

FAMILY COURT SERVICES MEDIATION WELCOME PACKET

This may be a challenging time as you and the other parent work toward a custody and time share arrangement which is in the best interest of your child(ren). The court's professional and clerical staff will make themselves available to help you to the best of their ability. The types of services currently offered by Family Court Services are listed below.

1. Orientation for Mediation and Child Custody Recommending Counseling (CCRC).

By Local Court Rule, **orientation is mandatory** for parents who will be participating in Mediation/Child Custody Recommending Counseling services in Butte County. The purpose of mediation orientation is to clarify the Mediation/CCRC process and assist you in focusing on the needs of your child(ren) by providing information about child development, benefits of cooperative co-parenting, detrimental effects of parental conflict, and to provide sample parenting plans.

Orientation, which is required every two years, is completed online, will take approximately 45 minutes, and is followed by a required intake form. The orientation consists of a series of online videos, quizzes related to the videos, and a 60-question background survey and domestic violence screener. You cannot exit and resume the orientation; you must complete the videos and 60-question survey and domestic violence screener in a single session.

A link to the online orientation and required intake form is emailed along with the Zoom mediation invitation that is sent the Friday prior to your mediation appointment time. The online orientation can also be found on the Family Court Services webpage, located under the Divisions tab on the Superior Court of California, County of Butte website:

<https://www.buttecourt.ca.gov/Departments/FamilyCourtServices/>

2. Court Ordered Mediation/Child Custody Recommending Counseling (CCRC).

California law mandates that, if parents are contesting custody and visitation of their minor child(ren), they must attend mediation. The judge will refer you to a full mediation appointment. You will need to schedule your mediation at the public counter. The clerk will give you a form with the date and time of your Mediation/CCRC appointment after scheduling. All mediations are conducted remotely using Zoom.

- Ensure that you provide the Court Clerk with a current/valid email address.
- You will be emailed a hyperlink invitation to your scheduled Zoom mediation session the Friday prior to your mediation appointment time. This email will include instructions for connecting to the Zoom video session from your smart phone, tablet, or computer. If you do not have technology to support your attendance via video, please follow the instructions (also included in the emailed invite) to attend your session by calling into the Zoom platform at your scheduled session time and attend via audio only.
- Ensure that you are ready and available to participate at the time of your scheduled appointment.

- You must secure a quiet and private location where you can participate in the Zoom session where you will not be overheard by any third parties and where you will not be interrupted.
- No additional third parties are permitted to participate in the session with you.
- Ensure that you make childcare arrangements for any children in your care.
- Expect and plan for your mediation session to take up to 1 ½ hours.
- As with all types of mediations (in-person, phone, or via video), recording the session is strictly prohibited/not allowed.

You will need to be on time and not have your child(ren) with you, unless specifically ordered by the judge to bring them. If you do not attend, or are more than 15 minutes late, the mediation session will be cancelled, and the court will be notified that you did not appear in a timely manner for the appointment.

The purpose of mediation is to reduce parental conflict and to assist in developing a parenting plan, and custody and visitation, that is in the best interests of their child(ren). If the mediation appointment results in an agreement, the mediator will prepare it for the parents' signatures and submit it to the court prior to the next scheduled court hearing. If parents have attorneys, they will be provided with a copy of the agreement so that they can review the document with their clients before signing it.

In the event that parents are unable to reach an agreement, the Child Custody Recommending Counselor is required to prepare a written recommendation containing a parenting plan that they believe is in the best interest of the minor child(ren). They will provide this report to the parents and court prior to the next scheduled court hearing. If parents have attorneys, the report will be provided to the attorneys so that they may review the documents with their clients. Please understand that **IT IS THE JUDGE WHO MAKES THE FINAL DECISION REGARDING THE APPROPRIATE PARENTING PLAN FOR MINOR CHILDREN, NOT THE CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELOR.** The CCRC's recommendation is only one of several factors the judge may consider in making the order.

Completion of orientation and attendance at your court-ordered mediation session are mandatory.

California law requires that Family Court Services screen for domestic violence and offer those reporting a history of domestic violence the option of having a joint mediation/CCRC session with the other party present or a separate mediation appointment. They may also request the presence of a support person during their appointment. Each parent will be given the opportunity to declare a history of domestic violence in Court when they are scheduled for their mediation appointment, during the mediation orientation, and just prior to their mediation appointment.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the services offered, please contact Family Court Services at (530) 532-7003 and we will do our best to assist you. Family Court Services is open on all court business days, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and is located at:

North Butte County Courthouse (NCCH)
1775 Concord Avenue
Chico, CA 95928

Court Clerks can answer general questions about our services but cannot provide legal advice. Child Custody Recommending Counselors can answer general questions about custody and visitation issues; however, they cannot discuss your case with you outside of the mediation process. You may want to seek legal counsel or contact the Facilitator's Office at (530) 532-7004, or the Self-Help Assistance and Referral Program (SHARP) at (530) 532-7015, which offer programs designed to assist self-represented litigants.