

Superior Court of California, County of Butte

FAMILY COURT SERVICES

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WELCOME TO FAMILY COURT SERVICES

We know this may be a challenging time as you and the other parent work toward a custody and time share arrangement which is in the best interest of your child or children. Our professional and clerical staff will make themselves available to help you to the best of their ability. The types of services we currently offer in Family Court Services are listed below.

1. **Orientation for Mediation and Child Custody Recommending Counseling (CCRC).** By Local Court Rule, this program is mandatory for parents who will be participating in Mediation/Child Custody Recommending Counseling services in Butte County. This program is approximately two hours in length and is held on Tuesday either at 10:00 am or 1:00 pm. Parties of the same case will not attend the mediation orientation date at the same time. You will typically be given an orientation date at the time you are given your mediation appointment. This class is held in a workshop format. A parent workbook will be provided during the orientation to assist you in developing a parenting arrangement that is best for your child(ren). The purpose of mediation orientation is to clarify the Mediation/CCRC process and assist you in focusing on the needs of your child(ren) by providing information about child development, benefits of cooperative co-parenting, detrimental effects of parental conflict, and to provide sample parenting plans.
2. **Court Ordered Mediation/Child Custody Recommending Counseling (CCRC).** California law mandates that, if parents are contesting custody and visitation of their minor child(ren), they must attend mediation. The judge will refer you to a full mediation appointment and the clerk will give you a form with the date and time for both your Orientation as well as your Mediation/CCRC appointment. **Attendance at both Orientation and court-ordered Mediation/CCRC are mandatory.** You will need to be on time and not have your children with you, unless specifically ordered by the judge to bring them. If you do not attend, or are more than 15 minutes late, the mediation session will be cancelled and the Court will be notified that you did not appear in a timely manner for the appointment.

The purpose of mediation is to reduce parental conflict and to assist in developing a parenting plan, custody and visitation, that is in the best interests of their child(ren). If the mediation appointment results in an agreement, the mediator will prepare it for the

parents' signatures and submit it to the Court prior to the next scheduled court hearing. If parents have attorneys, they will be provided with a copy of the agreement so that they can review the document with their clients before signing it.

In the event that parents are unable to reach an agreement, the mediator's responsibility and title changes to Child Custody Recommending Counselor (CCRC). In this role they are required to prepare a written recommendation containing a parenting plan that they believe is in the best interests of the minor child(ren). They will provide this report to the parents and the Court prior to the next scheduled court hearing. If parents have attorneys, the report will be provided to the attorneys so that they may review the document with their clients. Please understand that IT IS THE JUDGE WHO MAKES THE FINAL DECISION REGARDING THE APPROPRIATE PARENTING PLAN FOR MINOR CHILDREN, NOT THE CCRC. The CCRC's recommendation is only one of several factors the judge may consider in making his or her order.

3. **Voluntary In Court Program (VIP)**: This program offers a brief mediation session on the Court's Law and Motion/Request for Order Calendar. This program is **voluntary**; both parties must agree to participate. It is designed to provide immediate assistance to help parents reach an agreement regarding their custody and visitation issues. The program's purpose is to address emergency situations and to help parents reach a temporary parenting plan until a full mediation can be scheduled. The parties will step out of the courtroom and wait to be called by a mediator who will first do a Domestic Violence Assessment to consider any request for separate interviews, meet with the parties briefly, then return to the courtroom to notify the Judge whether or not an agreement has been reached.

California law requires that Family Court Services screen for domestic violence and offer those reporting a history of domestic violence the option of having a joint Mediation/CCRC session with the other party present or a separate mediation appointment. They may also request the presence of a support person during their appointment. Each parent will be given the opportunity to declare a history of domestic violence in Court when they are scheduled for their mediation appointment, during the mediation orientation and just prior to their mediation appointment.

If you have any questions about the services offered, please contact our office at (530) 532-7003 and we will do our best to help you. Family Court Services is located at the North Butte County Courthouse (NCCH) on 1775 Concord Avenue in Chico and is open between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm. Our clerks can answer general questions about our services. You may want to seek legal counsel or contact the Facilitator's Office (530) 532-7004 or SHARP (Self-Help Assistance and Referral Program) (530) 532-7015 which are designed to assist self-represented litigants. Mediators/CCRCs can answer general questions about custody and visitation issues; however, they will not be able to discuss your case with you outside of the mediation process.