 <p style="text-align: center;">State of Connecticut JUDICIAL BRANCH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES</p>	POLICY NO. 3.6	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 10, 2010	PAGE 1 of 4
	SUPERSEDES: October 15, 2000		
APPROVED BY: William H. Carbone, Executive Director	TITLE: FAMILY SERVICES CLIENT INITIATED SERVICES		

1. **Policy** The Family Relations Counselor (FRC) will be available to accept client initiated referrals.

2. **Definitions**

A. **Family Civil Intake Screen (FCIS) Judicial Form 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. <http://spforms/CourtForms/Shared%20Documents/PDF/fm194.pdf>.

B. **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>


C. **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>.

D. **Mediation** An intervention that is intended to resolve disputes and manage conflict by facilitating the identification and exploration of issues in the decision-making process.


E. **Self-Represented Litigant** A person who files an appearance to represent him or herself.

3. **Operational Procedures**

A. **General Inquiries** Persons contacting any CSSD Family Services office seeking information or services will be referred to a Family Relations Counselor. Upon receiving an inquiry of this nature, the FRC will evaluate the nature of the inquiry and will respond accordingly:


 <p>State of Connecticut JUDICIAL BRANCH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES</p>	POLICY NO. 3.6	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 10, 2010	PAGE 2 of 4
	SUPERSEDES: October 15, 2000		
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- (1) In the event a client appears to be seeking legal or therapeutic advice, or is seeking information not directly related to Court services, then the FRC will refer them to a resource that will be better suited to appropriately respond to the question or concern.
 - (2) When an inquiry is related to the operation of the CSSD Family Services or the Family or Criminal Court, the FRC will provide relevant information with respect to Court services.
- B. Custody/Access Inquiries Persons contacting any CSSD Family Services office seeking information regarding custody/access will be referred to a Family Relations Counselor. Upon receiving such inquiries the FRC will attempt to resolve the matter in one or more of the following ways:
- (1) Provide relevant information in an effort to resolve the initial inquiry.
 - (2) Inquire about the nature of the dispute, the history and current status of legal proceedings including current court family civil and criminal orders, the relationship of the clients, and their willingness to participate in this process.
 - (3) At their discretion, the FRC will contact the other party by letter or telephone to gather additional information including that party's perspective of the issue raised and their willingness to resolve the matter.
 - (4) In the event that the Family Relations Counselor's involvement has not resolved the dispute and both parties are willing to mediate the issue, the FRC will search the Protective Order Registry to ensure that orders do not exist prohibiting contact between the parties. If orders do not exist, the FRC will individually administer a Family Civil Intake Screen with the parties. <http://spforms/CourtForms/Shared%20Documents/PDF/fm194.pdf>
 - (5) A direct mediation will be offered if the screen indicates that mediation is an appropriate service unless staff shortages or other related duties prohibit the office from accommodating direct referral mediations.
 - (6) In the event that mediation is not a viable option, the FRC will apprise the clients of other alternatives that may be available to them for appropriately addressing their dispute, including adjudication of the dispute in Court.

 <p style="text-align: center;">State of Connecticut JUDICIAL BRANCH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES</p>	POLICY NO. 3.6	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 10, 2010	PAGE 3 of 4
	SUPERSEDES: October 15, 2000		
APPROVED BY: William H. Carbone, Executive Director	TITLE: FAMILY SERVICES CLIENT INITIATED SERVICES		

C. Direct Referral for Mediation Once a determination has been made to accept a matter as a direct referral for mediation, the following procedures will be adhered to:

- (1) The FRC(s) will complete a Referral form (JD-FM-194A) <http://spforms/CourtForms/Shared%20Documents/PDF/fm194a.pdf> and will submit that form to the office supervisor. The FRC will indicate prominently on the referral form that this matter is a direct referral to distinguish it from Court referred mediations.
- (2) The office supervisor will direct clerical staff to establish a file and create a case in CMIS. The direct referral mediation will then be assigned to an FRC.
- (3) The FRC(s) assigned to conduct the mediation will schedule an appointment for the parents/parties to participate in a mediation session in the CSSD Family Services office. Appointment letters will be mailed to the clients notifying them of the appointment in a timely manner.
- (4) The FRC(s) will conduct a mediation session in accordance with CSSD Policy and Procedure 3.2, Family Services – Mediation. In general, direct referral mediation will involve one session of up to two hours. This may be expanded to more sessions upon agreement of the clients and a determination by the FRC that an additional session may be productive.
- (5) Upon completion of a direct referral mediation, the FRC will prepare a brief report summarizing the outcome of the mediation session(s) including the specific terms of the agreement that were reached by the clients, if mediation resulted in an agreement. A copy of this report will be sent to each of the clients with the original to remain in the file that will be maintained in the CSSD Family Services office.
- (6) In the event that parents/parties resolve a dispute related to a parenting plan through the direct referral mediation process, and their resolution involves establishing or changing a Court order, then the FRC will inform the clients about the available options to access the Court.

 <p style="text-align: center;">State of Connecticut JUDICIAL BRANCH COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES</p>	POLICY NO. 3.6	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 10, 2010	PAGE 4 of 4
	SUPERSEDES: October 15, 2000		
APPROVED BY: William H. Carbone, Executive Director	TITLE: FAMILY SERVICES CLIENT INITIATED SERVICES		

(7) If a client is representing him/herself, the FRC will provide or refer the client to the appropriate Pro Se guide and handbooks. In addition, brochures detailing CSSD services will be made available.

D. Financial Inquiries Persons contacting any CSSD Family Services office seeking information related to a financial issue as it pertains to their separation/dissolution will be referred to a Family Relations Counselor.

(1) In the event a client appears to be seeking legal advice, or is seeking information not directly related to Court services, then the FRC will refer them to a resource that will be better suited to appropriately respond to the question or concern.

(2) When a financial inquiry is related to the operation of CSSD Family Services or the Family Court, the FRC will provide general court process information.

4. Professional Conduct The FRC will conduct him/herself in a professional manner, treating clients with courtesy and respect throughout their work with client initiated services. The FRC will strive to be accurate, objective, fair and independent in their work. They will treat all participants and weigh all data, opinions, and 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.

(1) During the course of their involvement with client initiated services, the FRC will 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.

(2) The FRC will not offer legal advice or conduct any therapeutic intervention with anyone involved in their work with client initiated services.

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