

COURT COORDINATION OF FAMILY CASES

CONCEPT:

The primary objective of a family court is to coordinate cases among family members throughout the judicial process. All circuit court judges are involved in the adjudication of family court cases, creating a one-family, one-judge case flow environment. This allows judges to review family issues in a comprehensive manner, consolidate hearings when appropriate, issue non-conflicting orders, impose sanctions to best fit family needs, and instill accountability.

OVERVIEW:

Cases enter into family court by a variety of methods. A family must have either a juvenile dependency or juvenile delinquency case, parental criminal history, and at least one other open court case (i.e. custody, dissolution). The Treatment Court Specialist researches case filings, and identifies those that meet those criteria. The information is then presented as a family court referral to a judge. Additionally, community agencies, the bar, CASA, or the presiding judge may refer a family needing a collaborative approach.

FAMILY CASE and MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION:

Once a family has been assigned to the family court program, all cases (including criminal cases) are assigned to one judge. Matters involving juvenile delinquency and dependency, dissolution, filiation, support, and criminal are bundled together. The assignment system is ideal because one judge is familiar with a family from start to finish. Many times hearings can be consolidated, eliminating unnecessary costs and employing better time management.

Additionally, the Family Court Coordinator will schedule a meeting with parents, counsel, DHS CASA, and community partners. The purpose of the meeting is to facilitate collaborative resolution of differences, provide resources to the family, increase communication between community partners, problem-solve, and produce a comprehensive treatment plan.

The Family Court Coordinator is responsible for overseeing this program. This includes educating the parents and team members regarding court processes, informing the judiciary, providing conflict management services, analyzing and researching information, leading multi-agency discussions, collaboration with service providers, and monitoring compliance with treatment plan agreements.

GOALS:

1. Develop an efficient and effective system for providing integrated, family focused prevention and intervention services to at-risk families defined by the family court.;
2. Coordinate available human services and community resources with the Deschutes County circuit court, both in the context of the court proceeding and outside the formal court process.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Coordinate all services that may be available to persons who are or who may become parties before the family court (see ORS 3.417).
2. Assist human service agencies in their collaboration efforts.
3. Assist the circuit court judges in viewing litigation in a family focused environment.
4. Intervene with at-risk families who do not receive governmental assistance.
5. Research and determine new programs that support family court litigation.