



Services Provided

Dane County Family Court Services (FCS) provides mediation and evaluation services when Dane County has jurisdiction to assist in resolving custody and physical placements disputes in both divorce and paternity cases. Custody concerns decision making while physical placement concerns where the child(ren) spends time. In addition to these services, FCS also offers a resource book available for \$3.00 [and online](#), which further explains the Family Court system.

Parents are referred to FCS by a Circuit Court Commissioner or a Judge.

Upon receipt of a referral to FCS, parents will receive a letter scheduling parents to attend a mandatory [Parent Education Program \(PE\)](#). This program is held twice a month and costs \$40.00. With this letter, parents will also receive a form requesting additional background information.

After both parents attend PE, a [Family Court Counselor](#) will be assigned and a mandatory mediation session will be scheduled. Both parents will be informed of this meeting by letter. Mediation sessions are held Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. There are a limited number of mediation appointments available on the afternoon PE is held, which is explained in the letter you receive from FCS. This mediation session provides parents with the opportunity to resolve their issues in a confidential, non-adversarial setting. Mediation is usually conducted between the parties to the action and the mediator only. There is no fee for this initial mediation session. If parents have been in our office for mediation on a previous referral, there is a \$100.00 fee per parent for this first appointment. If parents are unable to reach agreement in this first session, they may elect to continue for additional time for a \$200.00 fee, which is usually ordered to be shared equally between the parties.

If mediation resolves the issues, the agreement can be drafted as a stipulation and submitted to a Judge for court approval. When signed by a Judge, the stipulation becomes an enforceable court order.

If mediation does not resolve the issues, one parent may file a Motion and Affidavit with the Judge requesting a study. The Judge can then direct FCS to proceed with a study. If a divorce is still pending, a Circuit Court Commissioner may direct FCS to proceed with a study. There is a fee for the study which is \$500, \$1000, \$1500 or \$2000 based on combined household income. The FCS Director determines the amount each party will contribute towards this fee. A study is an investigative process conducted by a Family Court Counselor, which culminates in the issuing of recommendations to the parents and the Court. After the recommendations are issued, parents may agree to the recommendations or elect to go to trial over the issues. During the study, the evaluator may talk to significant others, teachers, other family members, therapists, daycare providers, etc. Because mediation is confidential, the Family Court Counselor who conducted the mediation will not conduct the study.

Waivers of mediation and study fees may be granted in certain situations.

A Family Court Counselor is available every weekday during business hours to answer questions regarding FCS services.

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Courthouse](#)

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