
 <p style="text-align: center;">State of Connecticut JUDICIAL BRANCH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES</p>	POLICY NO. 3.10	EFFECTIVE DATE: October 20, 2014	PAGE 1 of 7
	SUPERSEDES: April 1, 2011		
APPROVED BY: Executive Director	TITLE: FAMILY SERVICES CONFLICT RESOLUTION CONFERENCE		

1. **Policy** The Family Relations Counselor (FRC) will conduct conflict resolution conferences on all Court referred cases that have been screened using the Family Civil Intake Screen and identified by the Screen as appropriate for this service or otherwise directed by the Court.

2. **Definitions**


- A. Access/Visitation Dispute A dispute regarding the contact and access of the child(ren) with a non-custodial parent or other interested party.
- B. Authorization for Release of Information (JD-CL-46) A Judicial Branch form that is completed by the FRC/FSS that authorizes the FRC/FSS to obtain information from collateral professional contacts who have worked with the clients involved in the case, [CL046.PDF](#).
- C. Conflict Resolution Conference (CRC) A confidential Alternative Dispute Resolution process for custody, visitation and/or other parenting disputes that involves meetings with the parents and the attorneys of record. Every effort will be made to assist the family in their resolution of the conflict, including the offering of recommendations at the conclusion of their involvement if the parties are unable to reach a consensus on their own. The recommendations are provided within the context of the CRC only, and are not shared with the Court. Since recommendations will be made, limited professional collateral contacts may be made to discern the current status of an issue and to aid the parents' understanding of the situation.
- D. Custody Dispute A dispute regarding the parenting, living arrangements, care and best interests of the child(ren).
- E. Family Civil Intake Screen (FCIS) (JD-FM-194) A screening instrument that is administered at the time a case is being referred. The screen assists the Family Relations Counselor / Family Services Supervisor in determining the most appropriate service offered by Family Services. The most appropriate service is the one that is least intrusive but has the highest likelihood of resolving the referred matter. [FM194.PDF](#).
- F. Family Civil Intake Sheet (JD-FM-194a) – An intake form containing demographic and case specific information needed to open a referral. [FM194A.PDF](#).

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- G. Family Relations Counselor (FRC) A CSSD employee with the qualifications and training who performs the functions outlined in the job description for Family Relations Counselor, which can be accessed by clicking the following link: <http://zeus/AdminSvc/HRM/Job%20Descs/Job%20Descriptions%20Header.htm>
- H. Family Services Supervisor (FSS) A CSSD employee with the qualifications and training who performs the functions outlined in the job description for Family Services Supervisor, which can be accessed by clicking the following link: <http://zeus/AdminSvc/HRM/Job%20Descs/Job%20Descriptions%20Header.htm>
- I. Self-Represented Party A person who files an appearance to represent him or herself.

3. General Procedures

- A. Screening and Intake Clients with custody and access disputes may be referred by the Court for service. The referrals will be screened by the FRC to assess whether or not a conflict resolution conference is the appropriate intervention in the matter.
 - (1) Upon receiving a potential referral for a Conflict Resolution Conference, the FRC will administer a FCIS in accordance with CSSD Policy and Procedure 3.13, Family Services – Family Civil Intake Screen, to determine if the CRC is the most appropriate service.
 - (2) At the time of intake the FRC will provide the clients and their respective attorneys with a brief description of the Conflict Resolution Conference.
 - (3) The FRC will explain the purpose of and have both clients sign the necessary Authorization for Release of Information forms for collateral professionals that will be contacted as part of the CRC process.
 - (4) The Court will be notified of the selected service via a Request for Referral from Family Services, Judicial Form JD-FM-230, [FM230.PDF](#).
 - (5) Upon completion of the FCIS, the FRC/FSS will print a copy of JD-FM-194a, [FM194A.PDF](#), which shall be retained in the case file.


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B. Case Assignment Once a referral for CRC has been effectuated, the following procedures will be completed:


- (1) The Family Relations Counselor will submit to the Family Services Supervisor a completed intake form (JD-FM-194a) in a timely manner. [FM194A.PDF](#).
- (2) The Family Services Supervisor will ensure that the court that ordered the service, review the completed Family Civil Intake Screen for accuracy prior to assigning the case, confirm that the FCIS has been entered into the automated system, and direct clerical staff to establish a paper file.
- (3) The FSS will assign the CRC within five (5) business days of the referral notification date.
- (4) Conflict Resolution Conferences should be assigned to those FRCs who have conducted a significant number of evaluations, mediations and court negotiations. CRCs should preferably be assigned to staff that have reached the Family Relations Counselor II level. However, operational needs may require the CRC be assigned to FRCs that have not reached Family Relations Counselor II status, but have acquired the necessary skills and expertise to perform the service.
- (5) The FRC will schedule conflict resolution conferences within twenty-eight (28) days of the court referral and mail appointment letters to the clients three (3) days after receiving the case assignment utilizing the Conflict Resolution Conference Appointment Letter (**CSSD Attachment A**), or Spanish version (**CSSD Attachment A-1**).

C. Conducting the Conflict Resolution Conference The Family Relations Counselor (FRC) will conduct CRC sessions in accordance with the following procedures:

- (1) If there are attorneys of record in the case, they will be invited to participate in the Conflict Resolution Conference. Under no circumstances will the FRC only meet or primarily meet with attorneys, as the parties are the central participants in a CRC.

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- (2) Children will not be included in the Conflict Resolution Conference. The CRC is strictly an adult decision making process. If there is an attorney appointed for the minor child(ren), and/or a Guardian Ad Litem is assigned to a case, then they will be invited to participate in the process. In rare instances an exception may be made if the case involves a mature older teen. The decision to include the older teen will be at the discretion of the FRC after consultation with their supervisor.
- (3) Other interested parties (i.e., grandparents, step-parents, etc.) who may contribute to the resolution of the referred issues may be invited to attend and participate in the CRC process by the FRC/FSS. The decision to include these parties will be at the discretion of the FRC after consultation with their supervisor.
- (4) At the beginning of the CRC process, the FRC will provide an explanation of the service to the clients. They will emphasize to the clients the self-determination qualities of CRC and promote communication between the clients. The FRC will facilitate the identification of the presenting issues, and explore potential solutions in an objective manner. The participants will be instructed that the FRC may also consider information provided by collateral contacts, and offer recommendations to the parties during the CRC process if they are unable to reach their own resolution.
- (5) The FRC will thoroughly explain to the participants that the process is confidential. Although the Family Relations Counselor will make recommendations at the conclusion of the process to the participants, if the parents cannot resolve the disputed issues, those recommendations will not be submitted to the Court. The FRC must get acknowledgment from all participating parties that they understand and accept this level of confidentiality. This verbal acknowledgement should be noted by the FRC in the Family Services file.
- (6) Limited collateral contacts may be made as part of the Conflict Resolution Conference. The FRC will make every effort to contact the professional sources prior to the first scheduled conference if the parents signed the necessary authorizations for release of information at the time of referral. If this step was not completed at intake, then the FRC conducting the CRC will

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have the parents sign completed authorizations for release of information and contact collateral references in a timely manner before the second CRC. The parties may be allowed to bring collateral contact information to the conference only if they sign an authorization for release of information form allowing the FRC to contact the author of the material and the author is available to consult with and answer questions from the FRC. Collateral contacts cannot be offered confidentiality.

- (7) If the CRC does not end in an agreement, the FRC and the participants will discuss the next level of service that would be appropriate to resolve the continued conflict.
- (8) The FRC will be prepared to discuss their Conflict Resolution Conferences with their supervisor minimally on a monthly basis, including those cases that were opened and closed between supervision meetings.

4. Case Administration

A. Upon completion of the Conflict Resolution Conference, the Family Relations Counselor will prepare and file a notice with the Court as follows:


- (1) Disputed issues resolved – If the clients reach a full agreement, the FRC will prepare a summary report in CMIS detailing when the referral was made, the issues addressed within the CRC, who participated in the process, the dates the conferences were held, and finally the proposed provisions of the agreement. The FRC will also prepare the Family Services Notice to Court, JD-FM-223, [FM223.PDF](#) indicating an agreement was reached and the parties' intent to submit the agreement to court. The notice will be submitted to the Clerk of Court, the parties, and any attorneys of record. Finally, the FRC will prepare an Agreement Form, JD-FM-231, [FM231.PDF](#) detailing the provisions of the agreement. This document will then be made available for signing at the next court date.
- (2) Disputed issues unresolved – If the CRC does not result in an agreement, the FRC will prepare the JD-FM-223 indicating the matter is being returned to court for further direction, with a narrative attached detailing the dates the

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conferences were held, and will conclude with a statement that an agreement was not reached. If there is agreement as to what if any, the next service should be, this information will be included in the narrative. This document will then be submitted to self-represented parties counsel of record, and the Clerk of the Court.

B. Closing the CRC

- (1) Conflict Resolution Conferences will be completed and closed within eight (8) weeks of the referral notification date, with either an agreement or no agreement being reached.
- (2) In the event the case cannot be completed within the eight (8) week timeframe the Court, counsel and parties will be notified via JD-FM-223 indicating that an extension is being requested to complete the Service, with an expected date to return to court. A narrative will be attached to this Notice identifying what remains to be done, and an expected date for completion.
- (3) If a CRC is terminated before the FRC meets with both parties, it will be considered a withdrawal. A JD-FM-223 indicating the matter is being returned to court for direction will be prepared with a brief narrative attached outlining receipt of the referral and why it is being withdrawn. That report will be submitted to the Clerk of Court, attorney/GALs of record and self-represented parties.
- (4) The FSS will review all CRC narratives that are attached to the JD-FM-223 before they are submitted to the self-represented parties, attorneys, or the Clerk of the Court. The FRC will provide the FSS with the report allowing sufficient time for the supervisor to read, edit, and review any necessary rewrites. The FSS will ensure that any narrative attached to JD-FM-223 does not include any information that may be prejudicial to the Court. The timeframe to submit the report for review will be determined by the supervisor.
- (5) A CRC is considered closed once the JD-FM-223 has been filed with the Clerk of Court.

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C. File Maintenance

- (1) The FRC will maintain a well documented and accurate record of their work keeping both the paper file and CMIS file up to date with required information and notes from all sessions and collateral contacts. The closed status of the case will be immediately recorded into CMIS.
- (2) Any correspondence, notes or reports received during the CRC will be retained in the Family Services file.
- (3) The FRC will place a copy of their completed CRC summary, report and/or Notice to the Court with applicable narratives in the Family Services file.
- (4) Sharing information from the file will only be done so in accordance with CSSD Policy and Procedure 3.12, Family Services – Access to Information.

D. Professional Conduct

- (1) The FRC will conduct himself/herself in a professional manner, treating clients with courtesy and respect throughout the CRC process. The FRC will strive to be accurate, objective, fair and independent in their work. They will treat all participants and weigh all data, opinions, hypotheses thoroughly and impartially. They will assess all information that is provided to them in a balanced manner. The process will be an open one in which all participants will be offered the opportunity to respond.
- (2) During the course of the CRC, the FRC shall not have substantive ex-parte communications about the case with the Court, the attorney's representing the parties or children, or the Guardian Ad Litem except of an administrative nature or with mutual consent of all parties.
- (3) The FRC will not offer legal advice or conduct any therapeutic intervention with anyone involved in the CRC process.

5. **Exceptions** Any exception to this policy will require prior written approval from the Division's Executive Director.



State of Connecticut
JUDICIAL BRANCH
COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION
SUPERIOR COURT
Family Services Unit

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

[City, Zip Code]

Re: [Case Name]

Docket No: [Docket]

Dear [Salutation]:

The court referred your parenting dispute to our office for a conflict resolution conference. It is our desire to assist you in your attempted resolution of this matter. We have scheduled a meeting on [appointment] in our office located at [office address]. It is imperative that you attend, as your input is essential to the resolution process.

It is additionally important for you to know that a high volume of referrals from the court to Family Services makes the rescheduling of missed appointments an ineffective use of our staff's resources. *We ask that you not bring children to conflict resolution conference sessions.*

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

[Counselor]

[Title]

cc: [Attorney]



State of Connecticut
RAMA JUDICIAL
DIVISIÓN DE SERVICIOS DE APOYO AL TRIBUNAL
TRIBUNAL DE PRIMERA INSTANCIA
Unidad de Servicios de Familia

Fecha: _____

Nombre: _____

Dirección: _____

Ciudad, código postal: _____

Re: Nombre del caso _____ **Expediente número: Docket** _____

Estimado _____:

El tribunal ha remitido su disputa por cuestiones de crianza a nuestra oficina para una conferencia de resolución de conflicto. Es nuestro deseo de ayudarlo a usted en un intento por resolver este asunto Hemos fijado una cita para una reunión el _____ en nuestra oficina situada en _____. Es sumamente importante que usted esté presente porque su contribución resulta imprescindible para el proceso de resolución.

También es importante que usted sepa que hay un número elevado de remisiones del tribunal a Servicios de Familia y cambiar de fecha porque no se presentó en la fecha indicada es un uso ineficaz de nuestro personal. *Le pedimos que no traigan niños a las sesiones de resolución de conflicto.*

En espera de encontrarnos con usted,

Atentamente,

Asesor: _____

Cargo: _____

cc: **Abogado** _____