



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

**FAMILY COURT SERVICES
CLIENT COMPLAINT FORM**

We at Family Court Services appreciate your taking time to inform us of your complaint about the services you received through our offices. We encourage you to notify us of your complaint as early as possible. Our staff is committed to responding to your concerns in a prompt and thorough manner. We are interested only in helping you and the courts make the best decisions possible to meet the needs and interests of your children.

We encourage all clients with complaints about their experience with Family Court Services to first talk directly with the individuals involved in order to try and work things out. Many complaints about mediation and evaluation services are a result of misunderstanding or miscommunication, and many of these misunderstandings can be worked out through direct, honest discussion.

Formal Complaint Process: If you want an investigation of and response to a complaint, you must submit the complaint in writing and provide a copy of the written complaint to the attorney or self-represented person on the other side and submit either a Proof of Service or Declaration Under Penalty of Perjury that you have done so. Attachments to this complaint form may not exceed three pages, double spaced. Once the complaint has been investigated, a written response will be prepared and sent to the complaining person and copied to all the attorneys/self-represented persons in the case.

Attached is a set of questions that will help us better understand the nature of your complaint about Family Court Services staff and/or procedures. Please complete the form and return to the Family Court Services office in which your mediation, screening, assessment or evaluation took place. Please complete the form and return it to the Family Court Services office. A supervisor will respond within 30 days if at all possible.

Please review the next page for some general information that may help you understand how Family Court Services and the courts work.

HOW FAMILY COURT SERVICES AND THE FAMILY COURT WORKS

1. Responsibility for making official orders about your parenting arrangements rests with the court. No one but a judge can *order* any child custody or visitation arrangement. Mediators in Santa Clara County Superior Court, who perform mediations at Family Court Services, cannot make recommendations about your case without the permission of both parents. If a mediator performs an Emergency Screening, an Assessment or an Evaluation, they are responsible to make recommendations of what they think would be best for your children, but they do not make a court order or a decision. ***The judge is the only person authorized to order a child custody or visitation arrangement.***
2. Family Court Services cannot reverse or change a court-ordered parenting plan. Only the judge can change the court order. If you are concerned about the custody or visitation orders that were made by a judge, you must make your appeal directly to the court for a review of the case. Your attorney or staff of the Family Court Clinic can tell you how to appeal a court decision.
3. A complaint about how you were treated in Family Court Services or about the procedures used can be addressed directly by the Family Court Services office.
4. Submitting a complaint through the use of the attached form is not an appeal for a review or reversal of court orders that have been made in your case. An appeal is a legal process over which Family Court Services has no control. Use of this form is, however, the proper way to express your grievances about the way in which Family Court Services handled your child custody mediation, screening, assessment or evaluation case.
5. To process your written complaint, the director or one of the supervisors will :
 - Review your complaint.
 - Talk with staff who has been involved with your case.
 - Determine whether your complaint is a matter that the Family Court Services can address or a legal matter only the courts can address.
 - Respond in writing to the complaining party and to the attorney or self-represented person on the other side.

CLIENT COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete the following items to help us better understand your complaint. This form will not be placed in your Family Court Services file or in your court file.

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____

Case Number _____

Do you have an attorney? Yes No

This complaint is about An individual(s) in the Family Court Services mediation or evaluation office

A Family Court Services procedure

Both an individual and a procedure

If an individual(s) is the source of your concern, please provide the name(s) below, if known:

When did the action about which you are concerned happen? Within the last month
 Within the last three months
 Within the last year
 More than one year ago

What is your complaint? Please be specific.

What would you like to have done as a result of this complaint?

Is your mediation or evaluation in progress at this time? Yes No

What other information do you think is important for us to know?

Signature
(Unsigned or anonymous complaints cannot be accepted)

Date

Client surveys are available through the Family Court Services office if you would like to provide other feedback about the child custody mediation and/or evaluation process.