

CHILD CUSTODY RECOMMENDING COUNSELOR

DEFINITION

Under general direction, the Child Custody Recommending Counselor supports the Court process by performing child recommending counseling services designed to resolve disputes regarding contested child custody and visitation matters, and in the absence of an agreement makes written recommendations to the Court and parties regarding the child/children's best interests on the unresolved custody and visitation issues. This position is subject to the provisions of the Trial Court Employment Protection and Governance Act.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

This is a journey-level professional classification. Most duties and responsibilities are performed within established policies, procedures, standards, rules and laws. However, incumbents must often work independently and make decisions in the absence of easily applied rules. This class typically reports to the Supervising Child Custody Recommending Counselor class.

This class is distinguished from the higher-level Supervising Child Custody Recommending Counselor class in that the latter has full supervisory authority for a group of assigned staff and the preponderant duties involve supervisory work and/or may require extensive knowledge to perform more difficult, complex and specialized duties.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

The Court reserves the right to assign or reassign duties as required to achieve business and operational objectives. When assigned, all of the essential functions and duties listed below must be accomplished effectively, are standard, and may not be inclusive of all functions and duties that may be assigned. Essential functions and duties may include, but are not limited to those listed below.

- Reviews Court case information prioritizes assigned cases; meets with parties to explain mediation process and explore child custody and visitation options with the parties; encourages parental involvement in the mediation process; contacts collateral contacts to obtain and/or verify information pertinent to child custody and visitation issues; responds to inquiries from customers, parents, minors counsel, community agencies and others.
- Conducts confidential mediation of assigned cases to facilitate development of a child custody and visitation plan agreement between the parties involved; facilitates and encourages negotiations between parties during the mediation process; works together with the parties and other agencies to ensure the best interests of the child are being met; when an agreement (stipulation) between the parties cannot be reached in mediation, develops and submits a recommended child custody and visitation plan to the Court.
- Works with various parties and agencies such as the Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services, parents, children, therapists and minors counsel.
- During the mediation process, observes and assesses risk factors, including domestic violence, substance abuse, child abuse issues and potential for danger to self and others and takes appropriate action to ensure the safety and best interest of the child; reports suspected child abuse and neglect allegations to appropriate authorities in accordance with statutory requirements; when intensive or continued counseling is appropriate, that information is included in the Court recommendation; completes required reports and contacts pertinent agencies to obtain collateral information as appropriate, including but not limited to, Child Protective Services, mental health agencies, substance abuse treatment providers, school personnel, supervised visitation monitors and law enforcement personnel as necessary and required by law.

- Provides expert professional assistance, guidance and support to customers, the Court and the public; handles and responds to numerous daily inquiries from customers, parents, community agencies and others; keeps abreast of current developments in family law, juvenile, social service policies and regulations, clinical studies and other trends and information pertaining to child development, family dynamics, mental health, healthy partner relationships, mediation and alternative dispute resolution.
- Performs responsible and specialized administrative duties related to areas of responsibility, such as: accessing and reviewing case information within the database; maintaining daily case-related statistical data and collateral contact information as requested; providing testimony when subpoenaed by parties or their counsel; as required or as requested, completes other assigned Court-related written reports and recommendations for the Court and for the attorneys of records.
- Participates in research applicable to areas of responsibility; participates in state and regional training institutes and training sessions, including domestic violence and mediation training to meet continuing educational requirements for Child Custody Recommending Counselors as set for in California Rules of Court, rule 5.210.
- Participates in case consultation meetings, staff meetings and provides regular status reports on workload.
- Communicates clearly, concisely and effectively orally and in writing; exercises tact, objectivity, sensitivity, discretion, courtesy and judgment in handling highly emotional issues and situations with a variety of people from diverse, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Establishes and maintains effective working relationships with judicial officers, other staff, members of the public, the parties and others encountered during the course of work.
- Travel between Court facilities as necessary to carry-out duties.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Minimum Qualifications

As stated in California Family Code sections 1815, 1816 and 3164, incumbents in this classification must possess the following qualifications:

Education: A master's degree from an accredited college, university or program in social work; psychology; marriage, family and child counseling; or other behavioral science substantially related to marriage and family interpersonal relationships.

AND

Experience: Two (2) years of experience in counseling or psychotherapy, or both, preferably in a setting related to the areas of responsibility of the family conciliation court and with the ethnic population to be served.

Desirable Qualifications

Current State of California license as a Clinical Social Worker (LCSW); Marriage, Family and Child Counselor or Therapist (MFCC or LMFT); Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC); or Clinical Psychologist.

Knowledge and Abilities

Knowledge of:

- Principles, methods and techniques of interviewing adults and children, conflict resolution, case management, crisis intervention, mediation and risk assessment.
- Resources in the community that clients can be referred to for assistance.
- Adult psychopathy and the psychology of families.
- Child development, child abuse, clinical issues relating to children, the effects of divorce on children, the effects of domestic violence on children, and child custody research sufficient to enable a counselor to assess the mental health needs of children.
- Training in domestic violence issues as described in California Family Code section 1816.
- Socio-economic and cultural diversity issues.
- Legal terminology, Court operations and courtroom procedures, etiquette and conventions.
- Correct English use, punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- Personal computers and word processing software.

Ability to:

- Obtain, interpret and evaluation information regarding family behavior from various sources and make recommendations.
- Mediate and facilitate the development of agreements and parenting plans.
- Communicate emphatically, neutrally and clearly with clients under stressful situations.
- Use communication, listening and problem-solving skills to assist culturally diverse parties in accepting or finding solutions.
- Recognize dysfunctional interaction patterns.
- Prepare clear and concise written reports for use in litigation.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationship with all those encountered in the course of work.
- Determine pertinent aspects of cases and recommend useful interventions.
- Maintain flexibility in managing an unpredictable workday.
- Meet established deadlines in a timely manner.
- Evaluate alternatives and recommendations in the absence of easily applied rules.
- Protect clients' rights.
- Maintain confidentiality of Court proceedings, documents and records and keep accurate records.
- Research, understand, interpret, explain and apply applicable policies, procedures, guides, rules and statutes.
- Exercise sound judgement in making recommendations to parties of the Court.
- Operate modern office equipment and personal computers, and use specified computer applications and databases.
- Use tact and diplomacy when dealing with sensitive, complex and/or confidential issues and situations.

Other Requirements

- Possession of a valid driver's license may be required depending on the position or the ability to provide alternate methods of transportation that meets job requirements.
- Candidates are required to pass a fingerprint clearance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice (DOJ). Convictions, depending on the type, number and date, may be disqualifying.
- All Court employees must take the Oath of Allegiance.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

The physical demands and work environment characteristics described here are representative of those that must be met by an incumbent to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Physical Requirements: Strength, dexterity, coordination and vision to use a keyboard and monitor; hearing to communicate with the public and Court staff; ability to sit for extended periods of time; walk or otherwise move within the Court facilities; reach with hands and arms; vision to read and write material; sufficient strength to lift, carry, push or pull materials weighing up to 25 pounds; lifting position may be from floor to waist, and/or from the waist to an overhead position; to stoop, kneel, squat and crouch to pick-up or move objects, office equipment and records; speak clearly on the telephone and before groups.

Working Environment: Work is performed in an office environment with little exposure to outside temperatures or dirt and dust. The incumbent's working conditions are typically quiet, but may be loud at times at some locations. The noise level and traffic level in the work environment are similar to a busy office.

Normal business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Work outside of these hours may be necessary in certain circumstances. This position is exempt from the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act and is not eligible for over-time.

NOTE: The statements herein are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by individuals assigned to this job classification, and are not construed as an exhaustive list of responsibilities, duties, and skills required of personnel so classified. Furthermore, they do not establish a contract for employment and are subject to change at the discretion of the employer.

Job Title	Child Custody Recommending Counselor
Classification Status	PL
Representation Unit	None
FLSA Status	Exempt
Established	06/00
Revised	12/19
Previous Title	Mediator/Counselor

General sign-off: I understand that I am expected to adhere to all Court policies and procedures. I have read and understand the explanation and description of this job classification. By signing below, I am declaring that I am able to meet the employment standards and perform the essential functions and duties of this classification with or without accommodation.

Signature _____

Date _____