



FAMILY COURT SERVICES

2020

WHO WE ARE

- Family Court Services is a small department located in the Courthouse.
- We have 2 full time Administrative Support Staff; 8 counselors licensed in mental health; 2 LTE's one is devoted to moving us through our paperless initiative and; a Director who is also a licensed mental health professional.

SERVICES SUMMARY

- FCS provides Parent Orientation classes, Mediations, Family Studies and Brief Focused Assessments as defined in WI Statutes.
- Parent Orientation explains the Dane County Family Court process and describes ways parents can improve parent communication/cooperation and reducing adverse effects on children.
- Mediation is an opportunity for parents to resolve their dispute at no or low cost without court intervention.
- Counselors serve as experts for the court when conducting Family Studies based on 16 statutory factors. Counselors gather information, issue a report with recommendations to the parents and the Court and also serve as the Court's expert witnesses if necessary.
- Brief Focused Assessments are similar to a study and provide a streamlined assessment based on a single question or issue.
- We also take calls from the public on demand on a daily basis which result in answering questions and referring folks to other agencies that can help the situation.

2020 NUMBERS

- 371 families have been referred for mediation (396 in 2019)
- 113 families have been referred for Family Study (115 in 2019)
- 10 families have been referred for Brief Focused Assessment (7 in 2019)

REVENUE 2020

- FCS has brought in about \$14,000 less than at this time in 2019.
- Parent Education was not conducted for six months due to the Pandemic. Fees were not collected.
- More fee reductions/waivers have been requested due to the economic impact of the Pandemic.

2021 Budget

FCS was directed to cut \$21,433 from our budget.

Proposal 1 offers cuts in several operational lines including interpreter services, overtime, continuing education, library, and mileage reimbursement. Services to the public will not be impacted by these cuts. These cuts total \$6,300 and will result in more out of pocket expense for licensing requirements and car maintenance related to necessary travel.

2021 Continued

- Proposal 2 reduces our budget by \$15,100 and eliminates our LTE position dedicated to assisting with our paperless initiative. This LTE was added in early 2019 to work on back scanning our paper files. These files are crucial and regular access is necessary.
- He has become an integral part of our staff assisting with technology questions relating to our paperless files, the scanning process and FCS website maintenance.
- This LTE is also the only person of color and the only male on our staff at this time.
- Proposals 1 & 2 combined make up the required \$21,433 cuts but will have a significant impact on the day to day functioning of FCS.

GREATEST CHALLENGES

- The Pandemic has significantly altered the manner in which we work with families. Normally, counselors rely on face to face meetings and in person observations of parent/child interactions. Currently we are conducting meetings by Zoom and outdoors. With the weather changing, outdoor meetings will soon be unworkable.
- Normal operations have been disrupted by the Pandemic. This slowdown has resulted in a longer wait time for a study to commence after referral.
- Some in person meetings and parent/child observations are occurring in our office in a very limited and strictly scheduled manner, observing a strict hygiene routine.

GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Mediations were continually conducted.
- FCS staff have remained safe and healthy.
- FCS has worked with the judiciary, the Clerk of Court and other stakeholders regarding safely reopening the Courthouse.
- We made a fairly smooth transition to having most counselors working primarily remotely. Thanks Information Management!

UNMET NEEDS

- The need for updated equipment and software continues to effect operations at FCS.
- Tracking fee payments, participation in Parent Orientation, and accessing our electronic files, is time consuming and burdensome.
- Our access to CCAP has been minimized which delays case assignments and case completion.
- Resources have not been available for us to update our database software which impedes our ability to collect and analyze data about client population, socio economic status of clients or other information that would help us be responsive to our evolving client base.

COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

- We currently have one counselor who is able to provide services in Spanish.
- Counselors continue to receive training on racial equity and social justice issues as part of our required continuing education.
- Counselors work on a regular basis to establish and strengthen relationships with County and non-County clinicians and resources who provide services specific to people of color in our community.
- FCS is aware of the need for more services and service providers in our community specific to people of color.

SUMMARY

- FCS staff interact regularly with a broad spectrum of agencies across Dane County, and beyond, including law enforcement, medical providers, therapists, domestic violence advocates, father's rights advocates, teachers and others.
- FCS families cross the full range of residents in the County. They are from all municipalities of the County, from a variety of cultures, and have wide ranging financial and family resources.