

FAMILY COURT SERVICES CLIENT COMPLAINT INFORMATION

We at Family Court Services appreciate you 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 decision 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 to work things out. Many complaints about mediation and investigation services are a result of a misunderstanding or miscommunication and many of these misunderstandings can be worked out through a direct and honest discussion.

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 it to the Family Court Services' Office. Your complaint will be reviewed by the supervisor or manager of Family Court Services and someone will get back to you within thirty (30) days.

Below is some general information that may help you understand how Family Court Services and the Courts work:

1. Responsibility for making official orders about your parenting arrangements rests with the Courts. Only a Judge may enter child custody or visitation orders. In accordance with Local Court Rules and practices, Family Court Services' staff may advise the Court regarding what they believe to be best for your child(ren), however, they do not make a court order or decision. **The Judge of your Court is the only person authorized to order a child custody or visitation arrangement.**
2. Family Court Services cannot reserve or change a court-ordered parenting plan. Only a 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 the clerk of your county can tell you how to appeal a Court decision.
3. A complaint about how you were treated at Family Court Services or about the procedures used can be addressed directly by Family Court Services.
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. Your 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 or investigation.
5. To process your complaints, the supervisor or manager of Family Court Services in Sam Joaquin County will:
 - (a) Review your complaint.
 - (b) Speak with the staff who have been involved with your case.
 - (c) Determine whether your complaint is a matter that Family Court Services can address or if it is a legal matter that only the Court can address.
 - (d) Contact you to discuss the next steps.

FAMILY COURT SERVICES CLIENT COMPLAINT PROCESS

Complaints concerning the San Joaquin County Superior Court Family Court Services' mediators, investigators, and/or the Family Court Services' program are handled according to the following guidelines:

1. Complaints are accepted only from a person (or his/her attorney) who is a party to an action currently filed with the San Joaquin County Superior Court.
2. Complaints must be put in writing on the Family Court Services' Client Complaint Form and addressed to:

Court Executive Officer
Superior Court of California
County of San Joaquin
180 East Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

3. The complaint form must include the following information:
 - (a) The name of the complainant and his/her address and telephone number.
 - (b) The name of the complainant's attorney, if represented.
 - (c) The court case file number.
 - (d) The most recent court date.
 - (e) The name(s) of any Family Court Services' personnel (i.e., mediators, investigators, etc.) with whom you have had contact.
4. The complaint should include a detailed written description explaining the reasons for the complaint.
5. The complainant should be prepared to sign releases of information waiving confidentiality upon the request of the Family Court Services' personnel.
6. The complainant should be aware that all information contained in the complaint may be made available to all persons involved in the case.
7. Following a review of the complaint, you should receive a response within thirty (30) days.

Attempts will be made to satisfactorily resolve all complaints. If the complainant is still not satisfied, the supervisor will remind the complainant that his/her concerns can (as at any time before, during, or after this process) be brought to the attention of the Court by filing the appropriate motion and the issue can be decided by a Family Law Judge.

***NOTE:** It is the complainant's responsibility (or the responsibility of his/her attorney) to file the necessary paperwork to have the matter heard before the Court.