



# FAMILY COURT SELF ASSESSMENT

Statewide Summary  
2004 - 2005

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

### JUDICIAL BRANCH

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
The circuit has an up-to-date resource directory used by judges and court staff.	<b>2004</b>	20	44	58	63	45	230	3.3
	<b>2005</b>	19	26	56	93	78	272	3.7
Parties are routinely referred to services when a need is identified.	<b>2004</b>	5	23	49	106	53	236	3.7
	<b>2005</b>	7	22	68	111	72	280	3.8
The circuit, through the Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG) or by some other means, has done some type of community services mapping or assessment to determine where service gaps exist.	<b>2004</b>	19	26	71	61	39	216	3.3
	<b>2005</b>	18	21	91	81	42	253	3.4

### STAKEHOLDER

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
Judges or court staff routinely order or refer parties to services recommended by me/my agency.	<b>2004</b>	4	1	9	29	27	70	4.0
	<b>2005</b>	3	5	5	44	22	79	4.0
I know of instances when the court has identified gaps in services and worked to address them.	<b>2004</b>	4	4	13	36	17	74	3.7
	<b>2005</b>	4	5	15	37	20	81	3.8

## CASE MANAGEMENT

JUDICIAL BRANCH		Never	Sometimes			Always	N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
When there are multiple court cases involving one family, I know about them.	<b>2004</b>	3	17	79	97	36	232	3.6
	<b>2005</b>	5	14	84	117	66	286	3.8
When there are multiple court cases involving one family, the cases are coordinated to prevent conflicting orders and multiple appearances.	<b>2004</b>	10	33	63	83	43	232	3.5
	<b>2005</b>	5	29	92	100	58	284	3.6
Adequate self-help services are available to parties in dissolution, child support and paternity cases.	<b>2004</b>	9	45	45	75	56	230	3.5
	<b>2005</b>	7	35	69	81	81	273	3.7
Adequate self-help services are available to parties in domestic violence cases.	<b>2004</b>	6	26	38	88	65	223	3.8
	<b>2005</b>	7	27	62	91	70	257	3.7
		Strongly Disagree	Neutral		Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5	N	Mean
Case management techniques are used to help move cases through the court process.	<b>2004</b>	9	19	46	92	72	238	3.8
	<b>2005</b>	2	14	39	113	115	283	4.1
Magistrates and hearing officers are used to help move cases through the court process.	<b>2004</b>	7	6	23	63	136	235	4.3
	<b>2005</b>	3	8	13	86	177	287	4.5
Aggregate data is routinely used to evaluate case processing	<b>2004</b>	18	28	76	57	36	215	3.3
	<b>2005</b>	19	23	114	65	41	263	3.3
My circuit has a clear understanding of the UFC definition of "Family" for the purpose of coordinating cases.	<b>2005</b>	9	19	61	110	81	280	3.8
My circuit has a clear understanding of the UFC definition of "related case" or "crossover case" for the purpose of coordinating cases.	<b>2005</b>	7	21	53	113	85	279	3.9

STAKEHOLDER		Never		Sometimes		Always		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5			
When there are multiple court cases involving one family, I know about them.	<b>2004</b>	2	17	31	15	2	67	2.9	
	<b>2005</b>	5	11	32	21	5	74	3.1	
When there are multiple court cases involving one family, the cases are coordinated to prevent conflicting orders and multiple appearances.	<b>2004</b>	8	20	22	13	5	68	2.8	
	<b>2005</b>	4	13	30	21	5	73	3.1	
Adequate self-help services are available to parties in dissolution, child support and paternity cases.	<b>2004</b>	4	9	21	16	6	56	3.2	
	<b>2005</b>	4	14	21	12	2	53	2.9	
Adequate self-help services are available to parties in domestic violence cases.	<b>2004</b>	2	3	17	13	14	49	3.7	
	<b>2005</b>	1	5	16	26	7	55	3.6	
Cases are moved efficiently through the court process.	<b>2004</b>	10	0	28	23	7	68	3.4	
	<b>2005</b>	1	4	36	32	4	77	3.4	

### **FAMILY LAW ADVISORY GROUP (FLAG)**

JUDICIAL BRANCH		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
The circuit has an institutionalized FLAG with an established membership and regularly held meetings.	<b>2004</b>	9	19	35	74	84	221	3.9
	<b>2005</b>	12	11	57	57	121	258	4.0
The circuit's FLAG has achieved meaningful results or specific goals.	<b>2004</b>	14	24	77	58	36	209	3.3
	<b>2005</b>	9	18	99	69	59	254	3.6

STAKEHOLDER		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
The circuit has an institutionalized FLAG with an established membership and regularly held meetings.	<b>2004</b>	1	5	14	22	20	62	3.9
	<b>2005</b>	1	4	15	20	18	58	3.9
The circuit's FLAG has achieved meaningful results or specific goals.	<b>2004</b>	2	4	26	18	2	52	3.2
	<b>2005</b>	2	5	27	40	9	53	3.4

## ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

JUDICIAL BRANCH		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
There is a presumptive use of mediation in dissolution cases in the circuit (after screening for domestic violence).	<b>2004</b>	5	6	28	80	109	228	4.2
	<b>2005</b>	5	3	41	77	151	280	4.3
		Never		Sometimes		Always		
		1	2	3	4	5	N	Mean
Alternative dispute resolution programs (for example: teen court, juvenile arbitration, mediation of restitution) are used in appropriate delinquency cases.	<b>2004</b>	11	10	45	84	61	211	3.8
	<b>2005</b>	11	9	52	96	73	241	3.9
Mediation is used in Title IV-D cases when parenting time issues are raised.	<b>2004</b>	65	16	51	35	25	192	2.6
	<b>2005</b>	38	25	73	47	37	220	3.1
Mediation is used in dependency cases.	<b>2004</b>	10	16	61	62	66	215	3.7
	<b>2005</b>	10	22	77	63	75	247	3.7

STAKEHOLDER		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
There is a presumptive use of mediation in dissolution cases in the circuit (after screening for domestic violence).	<b>2004</b>	2	2	18	17	11	50	3.6
	<b>2005</b>	2	20	23	10	55	55	3.7
		Never		Sometimes		Always		
		1	2	3	4	5	N	Mean
Alternative dispute resolution programs (for example: teen court, juvenile arbitration, mediation of restitution) are used in appropriate delinquency cases.	<b>2004</b>	3	4	7	23	8	45	3.6
	<b>2005</b>	2	5	15	26	6	54	3.5
Mediation is used in Title IV-D cases when parenting time issues are raised.	<b>2004</b>	7	3	14	7	2	33	2.8
	<b>2005</b>	2	4	19	7	6	38	3.3
Mediation is used in dependency cases.	<b>2004</b>	6	1	10	17	16	50	3.7
	<b>2005</b>	2	3	14	27	16	62	3.8

## SECURITY

JUDICIAL BRANCH		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
The circuit has a written security plan that adequately addresses the special needs of family court.	<b>2004</b>	22	27	62	53	44	208	3.3
	<b>2005</b>	32	35	71	71	43	252	3.2
I feel safe when I am in the courthouse and when I am in hearings.	<b>2004</b>	14	13	28	84	100	239	4.0
	<b>2005</b>	15	24	37	110	96	282	3.9
Appropriate stakeholders are adequately informed of the security plan.	<b>2004</b>	31	31	67	51	33	213	3.1
	<b>2005</b>	37	46	83	61	28	255	3.0

STAKEHOLDER		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
I feel safe when I am in the courthouse and when I am in hearings	<b>2004</b>	4	4	4	28	34	74	4.1
	<b>2005</b>	1	6	9	33	32	81	4.1
The Court has informed me/my agency of basic court security plans.	<b>2004</b>	16	8	13	21	11	69	3.0
	<b>2005</b>	12	10	28	17	11	78	3.1

## CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR JUDGES AND COURT STAFF

JUDICIAL BRANCH		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
Judges receive adequate training in issues such as child development, family systems, mental health, family violence, and mediation.	<b>2004</b>	7	14	67	83	42	213	3.6
	<b>2005</b>	6	22	65	85	59	237	3.7
Magistrates receive adequate training in issues such as child development, family systems, mental health, family violence, and mediation.	<b>2004</b>	13	31	77	56	21	198	3.2
	<b>2005</b>	15	30	82	75	36	238	3.4
Hearing officers receive adequate training in issues such as child development, family systems, mental health, family violence, and mediation.	<b>2004</b>	17	29	78	54	20	198	3.1
	<b>2005</b>	19	33	93	63	29	237	3.2
Court staff receives adequate training in issues such as child development, family systems, mental health, family violence, and mediation.	<b>2004</b>	16	42	81	59	25	223	3.1
	<b>2005</b>	23	44	74	89	30	260	3.2
Stakeholders receive adequate training in court process related to their client population.	<b>2004</b>	10	33	102	42	11	198	3.0
	<b>2005</b>	20	31	114	60	9	234	3.1

## STAKEHOLDER

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	<b>2005</b>	4	8	25	23	3	63	3.2
Court staff receives adequate training in issues such as child development, family systems, mental health, family violence, and mediation.	<b>2004</b>	5	14	24	13	5	61	2.9
	<b>2005</b>	5	10	29	16	2	62	3.0

## TECHNOLOGY

### JUDICIAL BRANCH

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		N	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5		
The circuit uses technology to create printed orders, forms and notices at the bench, making them readily available to the parties upon leaving the hearing.	<b>2004</b>	54	46	44	60	30	234	2.8
	<b>2005</b>	44	46	57	77	52	276	3.2
The circuit possesses and uses teleconferencing and appearance of witnesses by electronic means, when appropriate.	<b>2004</b>	12	31	48	88	55	234	3.6
	<b>2005</b>	14	21	68	98	79	280	3.7
Systems are designed to communicate across agencies for information sharing.	<b>2004</b>	47	57	66	37	21	228	2.6
	<b>2005</b>	32	52	103	60	22	269	3.0
A computer is available at the court for public access to appropriate court records.	<b>2004</b>	36	24	30	57	82	229	3.5
	<b>2005</b>	33	28	45	74	86	266	3.6

## STAKEHOLDER

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	<b>2005</b>	6	6	12	39	11	74	3.6
Systems are designed to communicate across agencies for information sharing.	<b>2004</b>	17	18	18	13	1	67	2.4
	<b>2005</b>	9	22	25	18	3	77	2.8

## **2004 JUDICIAL COMMENTS:**

- Case management used mostly with Pro Se cases.
- Good results for the short time since FLAG was established
- Alternative dispute resolution varies by county.
- First circuit is actively involved with training / education activities.
- All of these elements vary greatly by county.
- Parties are referred to services to the extent available but not early in the process because intake separated from CS management.
- Have internet access but not in all courtrooms or by all judges, even in the same county.
- Regarding access to services, the United Way Community First Alliance created a published manual.
- We need a computer system that can automatically identify cross-over companion cases. As of now, our clerks must hand input and search for these cases.
- Mediation should be ordered earlier in family law cases.
- Family mediators in Daytona are held at Traffic Court where there is no security.
- Our FLAG has been working on a service assessment.
- Need differentiated case management.
- Still do not have visitation center
- Thanks to generous mediators, pro bono is available (free mediation).
- Security is a major oversight.
- The use of in-house mediators could assist in the better resolution of cases and issues.
- Court staff could receive a little more training.
- Case managers have the ability to generate appropriate orders in court.
- The family court does not have access to the services UFC has access to, but needs to.
- No state funding for alternative dispute resolution programs
- Teen Court referrals as well as other diversion programs do not require assessments consequently there is not a determination of needs or strengths.
- Funding for dependency mediation was stopped after Revision 7
- Available services and case management vary from division to division and need to be more uniform.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution needs to be expanded. There is far more potential for early case resolution.
- There is no security plan.
- Much work is needed in the area of technology. Cross access to systems is necessary.
- There needs to be better communication and collaboration with the judges, magistrates, and hearing officers to make unified family court work.
- Would like to see more specific training made available regarding domestic violence, abuse, etc.
- Regarding access to services, there is an annual resource directory, but it is not always utilized. A summary of the more important services would be helpful as well as a handout that could be given to parties or litigants.
- I'm not aware of what the FLAG does in our county / circuit, because I have not attended or heard of FLAG before this conference.

- Regarding case management, we recently lost our Family Intake Unit (7/1/04) and the Clerk's office has not filled the gap.
- More training is needed for unified family court judges, magistrates, hearing officers and staff.
- Technology is an area of challenge which will require agreements and forward action to overcome.
- When our FLAG meets, we have great ideas but it seldom goes further than that stage.
- I am unsure how often mediation is used in dependency cases.
- Regarding security, sometimes all staff is not notified when the courthouse is evacuated.
- We need better training for police, DCF, and others that give wrong information to litigants.

### **2004 STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS:**

- We need more services to better serve the public
- FLAG is newly formed and was disrupted by hurricane, however, membership and committees have established goals.
- Court Security is not a large problem.
- Keep juveniles shackled and chained.
- In process of developing forms in dependency court in county.
- Security is very good for Leon County but very poor for outlying counties.
- Our circuit's FLAG is a work in progress; improvements are being made.
- I am extremely interested in gathering more information on mediation.
- We had a good seminar on child development.
- I think that judicial training and education is the weakest area.
- Didn't know my circuit had a FLAG.
- Technology varies county to county.
- Pro Se Self Help Center was a great asset and is missed.
- Mediation is very helpful in dependency cases.
- Bailiffs are very helpful in providing security.
- Regarding technology, CJIS is main resource. Child support case information not always known by dependency court. (i.e. DOR case initiated and active and information not known to all parties in dependency case.)
- Regarding access to services, we could benefit from a follow-up to determine if referrals and services work out for the benefit of families.
- We need a fully operational FLAG that includes practicing attorneys.
- No funding for alternative dispute resolution programs.
- We use the limited technology we have.
- Our CBC agency has been very helpful.
- Need more money for technology
- More child development training for judges is needed.
- No security exists for magistrates
- We don't want mediation in dependency
- Regarding technology, we need unified system for clerks.
- GAL has not been a part of the FLAG up to now. We will be involved in the future.

- Some staff has access to training and education; however it is difficult to find the time to convey this information to staff who don't attend conferences.
- Some counties are great at printing orders.
- Regarding alternative dispute resolution, we have teen court but cut way back on juvenile arbitration when we lost alternative sanctions.
- We have settlement conferences in all dependency cases and sometimes mediation if needed.

### **2005 JUDICIAL COMMENTS:**

- Adequacy of security is an ongoing issue at Title IV-D hearings.
- Hearing officers do not have electronic access to court records.
- We are looking at access to services gaps and needs but no official assessment has been done yet.
- A couple of counties do not have specialized domestic violence courts.
- We are beginning to use mediation more often.
- Interagency communication is sometimes lacking.
- Understanding of case management is there – utilization is lacking.
- Magistrates and hearing officers need to have greater access to A.J.S. and other judicial educational opportunities.
- There is a desperate need for timely mediation in dependency cases on a timely basis (within 30 days of arraignment) in order to adequately meet dependency guidelines and requirements of Chapter 39 (case plan filed with court within 60 days).
- Our mediation program is expanding – staff is knowledgeable and devoted to alternative dispute resolution.
- Suwannee County has excellent security.
- Need more case management staff in domestic violence
- Need at least one more family / dependency mediator
- We have just recently completed a new Family Law Resource Directory.
- I was unaware that we had a security plan.
- The Rules of Court do not allow juvenile delinquency matters to use video conferencing. This should be reviewed again.
- Technology could be updated and improved. There are numerous technology gaps.
- Security is a major concern and needs much improvement.
- Broward County has done community mapping to determine where service gaps exist; there are numerous community agencies which conduct such assessments.
- Stakeholders have attempted to do some type of community services mapping or assessment to determine where service gaps exist.
- Seminole County should have electronic docket distribution and secure access for parties to view case filings on clerk's records.
- Attorneys really could use a computer or attorney lounge to get work done between hearings.
- There is very little time, space, and agreements to utilize mediation.
- We do not have a case management system in place to coordinate the cases.
- Security for the judges' parking lot could be much better.
- FLAG does not meet often enough.

- Our court technology committee is in the process of purchasing laptops and printers for each judge / bench, so that orders may be printed in the courtrooms.
- Magistrates in my county utilize laptops and printers from the bench.
- Our county stakeholders receive monthly/bi-monthly training/information by court staff speaking at bar association meetings.
- I know about all cases involving one family if the case(s) was filed in my county; I am not aware of cases outside of my county.
- I am unaware of domestic violence services – it is run by the clerk of courts.
- Security needs improvement in my view – especially in transit between courts.
- Judges receive annual training, but I do not know what the scope of the training is.

### **2005 STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS:**

- One telephone line per bench creates problems in cases with multiple parents who need to appear by phone.
- Self help services were moved out of the courthouse and many people in domestic cases don't have transportation.
- Security is excellent in Leon County, but the outlying counties still have problems but have implemented some security measures.
- Alternative dispute resolution works well in Marion County.
- CBC not doing timely referrals and not submitting referrals to attorneys in timely manner
- DCF are not timely with orders on hearings nor are the orders reviewed before they are signed.
- In FLAG meetings, not much action on discussion issues.
- Staff could always benefit from more training.
- The New Visions System used in family court has capabilities (with some modification) to create and print orders from the courtroom. The domestic violence department plans to pursue this project in the upcoming year. Currently forms are created prior to hearings and distributed to the parties in the courtroom.
- The JV courtrooms are so close to the JV entrances that someone coming in could by-pass security and have access to courtrooms before security could act.
- Magistrates need bailiffs in their courtrooms.
- Mediation was being used; it has not been effective due to no one being able to agree.
- Mandatory mediation is being discontinued; however mediation will remain an option.
- At injunction hearings, there are no security personnel in the hallways where the petitioners and respondents are waiting.
- Regarding technology, a design is in place for information sharing but not always utilized effectively.