,509	100%
Reported by fathers					
Very concerned	131	10%			
Somewhat concerned	83	6%			
Slightly concerned	132	10%			
Not concerned	784	60%			
Missing	186	14%			
Total	1,316	100%			

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis. Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 4. Domestic Violence and Supervised Visitation (*continued*)

Individual Level (Parents) ¹⁶			Family Level (Parents)		
At least one parent received court ordered supervised visitation before this session			At least one parent received court ordered supervised visitation before this session		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Yes	291	19%
Yes, in past	106	8%	No	1,162	77%
Yes, currently	123	9%	Missing	56	4%
No	1,038	75%	Total	1,509	100%
Missing	108	8%			
Total	1,375	100%			
Reported by fathers					
Yes, in past	78	6%			
Yes, currently	108	8%			
No	981	75%			
Missing	149	11%			
Total	1,316	100%			
Need for supervised visitation			At least one parent reports need for supervised visitation		
	N	%		N	%
Reported by mothers			Yes	531	35%
Yes	389	28%	No	905	60%
No	819	60%	Missing	73	5%
Missing	167	12%	Total	1,509	100%
Total	1,375	100%			
Reported by fathers					
Yes	199	15%			
No	949	72%			
Missing	168	13%			
Total	1,316	100%			

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the individual level (n=2,691) and family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis. Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

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Table 5. Issues About Child That Parent Plans to Discuss in Session

Family Level (Parents)

Issues about child identified by one or both parents^{1, 19}

	N	%
Child refuses to visit	224	15%
Child safety with other parent	733	49%
Child support	584	39%
Delay in growth or development	102	7%
Behavior problems	297	20%
Emotional adjustment	519	34%
Medical needs	217	14%
School problems	284	19%

Issues about other parent identified by one or both parents^{1, 20}

	N	%
One parent is moving	271	18%
Visitation arrangements not working	826	55%
Parent's safety with other parent	381	25%
Domestic violence	314	21%
Child abduction	247	16%
Child neglect	333	22%
Child abuse—sexual	45	3%
Child abuse—physical	177	12%
Drug abuse	267	18%
Alcohol abuse	294	19%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the family level (n=1,509). See p.14 for a description of the analysis.

Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

2003 Client Baseline Study: Summary Findings

Table 6. Issues Raised by Parents or Identified by Mediator

Session Level (Mediators)		
Issues about child^{1, 21}		
	N	%
Child refuses to visit	208	13%
Child support	306	19%
Delay in growth or development	43	3%
Behavior problems	233	15%
Emotional adjustment	531	34%
Medical needs	111	7%
School problems	211	13%
Issues about other parent^{1, 22}		
	N	%
Parent is moving away	160	10%
Parent prevents visitation	453	29%
Parent doesn't stick to schedule	414	26%
Parent has problems with travel time	201	13%
Parent has problems with expense of visitation	131	8%
Parent feels unfairly denied time with child	705	44%
Problems with other parent's new partner	348	22%
Problems with other parent's lifestyle	471	30%
Parent talks badly about other parent in front of child	335	21%
Parent harassing other parent	272	17%
Other	234	15%
Safety and other issues^{1, 23}		
	N	%
Parent feels unsafe with other parent or other person	326	21%
Parent feels child is unsafe with other parent or other person	510	32%
Mental health problem of other parent or other person	200	13%
Domestic violence by other parent or other person	447	28%
Child abduction by other parent or other person	82	5%
Child neglect by other parent or other person	170	11%
Child abuse, physical, by other parent or other person	124	8%
Child abuse, sexual, by other parent or other person	49	3%
Drug abuse by other parent or other person	275	17%
Alcohol abuse by other parent or other person	294	19%
Other	103	6%

Source: 2003 SUSRS Client Baseline Study, AOC, CFCC.

Data are analyzed on the session level (n=1,585). See p.14 for a description of the analysis.

Updates to the tables will be posted at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc.

Interpretation of Tables

The 2003 Client Baseline Study surveyed the parents and mediators of all court-based child-custody mediation sessions in California during the week of October 20–24, 2003.

Each mediator filled out a survey at the completion of each mediation session. A total of 1,585 surveys were received from the mediators. This represents 86 percent of the 1,864 total sessions conducted during this week.

Each parent was given a survey to fill out before the mediation session. Surveys were received from 2,691 parents: 1,375 mothers and 1,316 fathers, representing 1,509 families. In 1,179, or 86 percent of the cases a survey was received from both a mother and a father. In 194 cases only a mother completed a survey, and in 136 cases only a father completed a survey. In a small number of cases, both parents reporting were of the same sex.

The data presented in this report is analyzed in three different ways: by Individual Level (Parents), Family Level (Parents), or Session Level (Mediators).

Items presented on the Individual Level (Parents), such as the “Age of parents” in Table 2, are computed based on all survey responses from parents.

Items presented on the Family Level (Parents), such as “At least one parent reports threats of violence” in Table 4, are computed by linking the survey responses of the mother and the father in the family. A “yes” response is calculated if either the mother or father reports “yes” to the question. A “no” response is calculated if both parents report “no,” or if neither parent reports “yes” to the question and either the mother or the father reports “no” to the question. Responses are coded to “missing” if neither parent answers the question. Data from both parents are not available in all cases. In these cases, the information is used from the only reporting parent.

Items presented on the Session Level (Mediators) are computed from the survey responses of mediators.

Notes

1. For this item, respondents were asked to “check all that apply”. Percentages can sum to greater than 100 because respondents can check more than one item.
2. California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System.
3. California Department of Motor Vehicles.
4. Total of sessions in which parents sought an initial order for legal custody: 580 sessions or 37 percent of all sessions.
5. Total of sessions in which parents sought a modified order for legal custody: 360 sessions or 23 percent of all sessions.
6. Total of sessions in which parents sought an initial order for physical custody: 588 sessions or 37 percent of all sessions.
7. Total of sessions in which parents sought a modified order for physical custody: 563 sessions or 35 percent of all sessions.
8. Total of sessions in which parents sought an initial order for visitation: 627 sessions or 40 percent of all sessions.
9. Total of sessions in which parents sought a modified order for visitation: 811 sessions or 51 percent of all sessions.
10. Respondents were asked to check all the race/ethnicity categories that applied to them. Those respondents who checked more than one category were coded to the “more than one ethnicity” category. Those respondents who did not check any category were coded to missing.
11. Income reflects personal income after taxes from all sources, including child support and government benefits. It does not reflect household income.
12. Of 1,509 families, 1,439 reported the ages of their children and 2,294 children, under the age of 18, were reported.
13. No language reported by fewer than five parents is identified.
14. No language reported by fewer than five mediation session reports is included.
15. No language assistance reported by fewer than five mediation session reports is included.
16. Mothers’ and Fathers’ responses are presented separately. The respondent category (“mothers” or “fathers”) identifies the person reporting the behavior or other item, not the person engaging in the behavior.
17. This is a calculated response variable. A “yes” response was calculated when the parent reported “yes” to the question, “Has there been physical violence in your relationship with the other parent?” or reported “yes” to any of the sub-categories: “When was the last time it

[the violence] happened?"; "Which parent was violent?"; and "Have your children ever seen violence between you and the other parent?"; A "no" response was calculated if no "yes" response applied and the parent answered "no" to the question "Has there been physical violence in your relationship with the other parent?" All other responses were coded to missing.

18. A "yes" response was calculated if either parent reported "An application in progress," "Yes, [restraining order] at present," or "Yes, [a restraining order] but in the past."
19. Of the families, 316 or 21 percent did not check any of the items in this category.
20. Of the families, 209 or 14 percent did not check any of the items in this category.
21. Of the mediators, 683 or 43 percent did not check any of the items in this category.
22. Of the mediators, 304 or 19 percent did not check any of the items in this category.
23. Of the mediators, 326 or 21 percent of mediators did not check any of the items in this category.

Acknowledgements

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