

**FILED**

Superior Court of California  
County of Los Angeles

**AUGUST 19, 2026**

David W. Slayton, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court

By: R. Mina, Deputy

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING  
COUNSELING PILOT PROGRAM

**GENERAL ORDER**

WHEREAS, Family Code sections 3160 through 3188 authorize the Court to provide child custody mediation and child custody recommending counseling services in contested parenting matters involving the health, safety, welfare, and best interests of children;

WHEREAS, the Court recognizes that high-conflict custody disputes significantly affect children, families, judicial resources, and the effective administration of justice;

WHEREAS, in counties of substantial population and geographic size, including jurisdictions comparable to Los Angeles County, the volume and complexity of family law filings require a flexible, trauma-informed, and accessible model of child custody dispute resolution;

WHEREAS, the Court finds that a child custody recommending counseling program incorporating elements of mediation, assessment, case management, and recommendations to the judicial officer promotes timely resolution of disputes, increases access to services, reduces unnecessary adversarial litigation, and supports child-focused outcomes;

WHEREAS, the Court further finds that differing levels of intervention are appropriate depending upon the degree of parental conflict, allegations of domestic violence, substance

abuse, mental health concerns, refuse and resist behaviors, child safety concerns, relocation issues, or chronic noncompliance with prior court orders;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this General Order is to establish a Child Custody Recommending Counseling (“CCRC”) Pilot Program for referred family law proceedings in dissolution cases involving minor children with custody and visitation disputes at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse where no prior child custody and/or visitation orders have been issued. The CCRC Pilot Program is intended to:

- A. Promote the best interests of children;
- B. Encourage parental agreement, which is a preferred method of determining custody and visitation, as well as cooperative parenting and durable parenting plans;
- C. Ensure frequent and continuing contact with both parents, when in the children’s best interests;
- D. Reduce trauma to children caused by prolonged litigation;
- E. Improve judicial efficiency in a high-volume metropolitan court system;
- F. Facilitate timely recommendations to the Court when agreement cannot be reached;
- G. Increase consistency, accountability, and access to family-centered services; and
- H. Permit the Court to assess and evaluate the value of this tailored child custody recommending counseling model and contrast it with the efficacy of the Court’s current non-recommending model based upon the aforementioned considerations.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

This General Order creates a pilot program and applies to all dissolution proceedings filed at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse involving dissolution cases with children that have

contested child custody and/or visitation disputes in which no prior child custody and/or visitation orders have been issued.

### **III. PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

The CCRC Pilot Program shall utilize the following model:

- A. A “court-connected mediation” (hereinafter “mediation”) as set forth in Superior Court of Los Angeles County Local Rule, rule 5.19, subds. (a) - (c) with a Family Court Services (FCS) Specialist; and, if no agreement results from the mediation,
- B. Participation in a CCRC, with a report and recommendation made pursuant to Family Code section 3183.

### **IV. CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELING**

- A. If a mediation does not result in a full agreement as to child custody and/or visitation between the parties, the parties must, in good faith, participate in the CCRC session pursuant to Family Code section 3183. The parties shall be informed of the date, time, and manner/location of the CCRC session at the conclusion of the mediation. To the extent possible, the CCRC session shall occur at least ten (10) calendar days before any court hearing concerning the custody and/or visitation. Failure to participate in good faith may result in sanctions authorized by law or adverse evidentiary inferences.
- B. The FCS Specialist serving as the child custody recommending counselor shall not be the same FCS Specialist who conducted the mediation.
- C. The purpose of the CCRC is to permit the FCS Specialist to obtain information and provide the Court with a report and recommendations after interviewing the parents and allowing the parties to present their respective positions as to child custody and/or visitation along with other limited information.

- D. In preparing the report and recommendation, the FCS Specialist may consider collateral contacts and additional information provided by the parties if the FCS Specialist deems it necessary to address a significant concern affecting the health, safety, or welfare of the child(ren). This includes, but is not limited to, the parties' relevant criminal histories, contacts with the Department of Children & Family Services or Child Protective Services, and non-party witnesses including the child(ren).
- E. The CCRC report is non-confidential as between the FCS Specialist, the Court, the parties, and their attorneys, but remains confidential as to the public. Family Code sections 3025.5 and 3177 govern the confidentiality of CCRC reports. CCRC reports will only be disclosed to those persons expressly identified in Family Code section 3025.5 unless ordered otherwise by the Court. CCRC reports are only to be used in connection with a specific family law case to assist the Court in determining and deciding the best interest of the child in a custody and visitation proceeding. CCRC reports must not be submitted to the Court for consideration in other case types. They may not be attached or referred to in material part in a public filing by the parties or their attorneys. Failure to comply with the Family Code provisions regarding disclosure could result in the imposition of a monetary sanctions against the disclosing party or attorney. The sanction shall be in an amount sufficient to deter repetition of the conduct, and may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs incurred, or both, unless the Court finds the disclosing party or attorney acted with substantial justification or that other circumstances make the imposition of the sanction unjust, such as an unreasonable financial burden on the party or attorney against whom a sanction is imposed.

**V. THE FCS SPECIALIST'S REPORT**

- A. The CCRC report shall contain the basis for the recommended child custody and/or visitation plan. The recommended child custody and/or visitation plan shall focus upon the following: the best interests of the child, including but not limited to, child safety and stability, developmentally appropriate parenting arrangements, school and healthcare continuity, reduction of parental conflict exposure, and compliance with statutory presumptions and public policy.
- B. The FCS Specialist shall disclose the report and recommendations to the parties, their counsel, and the Court at least ten (10) calendar days before the proceeding relating to child custody and/or visitation.
- C. Any evidentiary objections to the CCRC report shall be made in writing and served at least five (5) calendar days before the hearing. Objections referencing the content of the report shall include the requisite Confidential Report Coversheet and must be filed under seal, as public disclosures are subject to sanctions as discussed in Section IV.  
  
E., supra.
- D. Absent filing and service of timely objections, the FCS Specialist's report prepared in connection with the CCRC may be considered by the Court at the hearing on child custody and/or visitation and may be used as the basis for a child custody and/or visitation order. Untimely objections are deemed waived.
- E. Any party who seeks to subpoena the Child Custody Recommending Counselor may ask the Court at the time of the hearing to do so. Government Code sections 68097.1 and 68097.2 apply including the subpoenaing party's obligation for all statutory fees and salary reimbursements. The Court may issue temporary orders pending any further hearing date. Any subpoena related to the CCRC shall be served upon the

Office of Court Counsel, located in Stanley Mosk Courthouse at 111 North Hill Street, Room 546, Los Angeles, California 90012.

- F. Once a hearing date is set for the FCS Specialist to testify, the party requesting the testimony must serve the following on the Office of Court Counsel, located in Stanley Mosk Courthouse at 111 North Hill Street, Room 546, Los Angeles, CA 90012, at least ten (10) calendar days before the hearing: (a) the original and one copy of the subpoena to appear; (b) a check in the amount of \$275.00 made payable to the Superior Court of Los Angeles as a deposit pursuant to Government Code § 68097.2(a), unless a current fee waiver specifically for witness fees is on file for that party.<sup>1</sup>
- G. Due to certain privileges, the Court will not order the production of any FCS documents without a prior in-camera review. A party desiring an in-camera review must serve the Office of Court Counsel with a subpoena duces tecum for the file/documents at least ten (10) calendar days before the trial or hearing. If an objection is received, the subpoenaing party must file a Request for Order (RFO) and seek to have it be heard on shortened time, in order to compel the in-camera review.

## **VI. EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Ex parte communications between FCS Specialists, parties, attorneys, including minor's counsel, are governed by Family Code section 216 and California Rules of Court, rule 5.235. Neither party, attorney for the parties, nor minor's counsel may contact the FCS Specialist prior to or following the CCRC appointment for anything other than scheduling issues.

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<sup>1</sup> If expenses exceed the \$275.00 deposit, FCS will bill the depositing party for the additional funds. Failure to comply with these provisions may be deemed a waiver of the right to call the FCS Specialist to testify.

- B. An FCS Specialist shall not have ex-parte communication with a judicial officer regarding information obtained as part of a confidential mediation or CCRC except as otherwise indicated in subdivision (e) of Local Rule, rule 5.19.

## **VII. REASSIGNMENT AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

- A. The FCS Specialist appointed to perform mediation or a CCRC may be challenged for cause if the FCS Specialist is personally acquainted with a party or the child, or has a conflict of interest relative to a party, attorney or the child, or it appears to the Court that the Specialist is otherwise unable to perform the mediator's or counselor's duties in a fair and impartial manner, consistent with subdivision (f)(1) of Local Rule, rule 5.19.
- B. Once a CCRC report and recommendation have been filed and served, any objection to or challenge of the FCS Specialist may be asserted only by a request for order filed in the family law proceeding, consistent with subdivision (f)(3) of Local Rule, rule 5.19.
- C. No peremptory challenges to FCS Specialists are permitted under subdivision (f)(2) of Local Rule, rule 5.19, because mediations and CCRC sessions are not conducted under Family Code section 3118.
- D. A complaint regarding an FCS Specialist shall be made in writing and directed to the Administrator, Family Court Services, 111 N. Hill Street, Room 241, Los Angeles, California 90012, consistent with subdivision (f) of Local Rule, rule 5.19.

## **VIII. JUDICIAL AUTHORITY**

- A. Nothing in this General Order limits the authority of any judicial officer to:
1. Adopt, modify, or reject the FCS Specialist's recommendations;
  2. Order evaluations pursuant to Evidence Code section 730;

3. Conduct evidentiary hearings;
4. Enter temporary emergency orders;
5. Appoint minor's counsel;
6. Refer parties to additional services.

## **IX. IMPLEMENTATION**

The Supervising Judge of the Family Law Division and the Administrator of Family Court Services are authorized to establish administrative procedures, forms, intake protocols, and operational guidelines necessary to implement this General Order.

## **X. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This General Order shall take effect on August 25, 2026, and shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded by further order of the Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: August 19, 2026



  
SERGIO C. TAPIA II  
Presiding Judge