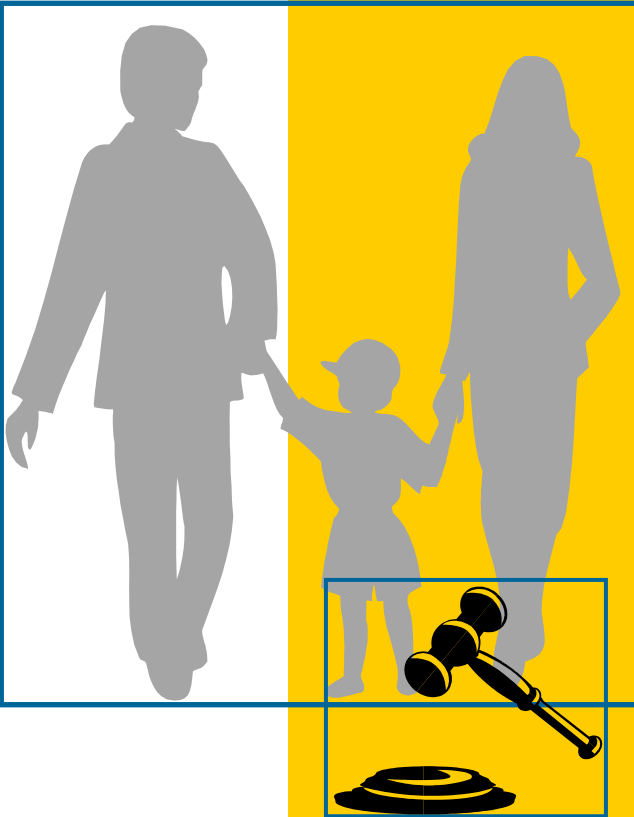


Florida's Unified Family Court



... Families don't think of their problems in terms of divisions of the court.

ONLINE JUDICIAL RESOURCES

<http://www.flcourts.org>

- ◆ Supreme Court UFC Opinions
- ◆ UFC Tool Kit
- ◆ Model Administrative Order
- ◆ Office of Court Improvement Newsletter
- ◆ Family Law Forms
- ◆ Dependency Bench Book
- ◆ Drug Court Program

"... For children are not just our future; children are our present. They are our present and what we do today or fail to do can and may forever alter their future. And the lives of children and their families can forever be changed by our action or inaction."

- Justice Barbara J. Pariente

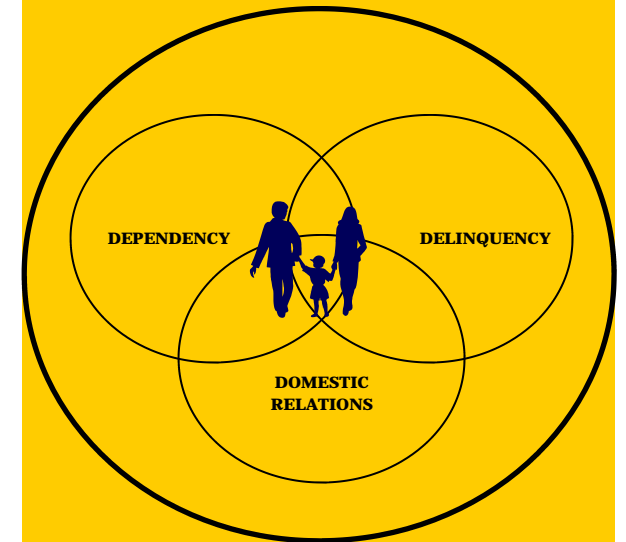
**Office of the State Courts Administrator
Office of Court Improvement
Supreme Court Building
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1900**

**Phone: 850.414.1507
Fax: 850.414.1505**

If you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.

Upon request by a person with a disability, this document will be made available in an alternate format.

Florida's Unified Family Court



WHAT IS UFC?

Unified Family Court is a fully integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases involving children and families, while at the same time resolving family disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

The Essential Components

Include:

- ◆ **Court case management** to monitor the case progress and evaluate each case at the outset to determine the appropriate resources and the appropriate way to handle the case.
- ◆ **Coordination** of multiple cases involving one family.
- ◆ **Collaboration** between the judiciary, stakeholders, and the community to provide access to an array of services for families.
- ◆ **Less adversarial approach** to handling family cases that focuses on minimizing harm to the child while balancing due process concerns.

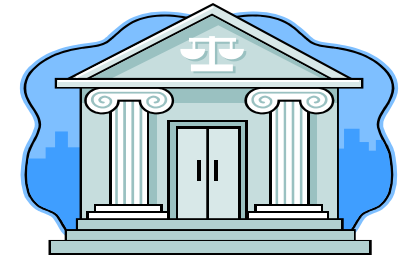
HISTORY OF UFC

- ◆ In 1991, the Legislature's Commission of Family Courts issued its report pursuant to a legislative directive to: develop specific guidelines for the implementation of a family law division within each judicial circuit; provide recommendations for statutory, rule and organizational changes; and recommend necessary support services.
- ◆ Between 1991 and 2001 three Supreme Court opinions were issued emphasizing the need for a family court system which would provide better protection for children in court and an improved method for resolution of family problems.
- ◆ In May 2001 the Supreme Court issued a fourth and unanimous opinion citing twelve guiding principles of a family court as a foundation for defining and implementing a model family court, including:
 - Children should live in safe and permanent homes.
 - Needs and best interests of children are primary considerations.
 - All persons should be treated with objectivity, sensitivity, dignity and respect.
 - Cases with inter-related family issues should be consolidated or coordinated.
 - The court is responsible for managing its cases.
 - A means of differentiating cases should be available.
 - Parties should be empowered to select ways to address their individual case.

WHY UFC?

UFC increases efficiency and is better for families by:

- ◆ *Eliminating* duplicate hearings.
- ◆ *Decreasing* the potential for conflicting orders.
- ◆ *Creating* opportunity for alternative dispute resolution.
- ◆ *Providing* prompt linkages to services.
- ◆ *Promoting* more informed judicial decision-making.



A Vision Without Division . . .

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