

Family Court Service
Fifth Judicial District
Coordinator- Anita Engstrom Jones
P.O. Box 126, Twin Falls, ID 83303
208-312-0798 message 208-735-4307
neet@dcdi.net

Clarification of Family Court Services availability.

In concert with national recommendations for improved handling of domestic relations cases, Idaho Code Section 32-1401 et. seq., passed in the 2001 Legislative Session, established a coordinated approach to court cases involving families and children in Idaho. The legislature appropriated funding so that districts would have access to Family Court Service Coordinators (FCSC). The primary roles of FCSC are to: 1) assess the needs of the family and barriers to resolving their cases; 2) determine appropriate and available community resources; 3) connect children and families with those resources; and 4) improve and enhance community resources that have been identified by courts as necessary for resolution of cases involving children and families.

What does FCS do?

Anita Engstrom Jones is a licensed clinical professional counselor and a marriage a family therapist with many years of working with high conflict families. With the exception of parenting/custody evaluations and parenting coordination, FCS is available to assist the court with the following services that are described along with fees and available funding below:

- Parenting Education
- Effective Co – Parenting (for parents who need a little more than a 9 hour class and a little one-on-one help)
- Directed Co-Parenting Intervention (for parents who really need one-on-one psycho educational information).
- Family Screening
- Alternative Dispute Resolution Screening (ADR Screening and Referral Report)
- Mediation
- Supervised Access
- Therapeutic Supervision
- Interim Parenting Time Evaluations

These services are more fully described below.

[Family Court Services does not require the cases to be part of a divorce, in order for the program to assist.](#) Several Judges have requested intervention in custody cases involving non-married parents, parents and grandparents or other guardianship relationships.

FCS must have a court order for referrals. It is necessary for the court or the attorney to send a copy of the order to FCS. A reminder to the clerk or the attorney would be helpful.

Parenting Education: Some Judges are referring parties involved in custody disputes, not just divorcing parents, to attend these nine hour classes. The Instructors have stated that they believe it is helpful information to educate and assist individuals who are in a shared custody arrangement. We continue to see an increase in co-parenting arrangements. Having information about the impact on children can improve a stressful situation.

The child/ren also attend for three hours.

Cost for attendance is \$50.00 for adults and no cost for children.

Supervised Access and Supervised Exchanges: This service is under utilized in our district. The process of supervised access is not a punishment. A supportive access supervisor can assist in transitions that are stressful to children. They can assist a parent in gaining confidence in their parenting skills. A supervisor can also provide feedback to the court about observed behaviors and needs for future assessment.

Cost is \$25.00 per hour plus mileage. Parents may qualify for the state subsidy for supervised access and exchange on a sliding fee scale and in low-income cases, parents may only be responsible for mileage. If the referral is made to FCS, our supervisors are trained in the National Standards for access providers, with background checks, and program monitoring.

Therapeutic Supervision: This service is also underutilized in our district. Again, this is not a punishment. Some parents lack the necessary skills to parent effectively. There may have been some issues such as domestic violence, neglect or sexual inappropriateness which requires a trained therapist to redirect and teach the parent better interventions.

If the referral is made to FCS, our supervisors are trained in the National Standards for access providers, with background checks, and program monitoring.

The payment for this service depends on the provider and in the past has been mostly third party. FCS has been successful in arranging with therapists to provide services at a reduced cost to assist parents. Parents may qualify for the state subsidy for supervised access and exchange on a sliding fee scale of up to \$25.00 per hour and parents are responsible for the remainder of fees to the provider.

Alternative Dispute Resolutions or ADR Screenings: Some Judges are reporting that the restrictions imposed on ADR limit the scope of information they need in order to make a decision in most custody cases. Most effective use of ADR screenings is when there is a question about the parties being able to safely and successfully proceed to mediation and when there is a need for an independent third party to outline issues and risks to children with suggestions for case management and resource referral to parents and the court.

There is no cost to parents for ADR Screening reports.

Family Screenings: Family screenings have been requested by the court when it is felt that additional information about families, input from the children and collateral contact information is needed to assist the court in decision-making. Family Screenings are conducted by collecting similar information as an ADR but with the benefit of additional information on which a decision can be made.

Cost of this service depends on the parties' ability to pay and based on guidelines for financial assistance. The guideline for financial assistance is used to determine eligibility.

Neither an ADR nor a Family Screening is intended to make recommendation for placement. The screening is to provide additional information and possible referral for appropriate further evaluation of the case.

Mediation: Referral for mediation will be based on financial eligibility. There are limited funds available. There are several contracted mediators available. They have agreed to accept a lower rate for their services as a courtesy to FCS. The advantage in referral to FCS for mediation is that all of our mediators are certified with the Supreme Court and FCS will qualify parents based on a sliding fee schedule. The total cost per hour is \$70.00 to be shared by parents.

Effective Co-parenting: Periodically, you will have cases that in your opinion, the parties need someone to intervene, giving them direct feedback, educating them, and redirecting them to behaviors that are more appropriate. This process usually involves meeting with both parties individually, then together. Sometimes, meeting with the children or other parties is helpful and would be determined by the therapist. FCS has some powerful success stories using this intervention.

Parents may qualify for this service on a sliding fee schedule. The FCS coordinator has been conducting these sessions. If the parties are able to contribute financially, the fees are returned to FCS program.

Directed Co-Parenting Intervention. (DCI): Referrals to this process should be made when there are parents with ongoing high conflict and repeated submissions for modifications. DCI's are not about attempts to have parents work together but rather enforcing the concerns, safety and boundaries of the parents and children involved.

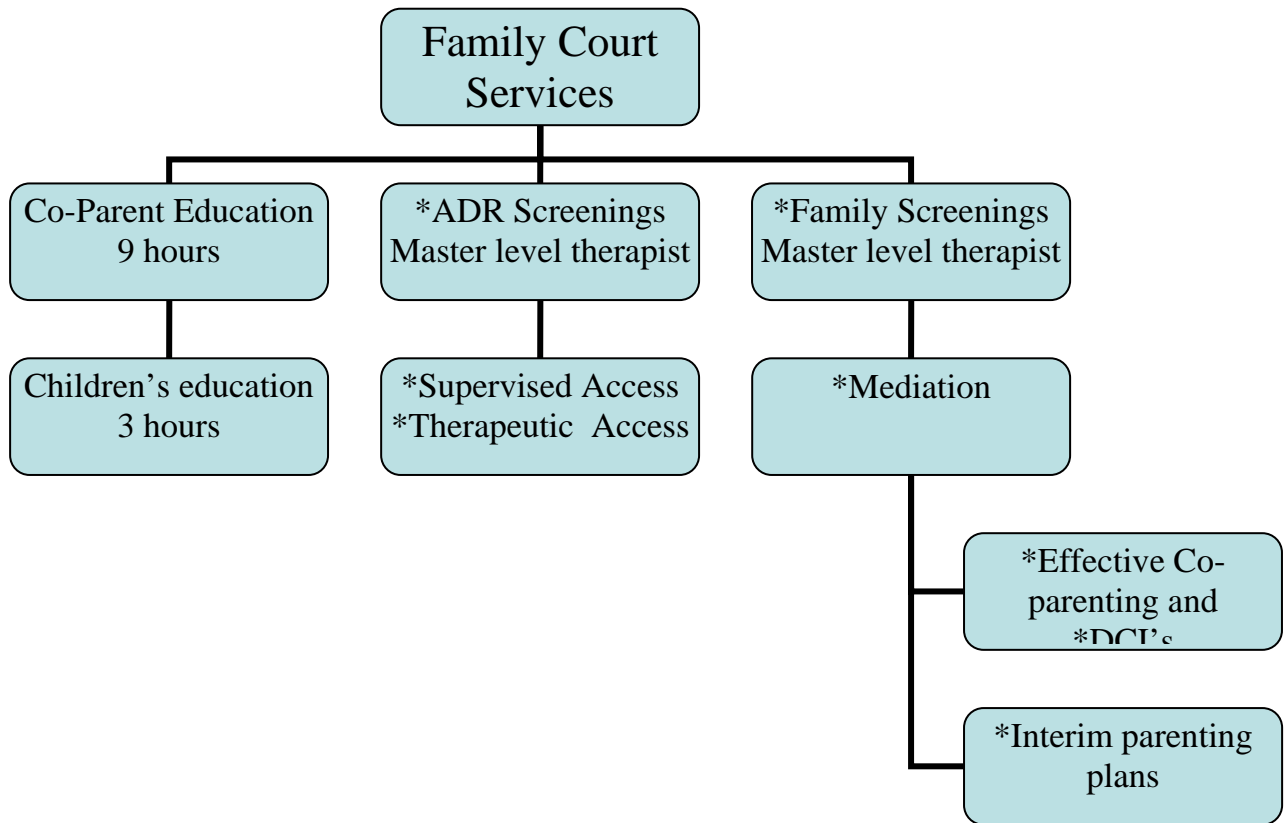
Parents may qualify for this service on a sliding fee schedule. The FCS coordinator has been conducting these sessions. If the parties are able to contribute financially, the fees are returned to FCS program.

Interim Parenting Time Evaluations, (IPTE). This is a shortened version of a family screening, (approximately 3 pages), with recommendations for temporary parenting arrangements included. An IPTE is meant to be an early intervention in cases where mediation has failed or the parties are not appropriate for mediation. The IPTE provides

an opportunity for the parties to begin working toward an agreed parenting arrangement. The recommendations made through an IPTE are intended to address temporary custody issues and should not be construed as recommendations for permanent custody arrangements. Trained graduate level therapists will conduct these assessments and referrals and assignments will come directly through FCS. For more information on the IPTE process, please contact FCS

Five therapists throughout our district are trained in the IPTE process.

The cost will be \$350.00 for each parent or \$700.00 total for a plan.



FCS does not provide funding for Child Custody Evaluations. I personally believe Child Custody Evaluations should only be used after all of the other tools have been made available to the parties involved in civil custody disputes.

I hope this outline will assist you in making referrals to FCS. Do not hesitate to contact FCS with any questions. If there is anything you feel would be more helpful, let FCS know and I will work with the Supreme Court to review making the service available. The program is here to serve you.