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**WASHINGTON STATE CENTER  
FOR COURT RESEARCH**

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**An Evaluation of Unified Family Court  
Pilot Sites in Washington State**

December 2004

**Washington State Center for Court Research**

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## **Preamble**

Recognizing the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the diverse and numerous legal problems facing Washington families, the Legislature in 1999 created a Unified Family Court Pilot Program (UFC Project). The enabling legislation required that certain types of juvenile and family law cases be consolidated for hearing by the same judicial officer or team who receives specialized education. The Administrative Office of the Courts was charged with the evaluation component of the UFC Project. A final report was required by December 1, 2004. This document satisfies that requirement.

The purpose of the evaluation is threefold: (1) to evaluate and report to the Washington State Legislature, Governor, and Supreme Court the extent to which the three UFC pilot sites are meeting stated objectives; (2) to provide consultation and feedback in the form of recommendations to the pilot sites regarding organization, procedures, and policies; and (3) to provide practical information regarding the operations of Unified Family Court for other jurisdictions considering such a court.

In brief, the evaluation found several benefits from Unified Family Court. Redundant and/or conflicting orders were reduced. Compliance with court-ordered services was increased in UFC cases. Continuity of judicial oversight was noted as a positive outcome. Case management was identified as important for gathering and organizing critical information, identifying issues, and maintaining a higher level of monitoring. Recommendations for improvement include improved communication and technology information for earlier identification of potential UFC families, longer judicial rotations of at least two years, and more communication with the social services community. State level funding could address inadequate resource availability.

Unified Family Court is an important tool in improving Washington's response to children and families. It brings into play the critical collaboration between courts and child welfare partners. With the continued support of government leaders and community stakeholders, the benefits of Unified Family Court can be realized across the state.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Introduction ..... 1  
General Results ..... 6  
King County Pilot Site ..... 13  
Snohomish County Pilot Site ..... 20  
Thurston County Pilot Site ..... 26  
Summary ..... 33  
Recommendations ..... 36  
Final Remarks ..... 37

**CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND & EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

**A. Unified Family Court Model**

1. Genesis & Motivation ..... 39  
2. History of UFC in Washington State ..... 40  
3. Unified Family Court Pilot Evaluation Objectives ..... 41

**B. Evaluation Methodology**

1. Evaluation Approach ..... 42  
2. Literature Review ..... 43  
3. Methods & Procedures ..... 44  
4. Participants/Pilot Sites ..... 45  
5. Study Design ..... 46  
6. Qualitative Data Sources ..... 47  
7. Quantitative Data Sources & Analyses ..... 48

**CHAPTER 2: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS ..... 53**

**SECTION I. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS & OBSERVATIONS ..... 55**

**§ I.1 GENERAL RESULTS**

**A. Background**

1. Goals ..... 57  
2. Strengths ..... 57  
3. Weaknesses ..... 58  
4. Success Factors ..... 58  
5. Procedural Issues ..... 59  
6. Suggestions for Improvements ..... 59

**B. Organization**

1. Implementation/Startup ..... 60  
2. Training ..... 61  
3. Referrals ..... 61  
4. Resources ..... 61  
5. Roles and Responsibilities ..... 62

Table of Contents

**C. Objectives**  
1. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing . 64  
2. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services ..... 64  
3. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation ..... 65  
4. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes ..... 66  
**D. Tabulated Responses for NCSC Questionnaire ..... 66**

**§ I.2 KING COUNTY PILOT SITE**

**A. Background**  
1. Definition ..... 69  
2. Goals ..... 69  
3. Strengths ..... 69  
4. Weaknesses ..... 69  
**B. Organization**  
1. Implementation/Startup ..... 70  
2. Training ..... 71  
3. Referrals ..... 71  
4. Resources ..... 72  
5. Roles and Responsibilities ..... 73  
**C. Objectives**  
1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making ..... 77  
2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing . 78  
3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services ..... 80  
4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR ..... 81  
5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation ..... 81  
6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes ..... 82  
**D. Additional Comments ..... 83**

**§ I.3 SNOHOMISH COUNTY PILOT SITE**

**A. Background**  
1. Definition ..... 85  
2. Goals ..... 85  
3. Strengths ..... 85  
4. Weaknesses ..... 85  
**B. Organization**  
1. Implementation/Startup ..... 86  
2. Training ..... 86  
3. Referrals ..... 86  
4. Resources ..... 87  
5. Roles and Responsibilities ..... 87

Table of Contents

**C. Objectives**

- 1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making ..... 90
- 2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing . 90
- 3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services ..... 92
- 4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR ..... 93
- 5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation ..... 93
- 6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes ..... 93

**D. Additional Comments** ..... 94

**§ I.4 THURSTON COUNTY PILOT SITE**

**A. Background**

- 1. Definition ..... 95
- 2. Goals ..... 95
- 3. Strengths ..... 95
- 4. Weaknesses ..... 95

**B. Organization**

- 1. Implementation/Startup ..... 96
- 2. Training ..... 97
- 3. Referrals ..... 97
- 4. Resources ..... 97
- 5. Roles and Responsibilities ..... 98

**C. Objectives**

- 1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making ..... 101
- 2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing . 102
- 3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services ..... 103
- 4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR ..... 104
- 5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation ..... 105
- 6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes ..... 105

**D. Additional Comments** ..... 106

**E. Special Programs**

- 1. Dependency Drug Court ..... 107
- 2. Domestic/Family Law Drug Court ..... 108

**SECTION II. KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

**A. Background & Methodology** ..... 109

**B. Emergent Themes**

- 1. Perception of the Family and Juvenile Court Systems ..... 109
- 2. UFC and Resources ..... 109
- 3. Public Relations ..... 110
- 4. Recommended Policy Changes ..... 110
- 5. UFC Strengths ..... 110
- 6. Areas for Improvement ..... 111
- 7. Summary ..... 112

<b>SECTION III. PRACTITIONER SURVEY</b>	
<b>A. Background &amp; Methodology</b>	113
<b>B. Objectives</b>	
1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making	113
2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing	114
3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services	116
4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR	116
5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation	116
6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes	117
7. Summary of Results	117
<b>C. Tabulated Responses</b>	118
<b>SECTION IV. LITIGANT FOCUS GROUPS</b>	
<b>A. Background</b>	127
<b>B. SESRC Report</b>	
1. Executive Summary	127
2. Purpose and Methods	129
3. Recruitment and Participation	130
4. Synthesis of Discussion and Interviews	134
<b>CHAPTER 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>A. Background &amp; Methodology</b>	137
1. Study Design Options	137
2. Potential Data Sources & Issues	138
3. Pilot Site Designs and Sample Selection	140
<b>B. Program Objectives &amp; Measures</b>	
1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making	150
2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing	151
3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services	152
4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR	153
5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation	153
6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes	154
<b>C. Results from JIS Data Sources</b>	
1. King County Pilot Site	154
2. Snohomish County Pilot Site	165
3. Thurston County Pilot Site	168
<b>D. Results from the Case File Review Database</b>	
1. King County Pilot Site	173
2. Snohomish County Pilot Site	177
3. Thurston County Pilot Site	181
<b>E. Results from DSHS Data Sources</b>	
1. King County Pilot Site	184
2. Snohomish County Pilot Site	187

<b>F. Summary of Quantitative Results</b> .....	189
<b>CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	
<b>A. Summary</b>	
1. Significance of this Project .....	191
2. UFC Development .....	191
3. Litigant Feedback .....	192
4. Case Management .....	192
5. Decision Making .....	193
6. Timeliness .....	193
7. Access to and Coordination of Services .....	193
<b>B. Recommendations</b>	
1. Awareness via Education and Public Relations .....	195
2. Enhanced Training for Judicial Officers .....	196
3. Site-specific Recommendations .....	196
<b>C. Final Remarks</b> .....	197
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	199
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
A. RCW Citations & Local Court Rules .....	A- 1
B. UFC Forms .....	A- 7
C. Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews .....	A-17
D. Practitioner Survey .....	A-35
E. Litigant Focus Groups .....	A-41
F. JIS Data .....	A-61
G. Compliance Data .....	A-65
H. DSHS Data .....	A-69
I. Study Design .....	A-73
J. Original Pilot Site Proposals .....	A-77
K. UFC Eligibility Criteria .....	A-97
L. Litigant Survey Pre-Test Assessment .....	A-99

**LIST OF FIGURES:**

**Figure 3-1:** Key Case Milestones ..... 141  
**Figure 3-2:** Key Case Milestones & Evaluation Timeframe ..... 142

**LIST OF TABLES:**

**CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND & EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

**Table 1-1:** Measures Drawn for the Judicial Information System (JIS) ..... 50  
**Table 1-2:** Measures Drawn from Superior Court Case Files ..... 51  
**Table 1-3:** Measures Drawn from DSHS Databases ..... 52

**CHAPTER 2: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

**Table 2-1:** Key Informant Interviewees ..... 55  
**Table 2-2:** Availability and Perceived Intensity of Treatment and  
Case Management Services (NCSC Question A9) ..... 65  
**Table 2-3:** Collaboration between Court Staff and Treatment Providers,  
Social Workers, and Attorneys (NCSC Question A10) ..... 65  
**Table 2-4:** Practitioner Survey - All Respondents ..... 119  
**Table 2-5:** Practitioner Survey - Practitioners w/ Both UFC and Non-UFC  
Experience in Past 12 Months (*King & Snohomish Counties Only*) ..... 120  
**Table 2-6:** Practitioner Survey - Attorneys (*Prosecuting Attorney,  
Assistant Attorney General, Private Attorney, Public Defender*) ..... 121  
**Table 2-7:** Practitioner Survey - Advocates (*BECCA Rep., GALs, Dependency  
or Family Law CASA/VGAL volunteers and staff*) ..... 122  
**Table 2-8:** Practitioner Survey - Social Workers ..... 123  
**Table 2-9:** Practitioner Survey - King County ..... 124  
**Table 2-10:** Practitioner Survey - Snohomish County ..... 125  
**Table 2-11:** Practitioner Survey - Thurston County ..... 126  
**Table 2-12:** UFC Participant List by County, Gender Group,  
and Valid Mailing Address ..... 131  
**Table 2-13:** Results of Recruitment Calls to Sample of  
UFC Participants by County ..... 133

**CHAPTER 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

**Table 3-1:** Snohomish Pilot Site Sample Characteristics ..... 146  
**Table 3-2:** King Sample Pilot Site Characteristics ..... 148  
**Table 3-3:** Thurston Sample Pilot Site Characteristics ..... 150  
**Table 3-4:** Number of Court Appearances within 6 Months of Filing Date,  
King County ..... 156  
**Table 3-5:** Number of Court Appearances within 12 Months of Filing Date,  
King County ..... 156  
**Table 3-6:** Number of Court Appearances within 18 Months of Filing Date,  
King County ..... 157

*List of Figures and Tables*

<b>Table 3-7:</b> Number of Court Appearances within 24 Months of Filing Date, King County .....	157
<b>Table 3-8:</b> Number of Continuances within 6 Months of Filing Date, King County .....	158
<b>Table 3-9:</b> Number of Continuances within 12 Months of Filing Date, King County .....	158
<b>Table 3-10:</b> Number of Continuances within 18 Months of Filing Date, King County .....	159
<b>Table 3-11:</b> Number of Continuances within 24 Months of Filing Date, King County .....	159
<b>Table 3-12:</b> Filing-to-Completion Duration, King County .....	160
<b>Table 3-13:</b> UFC Acceptance-to-Completion Duration, King County .....	161
<b>Table 3-14:</b> Differences between Tables 3-12 and 3-13, King County .....	161
<b>Table 3-15:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 6 Months after Filing Date, King County .....	163
<b>Table 3-16:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 12 Months after Filing Date, King County .....	163
<b>Table 3-17:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 18 Months after Filing Date, King County .....	164
<b>Table 3-18:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 24 Months after Filing Date, King County .....	164
<b>Table 3-19:</b> Number of Court Appearances (Pre-Completion), Snohomish County .....	165
<b>Table 3-20:</b> Number of Court Appearances (Post-Completion), Snohomish County .....	165
<b>Table 3-21:</b> Number of Continuances (Pre-Completion), Snohomish County .....	166
<b>Table 3-22:</b> Number of Continuances (Post-Completion), Snohomish County .....	166
<b>Table 3-23:</b> UFC Acceptance-to-Completion Duration, Snohomish County .....	167
<b>Table 3-24:</b> Case Completion Rates, Snohomish County .....	167
<b>Table 3-25:</b> Number of Court Appearances (Pre-Completion), Thurston County .....	168
<b>Table 3-26:</b> Number of Court Appearances (Post-Completion), Thurston County .....	168
<b>Table 3-27:</b> Filing-to-Completion Duration, Thurston County .....	169
<b>Table 3-28:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 6 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County .....	171
<b>Table 3-29:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 12 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County .....	171
<b>Table 3-30:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 18 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County .....	172

*List of Figures and Tables*

<b>Table 3-31:</b> Percentage of Cases Completed 24 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County .....	172
<b>Table 3-32:</b> Number of Services Ordered per Family, King County .....	174
<b>Table 3-33:</b> Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, King County .....	175
<b>Table 3-34:</b> Incidence of Duplicate Orders, King County .....	176
<b>Table 3-35:</b> Number of Services Ordered per Family, Snohomish County .....	178
<b>Table 3-36:</b> Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, Snohomish County ....	179
<b>Table 3-37:</b> Incidence of Duplicate Orders, Snohomish County .....	180
<b>Table 3-38:</b> Sample Description for Compliance Database, Thurston County .....	181
<b>Table 3-39:</b> Number of Services Ordered per Family, Thurston County .....	182
<b>Table 3-40:</b> Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, Thurston County .....	183
<b>Table 3-41:</b> DSHS-DASA Services Received, King County .....	184
<b>Table 3-42:</b> DSHS-DASA Treatment Completion Rates, King County .....	185
<b>Table 3-43:</b> DSHS-Mental Health Div. Services Received, King County .....	185
<b>Table 3-44:</b> DSHS-Childrens Admin. CPS Referrals and Placement Episodes per Family, King County .....	186
<b>Table 3-45:</b> DSHS-Childrens Admin. Placement Outcomes, King County .....	186
<b>Table 3-46:</b> DSHS-DASA Services Received, Snohomish County .....	187
<b>Table 3-47:</b> DSHS-DASA Treatment Completion Rates, Snohomish County .....	187
<b>Table 3-48:</b> DSHS-Mental Health Div. Services Received, Snohomish County ...	188
<b>Table 3-49:</b> DSHS-Childrens Admin. CPS Referrals and Placement Episodes per Family, Snohomish County .....	188
<b>Table 3-50:</b> DSHS-Childrens Admin. Placement Outcomes, Snohomish County .....	189

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **§ INTRODUCTION**

In this study Unified Family Court (UFC) models are assessed in three different pilot sites in Washington State, applying several qualitative and quantitative data techniques to each. Although general themes emerge, the three sites employed different UFC models and one must really have some background on the operations of each site in order to place the results into an appropriate context. Thus this executive summary is really three summaries (and more). Some general findings and background are presented first, followed by a summary of the results for each of the three pilot sites. Recommendations and some final remarks conclude the report.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

- **Empirical verification that UFC leads to a reduction of redundant and/or conflicting judicial orders**
- **Empirical verification that UFC treatment has a positive effect on compliance with court-ordered services**
- **Consensus support that UFC improves continuity of judicial oversight**
- **Consensus support that UFC cases require more time and resources at the 'front-end' - with an anticipated future payoff**
- **Consensus support of UFC case management benefits to children, clients, and the family**
- **Consensus support for the importance of case management practices that gather and organize critical information, are proactive in identifying issues, and maintain a higher level of monitoring.**
- **No empirical validation for UFC reducing either continuances or court appearances**
- **No evidence of an increased reliance on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods under UFC**
- **Consensus support for the importance of judicial leadership in establishing effective procedures and maintaining commitment**
- **Lack of resources to support the model is a continuing concern**
- **Consensus view that collaboration among all parties is necessary for resolving complex issues and establishing accountability**
- **Lack of legal assistance in family law matters negatively impacts any efficiency gains of UFC**
- **Judicial decision-making significantly benefits from specialized training and longer rotations**

**Policy Recommendations**

- For each implementation, a clear definition of UFC should be developed and communicated to all involved parties. Program objectives and expectations need to be clearly articulated at the beginning and reinforced throughout the process.
- A strategy should be developed to promote greater litigant awareness and buy-in, and to effectively communicate to them that they are participating in a problem-solving court.
- All judicial officers should receive cross-training in juvenile and family law.
- Attorney should receive training that is specific to UFC, focusing on their roles and relevant court procedures and rules.
- A state court rule should be established setting long-term rotations for UFC judicial officers in jurisdictions of significant size.
- Legislation regarding specific information sharing and use would eliminate guesswork for all parties. It could be mandated that judges be given information on all open cases for a family when children are involved, in addition to information and history on all dependency cases.
- Development of information systems that address the UFC model and provide users the ability to screen for and review cases in detail.
- State funding for staff to help adequately support the model.

**Background & Purpose**

Families involved with the legal system often present a variety of overlapping difficulties (legal, familial, psychosocial) that are likely to be managed and addressed separately in a typical family court environment. Advocates of a more unified approach believe that a Unified Family Court (UFC) model creates a more holistic and consistent way to address the needs of families - one that ultimately leads to better outcomes and reduced future contact with the legal system. Under this model, one judicial team becomes familiar with a family's multitude of cases and issues and provides a milieu for more informed judicial decision making and case management. Experienced and well trained judges and staff are viewed as essential to the functioning of this specialty court in which knowledge of child development, chemical dependency, child abuse and neglect, mental illness, and other issues such as domestic violence can improve judicial decision making. Thus Unified Family Court is a combination of philosophical approach, judicial procedures, and specific expertise.

In 1995, the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) published general guidelines to improve practices in child abuse and neglect cases. Recommendations included “direct” calendaring for a one-family/one-judge approach to these cases over time and improved case flow management - two components of the more recently developed UFC model. In the 1990s, separate centralized family court facilities emerged to meet the needs of children and families, with such facilities having been cited as key features to UFC implementation. Features of such facilities include on-site drug testing, enhanced security sensitive to domestic violence risks, and child waiting areas - all of which serve to enhance the centralized approach to working with families.

In response to the significant case overlap and increasing complexity of issues and laws affecting families in Washington State, the State Legislature in 1999 established the Unified Family Court Pilot Project. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) was charged with the evaluation component of this project, with attendant funding for UFC pilot sites in judicial districts with “...statutorily authorized judicial complement of at least five judges.” A Request for Proposal (RFP) process resulted in three funded sites located in King, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties. Although each of the three sites implemented the UFC criteria with different models, common components include: 1) a one judge/one judicial team approach, 2) consolidated or bundled case proceedings, 3) enhanced judicial training in child development and family issues, and 4) comprehensive and coordinated legal and social services.

The purpose of the evaluation is threefold: (1) to evaluate and report to the Washington State Legislature the extent to which the three UFC pilot sites are meeting stated objectives, (2) to provide consultation and feedback in the form of recommendations to the pilot sites regarding organization, procedures, and policies, and (3) to provide practical information regarding the operations of Unified Family Courts for other jurisdictions considering implementing such a court. Evaluation objectives were derived from the legislative intent and the stated goals of the programs. In all, six objectives were identified and this study seeks to evaluate how well the pilot sites have implemented these objectives:

- 1) Better Informed Judicial Decision-making**
- 2) Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**
- 3) Better Access to and Coordination of Services**
- 4) Emphasis on Providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**
- 5) Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**
- 6) Better Family Outcomes**

A review of the relevant literature revealed little empirical research establishing the effectiveness of the UFC model. One study by the National Center for State Courts (2000) sought to evaluate three sites in Minnesota and faced similar challenges to the current evaluation in Washington. An attempt to make pre- and post- comparisons within families proved difficult due to different case compositions and the large number of cases filed much earlier than the study period. That evaluation did find a significant relationship between the duration of a case and the number of judicial officers involved with one family. In another study of a family court pilot program in Adams County, Colorado, although quantitative analyses were limited, results suggested a trend towards reducing the total number of hearings and time to resolution for dependency and neglect cases heard in the pilot court. Consensus among professionals working in this court was that the bundling of cases created a more informed bench and allowed a family's problems to be approached in a more holistic manner. Recommendations included assigning experienced judges and requiring longer rotations (at least three years) for judges assigned to family court.

Similar to the above cited studies, a combined qualitative and quantitative approach was used to evaluate the three Washington State UFC pilot sites, with similar limitations in the quantitative measures. In all three sites, UFC families and appropriate comparison families were identified, and associated data drawn from court and social services databases to assess potential differences. Qualitative analyses include professional surveys and interviews, litigant focus groups, and observations. All methods focus on the UFC objectives defined above and also take into account the NCSC's *Trial Court Performance Standards*.

### **Data Sources & Methodology**

The population of interest was families with children that have multiple cases in the juvenile and family court system. Common actions are dependency, marriage dissolutions, paternity, child custody, and domestic violence. Generally, the criteria included families with at least two family law, dependency, or children in need of services (CHINS) cases and/or multiple filings of domestic violence protection orders, parenting plan orders, or modifications. Additionally, parties were identified as potentially benefiting from more intensive UFC case management either for monitoring of compliance with services or to track cases.

Semi-structured interviews conducted by AOC researchers gathered information from key informants and stakeholders. The interview was designed specifically for the purposes of this research and focused on general UFC issues such as case

processing, interviewees' perceptions of judicial decision-making, access to and coordination of services, and staff responsibilities. Additionally, a practitioner survey was distributed that focused on the perception of professionals with UFC experience on various environmental, process, and outcome factors.

Collecting useful litigant input proved to be difficult, although not unexpectedly so given the inherent difficulties in reaching the study population. Although surveys are relatively easy to distribute and collect for the litigant population, they are often tainted by social desirability and selection bias. A pre-survey launched in King County was deemed insufficient to fully capture litigants' family court experience. For this reason a focus group methodology was developed to capture this data. Although focus group results cannot in most cases be generalized they allow for a fuller explanation of the purpose of the evaluation and less pre-definition of potential responses than does a survey.

As researchers in the previously cited studies noted, finding meaningful quantitative measures that address the UFC objectives proved difficult. Additionally, even though we established some type of study groups in all three sites, the three study designs differ in significant ways. Thus direct comparison between sites of most measures is problematic at best and in many cases invalid.<sup>1</sup> For each site, data from three different sources was gathered in an attempt to find objective measures that might indicate differences between UFC and non-UFC outcomes. The three data sources are: (1) the statewide Judicial Information System (JIS), (2) individual case file reviews in the three pilot sites, and (3) Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) databases. In most cases, the analyses consist of descriptive statistics and between group comparisons.

Core evaluation questions that require objective measurement of case management data are addressed primarily from data in JIS. These measures include an array of data elements such as the underlying cause of action, proceedings held, appearances, continuances, active time from filing to case resolution, and other important elements from each study case docket.

Other data necessary for addressing core evaluation questions, specifically services ordered and compliance with court orders, were generated from a review of the physical case files for treatment and non-treatment cases. AOC research staff was on site to design the collection protocol and to review case files as needed in the early stages of the data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> See the full report for more details.

Finally, it was determined that DSHS data could help to identify the range of services received for UFC families and out of home placements and time in foster care for children in dependency cases. Data were requested from three divisions of DSHS (Mental Health, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, and Children's Administration) for those UFC and identified comparison families. The main issue with using DSHS data is the ability to match individuals. Incomplete matches reduce the sample size and can introduce biases if non-random factors are inherent in the matching process.

With the exception of the case file review measures dealing with services ordered, most of the quantitative measures yielded few statistically significant results. In the discussion below, results from the various data sources and analyses are blended together in an attempt to fully address each of the objectives.

## § GENERAL RESULTS

### *UFC Goals, Strengths, and Weaknesses*

In the semi-structured interviews, interviewees were asked to define the UFC goals and indicate level of accomplishment. Those interviewees listing increased efficiency, judicial economy, and consistency were more likely to choose "high accomplishment in all goal areas." Goals rated as low or low to substantial accomplishment seemed related to limited resources such as availability of services. There was some concern expressed regarding the goal of expeditious case processing, which could compromise family and individual outcomes.

When interviewees were asked about the strengths and advantages of the UFC model, several general themes emerged:

- **Monitored compliance and accountability in family law matters leads to better information that improves decision-making.**
- **Coordination of cases and long judicial rotations lessen the likelihood of litigants abusing the system because judicial officers are familiar with all of the issues.**
- **UFC planning conferences are very effective for:**
  - ✓ **identifying issues and goals**
  - ✓ **communicating required steps for all parties**
  - ✓ **taking a problem-solving approach to the family's issues and not focusing exclusively on procedural issues.**

Several weaknesses of the UFC model were identified, some of which were due to a lack of funding as opposed to the UFC model per se. These included:

- **Lack of attorney representation for family law cases**
- **Disruptive impact of frequent judicial rotations**
- **Lack of resources to support the model**

The lack of attorney representation was noted by interviewees in all sites. Self-representation in high-conflict or complex cases can significantly impact the efficiency of any court but is especially acute in a UFC which is more weighted towards litigants involved in these types of cases.<sup>2</sup> Because strong judicial leadership is so important in the UFC model, frequent judicial rotations were viewed as disruptive, resulting in differing interpretations of procedures. Commitment to the model may vary by judicial rotation and absence of protocol in some situations was viewed as rendering UFC “personality dependent.” A third weakness consistently noted among sites was the lack of resources available to support the model. This theme was applied to lack of funding to support a UFC coordinator/case manager position or additional positions that would allow UFC to serve more families.

Several success factors or potential hindrances were identified:

- **Collaboration among parties was viewed as central to the UFC model - a step away from the adversarial process that was viewed as not always appropriate for families.**
- **Judicial leadership and a core group of judges that are able to focus on family law issues emerged as critical for success, especially in the startup phase.**
- **A negative aspect of working in UFC included resistance of others to the model. Interviewees in all three sites expressed frustration at working with litigants who were not motivated to change, who attempted to take advantage of the system, and often have “insolvable” problems.**

**The resources most lacking in all three sites were social and treatment services for UFC litigants.** Interviewees acknowledged that this is a systemic problem, not one specific to UFC. This was echoed by litigants in the focus groups where a consistent theme was the considerable burden of being compliant with court-ordered services. Nevertheless, interviewees noted that UFC utilizes these

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally, this can be confusing for litigants if families with multiple cases may have representation in other actions (e.g., dependency) under UFC.

limited resources more efficiently, because services are not duplicated and because families' cases are brought together. As detailed later, there is empirical support for this in the case file data we collected on services ordered and compliance rates.

**Strong case management and coordination with a committed clerk's office was viewed as essential to UFC, regardless of the model.** It is necessary to identify and coordinate multiple case types in a system where it is difficult to identify cases by family and some files are sealed. All jurisdictions in the state have access to the statewide Judicial Information System (JIS)<sup>3</sup>; however, the system is not well-suited for information sharing - either across cases or across jurisdictions. King County has developed an in-house Web-based system for case tracking and management; however, most jurisdictions lack the resources and expertise for IT development projects.

### *UFC Objectives*

In order to address the degree to which the three pilot sites are meeting the six specific objectives outlined in the introduction, several measures - both qualitative and quantitative - were employed. While there are differences among the sites in definition, philosophy, and study design, some general themes and results do emerge. These are summarized below for each objective.

#### *Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making*

Among the six objectives, this is arguably the one over which the court has the most control and does not require significant additional resources. In addition to judicial commitment, the crucial elements here are better and more efficient information-sharing strategies and solutions. This does not require a UFC implementation; however, an effective UFC model makes it imperative. Outside funding would be helpful in the further development of an information technology system that more effectively manages information.

The results with respect to this objective were consistently favorable for UFC. Sources of information to address this objective came exclusively from the qualitative data sources - namely interviews and the practitioner survey. **Interviewees noted that the screening process for UFC case management brings a family's multiple issues together and provides judicial officers with full information in larger jurisdictions. This holistic approach was viewed as a shift in attitude from reactive to proactive.** The traditional case by case

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<sup>3</sup> JIS is an information technology system used by the courts for case management.

approach was viewed as spending time on redundant matters with no cohesive direction. Additionally, interviewees regarded judicial education as a necessary component towards advancing the goal of enhanced decision making.

Questions pertaining to this objective in the practitioner survey were also favorable for UFC:

- Seventy-nine percent (79%) of survey respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in establishing "**Continuity of judicial oversight**"
- Sixty-six percent (66%) of survey respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** for "**Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues**"

***Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing***

Many factors, both internal and external, will impact efficiency. One critical factor will be support of the model by all key players. Internally, if part of the bench is not receptive to the UFC model then necessary resource allocations may be limited. The county clerk's office and other court staff are crucial for managing the information that is central to the UFC model. Externally, the extent of buy-in of attorneys, social workers, and community service providers will also impact this objective. These key players are potentially a factor in both the population referred to UFC and in the behavior of litigants. All of these factors will be reflected in the caseload measures.

**A general consensus emerged among interviewees that UFC case coordination allows for increased efficiency, yet requires more immediate resources in pursuit of long-term goals.** Judicial officers across all three sites agreed that UFC increases their workloads. This is due to the multiple case types per family that require more extensive file review. UFC also reportedly increased judicial officers' administrative responsibilities and community activity. On the other hand, it was noted that combining cases enhanced efficiency of the judicial officer's time. Attorneys also noted that they spend more time on cases.

There were several questions on the practitioner survey that pertained to this objective. Some findings included:

- Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as being **better** for "**Resolution of procedural difficulties**"
- Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as being **better** for "**Scheduling of events for case disposition**"

- Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **no different** for "Trial date certainty"

**A strong majority consensus emerged that UFC produces fewer inconsistent or conflicting orders. This was affirmed by 75% of all survey respondents and 86% of those with recent experience in UFC. Empirical evidence via our case file review supports the reduction of duplicate orders in UFC.** It is worth noting that this result was consistent across all sites even though different UFC models are employed. Overall, the percentage of duplicate orders was about twice as high in our comparison groups relative to the treatment groups.

Quantitative measures pertaining to this objective consist of either duration between events (e.g., case filing-to-resolution time) or event counts (e.g., number of continuances). Since the three sites vary in design, there was no attempt at global measures. **For each of the sites, most of the case management statistics suggested no statistically-significant difference or no discernable trend between UFC and non-UFC cases.** This is not unexpected given the complex nature of the population's cases coupled with the fairly small sample sizes. The lack of any clear difference or trends was corroborated by the practitioner survey.

When interviewees were asked to compare the number of court appearances in the UFC versus non-UFC setting, the most common response across all practitioner groups and all counties in our survey was "about the same." The same is true for continuances. The measures from JIS were inconclusive for both appearances and continuances.<sup>4</sup>

Respondents were split fairly evenly between the view that UFC requires about the same amount of time for case resolution (40%) and the view that it requires less time (37%). Similarly, permanency<sup>5</sup> in dependency cases was deemed to require about the same time by 41% of respondents, but less time by 40% of respondents.

### **Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

This objective will be somewhat dependent upon outside constraints, particularly the availability and affordability of service providers. The cost (in both time and money) of services was a key issue with litigants in the focus

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<sup>4</sup> This is partly explained by the fact that these measures are necessarily drawn from the JIS docket codes which often lack consistency in usage and interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> Permanency refers to a permanent placement for the child.

groups.

**Case file review measures dealing with services ordered and compliance consistently showed fewer services ordered, fewer duplicate orders, and greater compliance with court-ordered services in the UFC setting versus a non-UFC.** The results were also consistent with the differences in the models between sites - namely, stronger in King which emphasizes services versus Snohomish where services are typically nearly complete by the time a family enters the UFC.

From the practitioner survey, a slight majority (53%) of respondents rated the UFC as **better** with respect to the "**Court ordering appropriate services.**" Respondents with more recent UFC experience came in higher at (61%).

On the practitioner survey this objective was more indirectly addressed by asking respondents to rate, on a scale of one to four, the overall helpfulness of UFC case management practices. Across all sites, respondents overwhelmingly (over 70%) rated UFC case-management as either helpful or very helpful with respect to their client, the children/child, and the family.

**Objective #4: Emphasis on Providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**

This objective will be affected by the availability of affordable options, existing court rules, and applicability. For example, in King County ADR is mandatory via a court rule which would impact our treatment and control groups equally. On the other hand, in a dependency-driven model such as in Snohomish, ADR would be rarely - if ever - used due to the nature of the action. Thus, even under the assumption that reliable measures are available, it is questionable that one could expect a priori that significant differences would be found between UFC and non-UFC groups. For the most part, this objective would likely be met more through a creative use of ADR resources which would be difficult to quantify.

Thurston County is the only site that places any significant emphasis on ADR. This was confirmed in the practitioner survey in that the majority of respondents (60%) rated the UFC as **no different** in "**Use of alternative dispute resolution**" **except in Thurston** where (54%) rated the UFC **better**.

**Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

This objective, along with #6 below, represents the long-term raison d'etre for the UFC model and is one in which the effectiveness of the model should clearly be reflected when assessing data longitudinally. Overall, significant differences in

post-resolution events between UFC cases and non-UFC cases are not evident in the study groups. There are two issues to consider in evaluating this result - the first being quite crucial. First, this long-term objective cannot be adequately addressed within the timeframe of this study. The UFC model is predicated on the assumption that long-term reductions in litigation often require fairly intensive and lengthy front-end work dealing with a family's many issues. This assumption cannot be addressed here since the study time frame is weighted heavily towards the front end.<sup>6</sup> In fact, many of the cases coordinated under UFC will have already had a case resolution<sup>7</sup> prior to UFC acceptance, and thus post-resolution counts are merely capturing the actual UFC treatment as opposed to the true long-term objective of reducing future litigation. Second, a mere event count does not capture differences in the content of the events. For example, a modification filed in a former UFC case will have a qualitatively different information set associated with it than a comparable non-UFC case, a difference that could result in a more expeditious resolution of the issue.

The results from the practitioner survey support the quantitative measures.

**UFC was largely rated as no different from a non-UFC setting in respect to the following goals:**

- **Post-resolution child support compliance (80% of respondents)**
- **Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (residential and visitation schedule) (63%)**

Strong majorities across all counties and all types of practitioners (ranging from 67% to 81%) felt **post-resolution domestic violence occurrences** were about the same in the UFC setting. On **post resolution petitions and appearances**, similar majorities (ranging from 55% - 77%) emerged in rating UFC "about the same."

#### **Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

This objective likewise can be fully addressed only with a longer study timeframe. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to address it with some of the qualitative methods. From the semi-structured interviews, there was consensus among all three sites regarding safety in dependency cases in that, although it is not approached differently in UFC, there nevertheless was a perceived positive

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<sup>6</sup> These families can continue to be tracked for a follow-up study.

<sup>7</sup> Case resolution as defined here is a milestone determined by technical criteria that have a basis in court procedures. In layman's terms it is when the judge 'bangs the gavel'. The specific issue before the court has reached a resolution; however, that does not mean that a family's underlying conflicts have been solved.

impact on safety because of and directly related to UFC. Safety needs of children are still addressed through the dependency action, and investigation and decisions are made relative to that case. However, because of the nature of UFC, more information is available to the judicial officer, and awareness of the dependency action results in more consistency of family law orders.

## § KING COUNTY PILOT SITE

### *Background & Operations*

Unified Family Court in King County was initiated with a workgroup beginning in 1994. Nearly three years were spent in committee meetings and drafting reports before an executive committee approved a startup at the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent in May of 1997. Judicial officers, the bar, public defenders, family law attorneys, and DSHS were all involved in the startup. Initially the UFC in Kent operated with one judge and one case manager; later expanding to two judges. In early 2003 the UFC was expanded to downtown Seattle. Currently there are six King County judges seeing UFC cases with three at each site. There are also family law, BECCA<sup>8</sup>, and dependency court commissioners who may be involved with specific cases.

The focus in King County is on intensive case management and concurrent jurisdiction for all UFC cases. The model is best understood on two levels. First, all family law cases involving children are assigned exclusively to the UFC judges. In practice this coverage may not always be 100% because of staffing constraints; however, that is the goal. On this level any family law case with children is heard by a judicial officer who has received specialized training specific to UFC and is committed to the model. Second, a smaller subset of these cases receives intensive case management supervision by the judges and UFC case managers. On this level, the court is devoting additional resources to these families because of the complex nature of the issues involved. There is more effort made in engaging parties in services. Much of the discussion that follows pertains to this smaller subset of UFC families and cases.

Cases are screened for UFC case management eligibility based on a very specific list of criteria that are the most concrete among the three pilot counties. During the key informant interviews some felt that the criteria are still not well

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<sup>8</sup> BECCA refers to truancy cases.

understood and that some sources are referring all abuse and neglect cases.<sup>9</sup> Some attorneys make referrals to case management because they have a “messy case” and desire judicial intervention. There are also some families who meet the criteria yet have attorneys and are on track - they may not benefit from the additional case management. However, once cases are referred, case managers conduct formal screening based on nine criteria<sup>10</sup> to identify those most appropriate for UFC.

It was noted by interviewees that historically people outside the UFC have not had a good understanding of UFC, and that initial success and support was associated with strong judicial leadership. One attorney stated that initially peers were worried about the time commitment of UFC planning conferences, but that over time they realized the model was “better for kids.” It was noted that some attorneys in King still do not understand the UFC model and continue to resist. In many cases, there are more players at the table than attorneys are accustomed to. Public defenders are reluctant to practice family law; they do not have the training and policies vary by agency. It is therefore sometimes difficult to determine the attorney’s role, which may differ by case (e.g. dependency and dissolution). Another difficulty is that UFC is a more holistic problem-solving model but attorneys are trained in adversarial methods.

King County UFC judges are on staggered, two year rotations. Rotations are staggered so that one judge leaves every year, while one with substantial experience remains. Recruitment for these voluntary rotations has been a challenge. The judges have either volunteered or have been assigned to work in UFC. For commissioners, it is a rotation assignment. A UFC family with multiple cases is typically seen by one judge and one or two commissioners. Family law and dependency commissioners continue to hear reviews (e.g., regularly scheduled dependency reviews) as cases move towards resolution, with one judge presiding over all issues at trial, planning conferences, and review hearings. Judges assigned to UFC have higher caseloads than non-UFC judges; however, they also gain more assistance of commissioners and other court staff.

In King County, UFC judges are more attuned to resource issues and case management, and remain directly involved with a UFC family’s cases. There are also administrative duties involved in identifying community resources and

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<sup>9</sup> Subsequent to the interviews, significant efforts have been made on strengthening and clarifying the UFC policies in King and on effective communication of these policies.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix K of the complete report for these nine criteria.

working with community groups. The UFC judges work toward facilitating settlement and function within a less adversarial system. The UFC model in King County is more “judge focused,” and commissioners are less involved in managing families, although they may make referrals to UFC when they identify areas where UFC management would be appropriate.<sup>11</sup>

Judicial officers educated in specialized areas of the law and issues affecting families were listed by interviewees as vital for working on complex cases. UFC judges in King receive internal training in the six legislatively mandated topical areas (child development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness). These trainings have recently included a greater orientation on providing information regarding community providers.

The functions of non-judicial officer staff have changed over time as the UFC has grown and evolved. In the current structure, the UFC employs one program manager who consolidates all of the management and program development responsibilities and has no case management duties. This individual is able to focus on keeping the program information current as well as fine-tuning the manuals to meet the needs of the changing environment. She identifies and coordinates training opportunities and resources for UFC judicial officers. She is responsible for expanding the resources for the UFC, such as identifying organizations to provide more pro bono time from local attorneys, and increasing and keeping current the referral network. Additional program development functions would include collaborative efforts with other professionals that are designed to eliminate duplicative efforts and improve overall system efficiencies.<sup>12</sup>

The UFC case managers screen referrals, set up cases, prepare orders, set and attend planning conference and review hearings, staff cases with judges, identify processing issues, troubleshoot, assist litigants in identifying community resources and services (both legal and treatment), and may help to de-escalate clients when stresses are high. The case managers know the legal documents, track and monitor progress of court-ordered services, track family issues that are before the court. They work up the legal profile for the judge, contact parties regarding scheduling, draft orders for the judge, monitor cases, report compliance to the judge, keep track of cases so they are closed out when

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<sup>11</sup> E.g., a third party custody where the father contests the petition but paternity has not been established.

<sup>12</sup> For example, collaborating with BECCA case managers.

appropriate, and participate in judges' meetings. To monitor compliance, litigants sign releases so that UFC case managers can check in periodically with service providers.<sup>13</sup> If not in compliance, parties are either issued a letter of warning or pulled in for a review hearing.

Resources most often mentioned by interviewees as lacking in King County include drug and alcohol evaluation, affordable and available mental health evaluation and treatment, and supervised visitation. The most valuable resources listed were the Family Law Information Center, drop-in child care, UFC case managers, and UFC trainings.

Having cases co-located at the RJC was seen as advantageous for families and allowing for better communication among staff. Individuals also found the south county location beneficial, with ample parking and less 'chaotic' activity than the downtown courthouse. The RJC is the only site that is able to offer onsite childcare. Although this service is not specific to or a result of UFC, it was viewed as an important resource in getting family members to court and not bringing children to hearings where sensitive material is presented (e.g. domestic violence protection order hearings). As one judicial officer put it, "*Parents can't not attend because of childcare issues.*"

Information technology is essential to the operation of the UFC in King. Since the spring of 2003, King County has implemented a Web-based case management system (KCMS) which, among other functions, acts as a central repository for information for UFC case management. The system takes initial information from the state Judicial Information System (JIS) and tracks judicial caseload, thus allowing court staff to manage a judge's entire family law caseload, identify problematic case management issues, and track UFC managed cases. The system also effectively works as a coordination tool between the UFC case managers and the civil case specialists, in that any duplicative hearings can be identified and eliminated.

The clerk's office was very involved in UFC program development. They worked with the UFC in developing identification codes to better track UFC families in both Seattle and Kent, and they have worked closely with the court in setting up UFC procedures and codes. Clerk employees have received training to increase efficiency and staff UFC meetings in Kent and Seattle to ensure this link.

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<sup>13</sup> This may be by phone or providers may give written reports at specific intervals.

King County's pilot proposal mainly involved expansion and continuation of an existing UFC at the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent. All eligible cases screened at the RJC in Kent are assigned to UFC. Since the superior court has two locations and the UFC was located at one of these<sup>14</sup>, a comparison group was formed by identifying families in Seattle (via court files) with similar case compositions to the UFC group in Kent. This is a case control study.<sup>15</sup> In such a design where no true comparison group exists, the comparison sample is for data analysis only and subjects do not experience an actual UFC referral. However, for purposes of the study we tried to match this process. A pool of comparison families was identified by the research team and screening of files only was performed by a UFC case manager to ensure that our comparison group met the criteria.<sup>16</sup> Case level and family level analyses were conducted on the two groups, controlling for any demographic variables deemed necessary.

***Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making***

The general belief among interviewees was that UFC has improved the consistency of court orders within the same family. Judicial officers get the "*big picture and not just a snapshot in time.*" This belief was supported by the practitioner survey in that **(61%) of respondents** in King County indicated that the UFC setting was **better** for "**judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues,**" and **(77%) rated UFC better** in terms of "**continuity of judicial oversight.**" Interviewees noted that the collaborative effort between case managers and judges along with increased communication between players was a key factor in this improvement. For example, if there is a dependency action, the Court will be aware of what has occurred in the family law action pertaining to visitation and custody.

Interviewees felt that judicial officers have an improved awareness of services because of specialized trainings and increased communication with UFC case managers and other family court staff. Appropriate referrals for services and availability are discussed with the judges. Interviewees noted that judges think about services earlier in the life of a case because of their involvement in planning conferences.

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<sup>14</sup> Subsequent to the start of our study a UFC was implemented in Seattle; however, none of our control families were ordered into UFC.

<sup>15</sup> A quasi-experimental design.

<sup>16</sup> A complete description of our procedures to create a comparison group can be found in Appendix I of the full report.

**Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

Interviewees felt that cases in UFC have greater focus on getting to completion and that case management creates an expectation of progression. They were unclear whether cases were completing more quickly and it was noted that this may differ by case type. Respondents in the practitioner survey felt that case resolution requires the same (43%) or more (33%) time in the UFC setting. Results from our JIS case management measures are inconclusive. Filing-to-completion times by cause of action were statistically insignificant as were counts of appearances and continuances. Furthermore, given the UFC approach of more up-front work to capture long-term gains, it is not clear a priori how these measures would be expected to differ between UFC and non-UFC cases.

Results from the practitioner survey:

- Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "**Resolution of procedural difficulties**"
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "**Handling of families with multiple active cases**"
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **no different** for "**Trial date certainty**"
- Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **about the same** for "**Number of continuances**"
- Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as being **better** for "**Scheduling of events for case disposition**"

**Seventy-four percent (74%) of survey respondents in King County felt that UFC produces fewer inconsistent or conflicting orders.**

**Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

UFC was perceived among interviewees as increasing access to appropriate services because case managers are familiar with the resources in the community. Thus a more direct communication channel is established between the bench and service providers and the latter have been impressed with the increased specificity of orders. Access to services is perceived to be faster because case managers make the linkages directly instead of families having to "figure it out" on their own. The needs identification process seems to work relatively well in King, with thorough screening by the UFC case manager central to the process. A very slight majority (51%) of respondents on the practitioner survey indicated that the UFC setting was better for the court ordering appropriate services.

The UFC has a standardized referral form in place which is used to create a profile of the family issues, service needs, and procedural issues. Referrals are monitored for compliance and do not get “dropped” or forgotten. “It is easier for pro se clients to get referred, or to have other options if one does not work out. Also, the court orders are clarified so they cannot say they did not understand what was expected.”

“The planning conference motivates parties to initiate services. Having a judge reiterate orders, plus the consistency in orders helps compliance.” Improved compliance was also attributed to case manager intervention and coordination of services. “UFC catches non-compliance much faster and gets [parties] back on track.” Case file review measures support these assertions in that statistically significant differences were found between UFC and non-UFC families in the number of services ordered and compliance rates. **Over all service types, the compliance rate on services ordered was 57% for UFC cases and 39% for non-UFC cases.** Among sub-classes of service types, statistically significant higher compliance rates in UFC cases were found for classes, assessments, treatment, and DNA testing. Eighty percent (80%) of respondents on the practitioner survey listed UFC case management as “helpful” or “very helpful” to the children and the family.

**Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

ADR is mandatory in King County for family law actions; however, it may be waived by the court in appropriate cases (e.g., presence of domestic violence issues). In some situations ADR resolves cases and enables families to avoid trial, but this approach is not specific to UFC. It was noted that including all of the issues (paternity, etc.) would be difficult with ADR. Most felt that ADR is rarely used with UFC, and that this was appropriate given the nature of the cases. There is also a shortage of low cost options and those existing have long wait-lists. Among respondents on the practitioner survey, a majority (66%) found the UFC setting to be no different with respect to use of ADR.

**Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

As discussed earlier this more long-term objective is best addressed with a longer study timeframe. None of the qualitative or quantitative results shed any light on this objective. All comparisons of the JIS measures on appearances, continuances, and case duration did not demonstrate significant differences between UFC and matched control families. Four questions on practitioner survey pertaining to post-resolution activity yielded strong majorities indicating no difference between UFC and a non-UFC setting: **(78%) no different** for “post-

resolution child support compliance," (64%) no different for "post-resolution compliance with parenting plan," (75%) about the same for "post-resolution DV occurrences," and (63%) about the same for "post-resolution petitions & appearances."

**Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

The UFC case manager helps parties define their responsibilities and be accountable. Early identification of needs and services is accomplished and resource referrals are appropriate. Families attend consolidated hearings so they may be in court less often and are working in a less adversarial environment that focuses on their needs. *"UFC looks at families globally, ensuring a safe environment for children to develop."* To better serve UFC families, it was suggested that cases could be identified earlier<sup>17</sup>.

**§ SNOHOMISH COUNTY PILOT SITE**

**Background**

The UFC in Snohomish was started as the result of the pilot project program created by the Washington State Legislature and began operations in 2000. An executive committee/oversight team was created which included an assistant attorney general, dependency and family law attorneys, a family court supervisor, DSHS representative, and a volunteer guardian ad litem (VGAL). The oversight team was involved with UFC planning and coordination.

Snohomish, while sharing the broader goals of the general UFC model, has a more specific focus of linking family law actions with dependency cases in which there are one or more procedural hurdles remaining in the former. Having the dependency case dismissed and assisting families in family law matters to move towards this goal are widely-understood as the focus. Other goals included better judicial decision making based on increased information, expedited case resolutions, and consistency because of case management and streamlined proceedings. Getting families legal assistance via dependency or other defense attorneys for family law matters was also addressed as a goal. Effectively there is less focus on services compared to the other pilot sites because most families are usually fairly well along in the dependency action by the time they are referred to UFC. Thus many of the service needs for these families have been

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<sup>17</sup> Referrals were primarily administrative at the time of the interviews; however, subsequent changes widened the sources of referrals.

addressed prior to UFC treatment. Interviewees suggested that the UFC broaden its goals and scope to address other family matters and to focus on family outcomes other than case disposition.

The criteria for referral seem to be well understood by all players, but deemed rather narrow. Potential UFC referrals occur when members of the same family need to finalize a parenting plan or modification and/or establish paternity in order to resolve the dependency action<sup>18</sup>. This could occur at any point in the life of the dependency. Stability of placement is another key factor in screening and ultimate acceptance. Screening is performed by the UFC facilitator<sup>19</sup> who receives referrals from the court, attorneys, social workers, and VGALs. Some criteria have evolved from experience. *"For example, we screen so that children are placed with one of the parents and has [sic] had placement for at least three months so there is some stability with that placement."*

*"In the startup phase, there was uncertainty and concern among the legal community. As time went on attorneys saw the benefits and wanted their cases to be in UFC to resolve dependency cases. Judges have appreciated having more information before making decisions."* Most of the attorneys involved are appointed or hired dependency attorneys that contract with the county for dependency defense. These attorneys may be appointed by the judge to assist litigants in family law matters (which is increasingly occurring) as there are few private attorneys hired to help with the family law portion of UFC cases.

Judges are assigned to juvenile court for one year and this is staggered at six month intervals. They are assigned dependency cases during that time. It was noted that in Snohomish the judge presides over UFC dependency and family law proceedings, whereas in the "usual" system commissioners would have heard these matters until trial. Commissioners do not hear UFC matters once they are designated as such. The judge is more informally involved in moving cases along and reviews may be set periodically to check in with players. The judge has to think holistically (e.g. how will domestic violence affect the dissolution case?) instead of one case at a time, resulting in better time and case management.

The case manager in Snohomish is known as a UFC facilitator. The UFC facilitator screens incoming referrals for UFC acceptance, develops family legal

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<sup>18</sup> Or multiple dependencies for many families.

<sup>19</sup> A position similar to the UFC case manager in King County.

profiles and identifies legal steps for parties to enter parenting plans, and child support. The UFC facilitator also schedules UFC hearings, staffs UFC planning conferences, compiles and tracks UFC program data, serves as the contact person for UFC and monitors cases to ensure parties and attorneys are doing what is required. There is no direct contact with the treatment providers, only documentation from the social worker, parties, or VGALs. Data gathered by the UFC facilitator is used to give updates for the court at review hearings. The UFC facilitator is more proactive with court (than usual specialists/social workers in dependency cases) and organizes and coordinates proceedings. Progress towards goals is monitored with a focus on parenting plans. It was noted that this model works best if specific deadlines are set for parties.

There has been very little formal staff training specific to UFC in Snohomish County. Most has been on the job or informal training at meetings. It was suggested by interviewees that new staff receive training on UFC legal issues and attend conferences pertaining to dependency, family law, and child development.

Given the dependency-driven nature of the UFC in Snohomish, DCFS social workers are more instrumental relative to the other sites. They work with parents on services pertaining to dependency cases, make referrals, and check on compliance. They provide the main link to service providers. They are also there to approve the parenting plan and to make sure it provides for the safety of the child, whereas they would not typically do this in the family law arena.

Only a small percentage of families have GALs appointed - usually families with high conflict, history with a GAL, or as necessary in private paternity actions. Guardian ad litem time was noted as limited. Although VGALs can be utilized efficiently if there is a dependency case, they are limited in number. Funding for attorney time to work on parenting plans is also a challenge. Other constrained resources in this jurisdiction include supervised visitation, affordable drug and alcohol treatment, and psychological evaluations. Some felt the issue of treatment resources was almost irrelevant to the Snohomish UFC model since many parents have already completed required services for dependency cases by the time they are in UFC.

The co-location of cases in Snohomish is less complete than the other sites in that domestic violence cases cannot be heard at the juvenile courthouse. This separation was seen as a liability in that files of cases heard downtown are not easily accessible and are not routinely screened for UFC families. This did not

seem to be an issue when there were dissolution and dependency cases only.

The role of the clerk's office is generally not different because of UFC, although the cooperation of clerk staff was viewed as essential to the success of UFC.<sup>20</sup> The office has worked with the UFC to set up procedures to get files. It was suggested that they provide facilitators (to assist self-represented litigants) on site at the Denney Justice Center.

At the onset of the pilot program, Snohomish County accepted a true experimental design and used random assignment to assign UFC eligible families to either UFC or a non-UFC comparison condition. Participants and/or their attorneys were notified of the condition upon assignment. As described earlier, the case management component is more administratively focused and cases are followed by one judge in order to avoid conflicting orders and further delay. Families in the comparison condition experience customary family and juvenile court protocols.

**Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

With the focus on remaining issues in the family law matter, case coordination and the information provided by the UFC facilitator means that judges have access to all case information and know what is needed (e.g., drug and alcohol evaluation). UFC has not seemed to impact judicial awareness of services because of the nature of the model - because these involve dependency matters, DCFS social workers are involved with referrals and typically much of this work is complete before families are considered "UFC."

**Practitioner survey results were particularly strong with respect to "continuity of judicial oversight," with 86% of all respondents in Snohomish indicating that the UFC setting was better. Sixty-eight (68%) of respondents indicated that the UFC setting was better for "Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues."**

**Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

Parties are expected to attend a UFC planning conference, UFC review hearings, dependency case hearings, and settlement conferences and trials if applicable. Planning conferences are held to identify legal steps necessary to establish parenting plans, to review compliance with services, and to coordinate future hearings. Goals and steps for the next review are established and broken down

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<sup>20</sup> A common theme in all three sites.

for parties. This is the first time all players are in one room. Strategies to move cases towards resolution are laid out.

*“Regarding case management by the UFC facilitator: the system would fall apart without it. The facilitator is on top of what happens next.”* All cases are heard by one judge and at the same location, which makes more sense to litigants. There is less of a burden on litigants, less time is taken from work, and there is less worry about transportation because cases are coordinated. Parties see progress towards goals via steps and parenting plans.

Because Snohomish is focused on finalizing parenting plans, **interviewees perceived dependency cases as resolving more quickly than they would have without UFC intervention and specifically, the monitoring by the UFC facilitator. Solid empirical support for this was found in dependency cases where the average duration from the UFC acceptance date to case completion was sixty percent (60%) longer for the control group versus the treatment group (322 days vs. 517 days).** Additionally, a clear majority (70%) of Snohomish County respondents in the practitioner survey stated UFC case completion requires less time.

**Among the sites, Snohomish came in particularly strong with respect to "Resolution of procedural difficulties" and "Scheduling of events for case disposition," with 78% and 81% respectively rating the UFC setting as better.**

Some other results from the practitioner survey:

- Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "**Handling of families with multiple active cases**"
- Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **no different** for "**Trial date certainty**"
- Fort-nine percent (49%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **fewer** for the "**Number of continuances**"

**Eight-nine percent (89%)** of survey respondents in Snohomish County felt that UFC produces **fewer** "**inconsistent or conflicting orders.**" Case file review measures support this, with a 13.8% duplication rate for orders in the control group versus 6.5% rate for the treatment group. A breakdown by service type maintains this pattern, where the control duplication rate versus treatment was on an order of magnitude of over two or three when compared to the treatment group.

There was no significant difference in the number of appearances or continuances in dependency cases in the treatment versus control groups. Pre-completion appearances in dissolution cases were greater in the UFC cases versus control, although the sample sizes were very small (under 10). Sample sizes for the other case types were too small to yield any significant results.

**Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

The general consensus is that Snohomish UFC does not improve access to or coordination of services because it is such a dependency driven model. One judicial officer remarked that the approach is simply more focused and unified, with more clear direction towards completion. Cases are not assigned to UFC until they are stable so services may have been ordered and compliance issues addressed prior to UFC involvement.

Nevertheless, **case file review measures demonstrated a statistically significant overall positive difference in the UFC group versus the control group on compliance with services ordered**, although the magnitude of the difference was considerably less than in a more service-oriented model such as in King County. Among sub-categories the positive difference was particularly strong for assessments, classes, and unsupervised visitation. Unlike King, however, the positive difference was reversed for some sub-categories (urinary analysis).

**Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

ADR is rarely, if ever, utilized because of the dependency driven model in Snohomish's UFC. Settlement conferences may be used if both parents are involved and cannot agree on a parenting plan or residential schedule. Historically, dependency cases do not use ADR and one judicial officer felt it would not be effective when issues of abuse and neglect are present. Results from the practitioner survey are in agreement.

**Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

Since the Snohomish UFC is so dependency driven and does not generally accept cases early on, parties for the most part have either complied or not prior to their acceptance as UFC families. It was noted, however, that parties seem more willing to comply with expectations following the planning conference because they are more clearly communicated and better understood.

Neither the practitioner survey nor the measures drawn from JIS suggested any difference between the UFC and non-UFC environments in this area.

**Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

Reported current benefits to families include:

- Easier access via having multiple cases heard in one court
- More expedient resolution of dependency cases
- Attorney time granted for help with parenting plans

Suggestions to better serve families included UFC becoming more service-oriented (i.e. more oriented towards access to needed services), more work with high conflict cases, and better preparation of all parties prior to review hearings. Most of this would involve broadening the scope of UFC in Snohomish County.

**§ THURSTON COUNTY PILOT SITE**

**Background**

The UFC in Thurston County was modeled somewhat after King County's UFC. An advisory committee was formed that included a judge, two commissioners, the county clerk, an administrator, members of the bar, assigned counsel, an assistant attorney general, a prosecutor, and the dispute resolution community. In the mid 1990s the county was planning a new detention center and decisions were being made as to remaining space. Family Court requested to add courtroom space onto the detention site, essentially co-locating juvenile family court under one roof. This new arrangement became fully effective in August 1998.

The model in Thurston County is defined more broadly than in the other two sites. Specifically, any case heard in the Family and Juvenile Court building is ipso facto a UFC case. Beyond this broad definition lie two specific practices or policies. The first is an assignment policy in which concurrent jurisdiction (by the same judicial officer) is initiated by the presence of contemporaneous actions.<sup>21</sup> The second is a more intensive case management practice in which the UFC case manager monitors court orders and compliance. There are no specific criteria for referral to case management, although families may be referred because of "high conflict" findings or non-compliance with orders. Acceptance may be constrained by staffing limitations.

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<sup>21</sup> Defined as actions filed in Family and Juvenile Court involving the same family or child and having court action within the previous twelve (12) months.

## *Executive Summary*

Similar to King, interviewees indicated that strong judicial leadership and staff commitment to the UFC model have been essential for implementation and continuing operation. Providing better service to families was a consistent theme among interviewees when asked to describe the goals of the UFC in Thurston. Consistency, overall better judicial decision making, and judicial economy and efficiency were also stressed, as well as a problem-solving, holistic approach to working with families and better quality of judicial time. Training of judicial officers on family issues and coordination of services and cases were also emphasized for Thurston. Judicial officers are more aware of services and are proactive within the community. They are responsible for awareness of multiple files related to a family and coordination of hearings.

There remains in Thurston some lack of acceptance of the UFC model, including some attorneys and judicial officers. Initially there was resistance to the UFC model among judges, who did not want to see dependency and domestic violence cases together because it was a change in protocol. Attorneys were also skeptical at first and did not want the court taking a hands-on approach to social work and case management, although this has reportedly changed over time as they saw client outcomes improve and enhanced scheduling efficiency. There is typically only one judicial officer to educate on multiple cases and they do not need to argue the same facts repeatedly. With the smaller jurisdiction, the players know each other well and if there are multiple actions, the expectation is that they will focus more on problem solving. One attorney noted that they have become more like facilitators in some cases and there is less litigation with some of the specialty programs (e.g., drug court).

There are two UFC judges in Thurston. One has a two-year assignment to family court and is thus best positioned to assume the necessary leadership role. The other judge is a rotating judge who is there for only two months. The longer term UFC judge works somewhat as an administrator and has the final say regarding procedural changes or decisions. He/she also presides over revisions, settlement conferences, and trials. The shorter term rotation of the other judicial officer was indicated by some interviewees as making consistency more difficult and attorneys reported appreciating having long-term rotation judges.

There are two commissioners in Thurston, one who deals primarily with family law matters and the other with juvenile offender, At-Risk-Youth, CHINS, BECCA, and dependency matters. The commissioners are said to provide more consistency since they do not rotate and therefore have the opportunity to become experts in their areas. It was consistently noted that the commissioner

role in UFC has the same unique characteristics of the judge's role in this setting. When the case manager finds there are concurrent cases, chronology of the cases determines jurisdiction. If the dependency was first, the family's cases go to that commissioner. If the dissolution was first, then other cases would go to the family law commissioner.<sup>22</sup> The commissioners are seen as "front line" judicial officers. The separation of duties between the family law and juvenile commissioners was viewed by some as inhibiting the broader perspective of the UFC model.

The UFC case manager identifies and follows families identified as "high conflict" among other duties. In Thurston, the case manager works more with the family law commissioner because the "dependency side" has social workers, and CASAs. Training needs listed for staff include drug and alcohol treatment and available services, third party custody actions and criminal background checks, and required training in the same areas identified for judicial officers (child development, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, and cultural awareness). It was suggested that everyone working in UFC receive more training so as to understand the goals of UFC and the concurrent caseloads. More training specifically for attorneys and CASA/GALs was also suggested. A relevant issue was the inability to appoint defense counsel on family law issues because of lack of cross-training and funding.

Resource limitations listed included mental health treatment and evaluation, domestic violence services, supervised visitation, social workers, parenting classes, housing, prescription drugs for mental health, and therapeutic daycare. Resources listed as most valuable were UFC case management, treatment resources, onsite drug testing, and the increased availability and sharing of information. Interviewees felt that the location of the new facility away from downtown allows for a calmer demeanor and the co-location of domestic and juvenile cases was clearly seen as a strength.

It was noted that the clerk's office is an integral component to this flow of information via movement of files. The clerk's office assists in identifying families with multiple cases and may identify concurrent cases. *"They are the key to success in UFC because of the need for information."* There was a need expressed for increased communication between the clerk's office and UFC, including regular meetings to discuss procedures and file needs for UFC, concurrent cases, and other special calendars.

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<sup>22</sup> With the exception of juvenile offender cases.

Thurston County has two specialized drug court calendars that fit under the UFC umbrella. Dependency drug court (DDC) was presented as a strength-based approach to dependency case processing. DDC addresses visitation, placement, and treatment all in one place with the involvement of social services. Perceived advantages of DDC listed by staff were: (1) shared decision making and better access to community resources, (2) lower recidivism for families entering the system, (3) quicker permanency for the children, (4) higher rate of children returning home, and (5) a less adversarial model. The second specialized calendar - domestic/family drug court (FDC) - focuses on domestic cases and is very similar in model to the dependency drug court. One difference is that social services are not directly involved since dependency issues are not the driving force. Parties may be individuals involved in custody or visitation difficulties that are related to substance abuse. The judicial officer takes an active role in verbally reinforcing behavior that demonstrates litigants are moving towards established goals (e.g., actively engaging in treatment).

Since Thurston considers all individuals entering their Family and Juvenile Court facility to be participants in UFC, no appropriate comparison sample is available in the same county. Those families identified as “UFC managed cases” and “concurrent cases” by UFC staff are the focus of our case file review; however, no comparison group exists. Since comparative analysis was considered essential, some comparisons were performed using another county of similar size and demographic composition (Kitsap). While this design could also be considered as quasi-experimental, it does differ from the King County design in that in King County (and Snohomish) the unit of analysis at times is at either the family or individual level whereas in Thurston, for practical purposes, it is at the case level.

**Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

With respect to concurrent cases, the same judicial officer works with both cases and so is making orders based on more complete family information. With regard to rotation, there was a level of consistency prior to UFC because the commissioners were the same. However, attorneys and pro se litigants could “shop around” by scheduling revision motions to reach a particular judge for a desired outcome. This is no longer possible since one judge (the long-term rotation judge) hears all the motions to revise. It was noted that the “laptop orders” used by one commissioner provide consistency and orders that are clear and easy to follow.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This commissioner uses a laptop to write tailored orders during hearings; orders are printed

Judicial awareness of services has increased in Thurston because of seminars; additionally, the co-location has increased communication with service providers and between judicial officers. The long-term rotation judges have benefited the most from this.

**Responses on the practitioner survey on judicial oversight and understanding were overwhelmingly favorable:**

- Eighty percent (80%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** for "**Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues**"
- Eighty percent (80%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** for "**Continuity of judicial oversight**"

***Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing***

The focus in Thurston has traditionally been more on the quality of case outcomes than on expediency, although case completions and trial dates were viewed as happening more quickly with fewer scheduling setbacks. Planning conferences are not a component of the UFC model in Thurston. Review hearings may be set for entry of orders and to monitor cases, but are primarily used to assess compliance and establish a structure for accountability. Settlement conferences and trials also seem to happen more quickly because of case manager coordination. **Interviewees noted that more compliance hearings are needed in family law cases but there are not enough resources.**

For the JIS case management measures, two years of case filings from both Thurston and Kitsap counties were extracted for purposes of straight comparison.<sup>24</sup> This procedure eliminates any family-level or individual-level analyses; however, for analysis at the cause level we gain the power of much larger sample sizes. As a result, several statistically significant differences emerge. However, the results taken as a whole do not paint any coherent picture. **Thurston tends to complete dissolutions dependencies, and paternities earlier than Kitsap; however, Thurston takes longer with third party custody actions. Appearances are the same prior to case completion; however, the UFC in Thurston has more appearances than Kitsap after case completion. Post-completion appearances are greater in Thurston versus Kitsap.** The docketing of continuances was not consistent between the two

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and signed on the spot.

<sup>24</sup> No attempt was made to control for any demographic factors that might differ between the two counties - see the full report for a description of some of the potential factors.

counties and so no analyses using these figures were conducted.

Finally, although the question did not pertain to judicial officers per se, 81% of respondents felt that the UFC was 'Better' in "Handling of families with multiple active cases." Among the sites, 90% of respondents in Thurston County rated the UFC as better in this area.

Results from the practitioner survey:

- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "**Resolution of procedural difficulties**"
- Ninety percent (90%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "**Handling of families with multiple active cases**"
- Fifty percent (50%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** for "**Trial date certainty**"
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **about the same** for "**Number of continuances**"
- Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as being **better** for "**Scheduling of events for case disposition**"
- Sixty-seven percent (67%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as producing **fewer** "**Inconsistent or conflicting orders**"

**Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

The court has no standardized protocols to identify service needs. Initially, the commissioner and GAL may identify service needs for domestic cases. Attorneys may identify and recommend services needs for parties and DCFS social workers identify needs in dependency cases. CASAs and defense counsel may also identify service needs. It was suggested that the new facilitator orientation will help litigants identify needs earlier on.

Interviewees felt that UFC has improved access to services via the case manager, and that judicial officers are more aware of non-compliance. The lunchtime education program has enhanced awareness of local services among attorneys, judges, and social workers.

The UFC case manager is actively involved with monitoring compliance via phone calls with providers and interviewees noted that the UFC model in Thurston has made a difference in compliance with orders. Although there was no comparison group, the overall compliance rate for Thurston was 67% - above both the Snohomish County and King County sites. Interviewees in Thurston

unanimously expressed the perception of increased compliance among litigants because of judicial and case manager monitoring.

Results from the practitioner survey:

- Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** for "Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system"
- Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents rated the UFC environment as **better** in "The court ordering appropriate services for the parties"

**Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

Mediation is encouraged and utilized regularly in Thurston. The court has a grant that allows two free sessions of mediation by a local firm. There is a push to have mediation even more available right at the courthouse as part of the "orientation" process.

Across all sites, the majority of respondents (60%) in the practitioner survey rated the UFC as no different in use of ADR; however, in Thurston County (54%) of respondents indicated that the UFC setting was better.

**Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

Originally, it was intended that, with one judicial team and less opportunity to manipulate, litigants would return to court less often. It was unclear to interviewees whether this is the case. The case manager may show cause for non-compliance, possibly increasing post-resolution activity in the form of modifications. More education for litigants regarding what can and cannot be changed post-decree was suggested to prevent future unnecessary proceedings.

Over all cause types, Thurston had slightly more post-completion appearances - especially in dependency actions - than Kitsap. Most of the responses on practitioner survey questions dealing with post-resolution or post-completion events were strongly (75%+) in the 'no different' or 'about the same' categories.

**Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

It was noted that litigants seem to appreciate the guidance they receive via case management. Other benefits listed by interviewees included having a more informed decision maker, increased access to services, more information, and a central contact person. "Litigants are more involved and less confused about the process." Those with managed cases are more likely to complete treatment and are held accountable via case monitoring, while those on concurrent calendars

have one judicial officer with more complete information and decision making ability.

Other benefits of UFC perceived by interviewees included:

- More financially efficient
- Trials occurring within 8 months instead of 2 years

## § SUMMARY

### *Implementation Considerations*

The Unified Family Court Pilot Project in Washington State was established to address the needs of families involved with multiple cases in the juvenile and family court systems and to ultimately improve their outcomes and decrease future contact with the legal system. This evaluation focused on a pilot project consisting of three UFC models that varied in significant ways. Any statewide recommendations or proposals pertaining to UFC need to take these differences into consideration, as well as the variability among jurisdictions across the state. Any general policy development pertaining to UFC would need to balance any goals towards establishing some uniformity against allowing for flexibility in developing UFC models that fit a jurisdiction size, culture, and resource availability. Model rules have been presented by the UFC workgroup<sup>25</sup> and should be tailored as suggested, keeping in mind that certain aspects will require more flexibility than others. There is a full menu of UFC components that may be drawn upon to formulate an individualized model. Considerations in developing a new UFC would include:

- Size of jurisdiction
- Resource availability
- Ability to co-locate different case types
- Information systems and screening ability
- Judicial leadership and commitment
- Judicial rotations and impact
- County clerk involvement and level of commitment
- Staffing requirements

### *Operational Considerations*

Surveyed practitioners and interviewees found case management helpful. In fact, less than 10% of practitioners surveyed found it not helpful. Similarly, they

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<sup>25</sup> A formal workgroup under the state Board for Judicial Administration (BJA).

agreed that the UFC setting is a more efficient and effective approach to handling families with multiple cases and complex legal and social issues. Efficient case management practices were cited by UFC stakeholders as critical for enhancing coordination within the court (e.g. scheduling), and between the court and social service agencies involved with the case. The theory is that, with proper case management, cases are screened, monitored, and directed to the appropriate track, utilizing ADR wherever appropriate. Cases in the family law realm do not typically receive this level of attention.

Surveyed practitioners indicated that the “one judicial team model” seemed to clearly result in fewer judicial officers per case, more consistency in orders, and better informed decision making. The consistency of orders was one of the strongest findings in the survey, with 75% of surveyed practitioners reporting fewer inconsistencies or conflicting orders in UFC. The responses to the NCSC question set reflect respondents’ positive attitudes pertaining to quality of court decisions in UFC and case processing timeliness. The lack of agreement on categories such as hardship and cost and litigant satisfaction point to a lack of clarity for these topics.

There was agreement among parties within the sites regarding time required for case resolution and permanency, with the model in Snohomish County clearly associated with shorter time to both resolution and permanence in dependency cases.

Case file review measures indicated significant positive effects of UFC treatment on compliance with services ordered. There is consistent support for this finding among the key informants interviewed - in fact, interviewees felt increasing the number of review hearings enhanced compliance via accountability. Empirical support emerged that the UFC reduces duplicate orders, which likewise received support from the qualitative data sources.

Another problem families with multiple cases often face is lack of resources and treatment services that may result in escalating problem behaviors and accompanying difficulties in parenting. Along these lines, utilization of mental health services has been cited as one of the strongest program effects for divorced parent education programs. Access to such services may also be an important family outcome for UFC, as was noted anecdotally in that many of the UFC parents have substance abuse problems and some have co-occurring mental illness. Given that access to services is also listed as a UFC objective, it was determined that such access should be tracked as part of the evaluation. Results

from the social services data analyses could have shed some light on access; however, the results were inconclusive due to small sample sizes.

**Litigant Feedback**

Focus groups combine elements of in-depth interviews and observation and add the unique element of group dynamics. Focus groups can be invaluable tools in identifying strengths and weaknesses in project implementation, and can be important in interpreting quantitative findings. As part of a formative/process evaluation, this feedback is important in providing information about the program but **should not be interpreted as having scientific validity**. Thus, generalizing any statements from the focus groups to the UFC population as a whole is questionable.

There are many difficulties involved with accessing litigants for this type of court research. They may not be pleased with the outcome of their court cases, and those who are the least pleased tend to respond more which can bias the results. In order for the results of the focus groups to be generalized to the greater population of UFC participants, a random sample of litigants in multiple focus groups would be necessary. Such an approach would need to be implemented at the onset of a program to capture this transient population.

Unfortunately, the focus group recruitment results were disappointing which limited the applicability of the findings, although some can be placed in perspective. It is apparent from statements made in the groups that, although litigants may be aware that there is a case manager or central contact person, they generally do not seem to be even remotely aware of their participation in a “problem-solving” court environment and are unaware of the meaning of their involvement with UFC. They tended to focus more on their disappointments with the outcomes - outcomes that were unlikely to have been different in a non-UFC setting in any substantive way. Family law and dependency cases are intensely personal and often frustrating experiences for any litigant and it was clear that many of these frustrations continue to exist in UFC.

## § RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

The following suggestions emerged from the key informant and key stakeholder interviews:

- Increased UFC-specific training for attorneys and newly assigned judicial officers
- Clear and widely-disseminated referral criteria and procedures
- Longer judicial rotations of two to five years
- Earlier identification of UFC or potential UFC families via improved communication or information technology
- Staffing could be better geared towards the UFC model. For example, GALs and CASAs could work together in gathering information on overlapping cases.
- More communication with the social services community. Feedback regarding referrals and what is needed to accomplish their goals in assessment, treatment, and other services was recommended.
- Co-location, when feasible, was viewed as an asset for UFC, and a liability of jurisdictions without the ability to co-locate cases.

### *Recommended Policy Changes*

A theme among sites was the delayed buy-in from both attorneys and judicial officers, much of which seems to stem from basic lack of awareness. Attorneys seem to be particularly lacking in basic understanding of the UFC model, concepts, and procedures. Attorney training should be specific to UFC, their roles, relevant court rules, and procedures of their jurisdiction's UFC. Hands on training for procedures such as referrals and planning conferences could include sample forms and court orders for enhanced familiarity.

A unified definition of UFC together with implementation procedures should be developed and communicated to the court community and all parties of UFC. For attorneys, judicial officers, and social services, this could be a major component of training, educational programming, and public relations. All parties in UFC cases should be aware of their involvement in UFC, the definition of UFC in that jurisdiction, and how this model differs from the "usual" family and juvenile court process. A pamphlet and continuous reminders of the model and how it works should be readily available for consumers.

Judicial officers have a defined “leadership curriculum,” but need more training on working with multiple case types, including cross-training in juvenile and family law.

The following policy recommendations emerged from the key informant and key stakeholder interviews:

- Establish a state court rule for long-term rotations for UFC judicial officers in jurisdictions of substantial size (e.g. four or more judges).
- Legislation regarding specific information sharing and use would eliminate guesswork for all parties. This could include schools and history on all dependency case parties. It could be mandated that judges be given information on all open cases for a family when children are involved, in addition to information and history on all dependency cases.
- Development of information systems that address the UFC model and give users the ability to screen for and review cases in detail.
- State funding for UFC staff was recommended.

## **§ FINAL REMARKS**

Previous studies of unified family court programs have not rendered any ultimate conclusions regarding success or failure, but guided recommendations in improving operations to benefit families. This study found some strong empirical evidence for UFC effectiveness; however, our limited timeframe did not allow for a truly full study which would include the long-term benefits. In practice, it is difficult to quantify the desired outcomes for a Unified Family Court. In the criminal justice system, variables such as recidivism or jail days commonly define success or failure of a program, and associated costs and tangible benefits are available. It is quite a different task to quantify concepts such as better informed judicial decision-making or better family outcomes, that may involve the experiences of and outcomes for children several years from now. A truly comprehensive outcome evaluation of the Unified Family Court model would therefore involve a longitudinal study of multiple realms of functioning for both children and parents, and would capture the costs and benefits of their experiences in multiple systems of judicial and social services intervention.



## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND & EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

### **A. UNIFIED FAMILY COURT MODEL**

#### **1. Genesis & Motivation**

In 1995, the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) published general guidelines to improve practices in child abuse and neglect cases. Recommendations included “direct” calendaring for a one-family/one-judge approach to working with such cases over time, as well as improved case flow management, two components of the more recently developed Unified Family Court model. With a Unified Family Court (UFC) approach, one judicial team becomes familiar with a family’s multitude of cases and issues and provides a milieu for more informed judicial decision making and case management. UFC is a combination of philosophical approach and judicial procedures. Jeffrey Kuhn (1998) noted that the underlying principle of Unified Family Courts is therapeutic justice or “therapeutic jurisprudence,” (Winick, 1997) a term typically used in the criminal realm to describe problem-solving court ventures such as drug courts, mental health courts, and domestic violence courts (Casey & Rottman, 2003).

Experienced and well trained judges and staff are viewed as essential to the functioning of this specialty court in which knowledge of child development, family, and other issues such as domestic violence can improve judicial decision making. A “one judge to one family” approach is typical to the functioning of UFC (Schepard, 2001), although it may be more accurate to use the term “one judicial team” that becomes familiar with and coordinates and monitors a family’s multitude of cases from filing to completion. The centralized approach is hypothesized to create a more holistic and consistent approach to cases processing, that ultimately leads to better outcomes for the families and less future contact with the legal system.

In his description of the UFC model, Kuhn (1998) listed some general goals and functions of Unified Family Courts including centralized facilities, efficient case management practices, a one judge to one family approach to case processing, experienced and well-trained judges and staff, and utilization of technology to share case information (e.g. with information systems that are comprehensive and accessible). In the 1990s, separate and centralized family court facilities emerged to meet the needs of children and families, and such facilities have been cited as key features to UFC implementation. Features of such facilities include on-site drug testing, enhanced security sensitive to domestic violence risks, and

day care or child waiting areas, all of which serve to enhance the centralized approach to working with families.

## **2. History of UFC in Washington State**

Families involved with the legal system often have a variety of overlapping legal, familial, psychosocial, and other difficulties that may be managed and addressed separately in the typical family court system, an approach that may result in duplication, inconsistencies, and incomplete information. In 1995, a study was conducted to address this phenomenon in King County, Washington. The researchers noted significant case overlap within families, with 48% of total cases overlapping with other cases in the same family within four years, and 27% overlapping with different case types. The highest levels of overlap of different case types were related to dependency cases (88%), and these family members were most likely to be involved in divorce or juvenile offender actions. There was a concern that such overlap could result in duplication of judicial effort and inconsistent orders. For example, dependency and family law matters are typically heard by different judicial officers, although many of the same issues (e.g. court ordered services) may be reviewed. Domestic violence had the second highest occurrence of overlap (42%), which raised the concern that judicial officers may be unaware of Domestic Violence (DV) issues when determining custody of a child or other matters where safety is a concern (Robson, 1995).

The Washington State Legislature developed the Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Project in response to the significant case overlap and increasing complexity of problems and laws affecting families (RCW 26.12.800 (1999)). The Administrative Office of the Courts was charged with conducting a unified family court pilot program in no more than three superior courts with at least five judges each, and with evaluation of the pilot program (RCW 26.12.802(6) (1999)). While individual UFC pilot sites differ in design, common components include: 1) a “one judge” or “one judicial team” approach; 2) consolidated or “bundled” case proceedings; 3) enhanced judicial training in child development and family issues; and 4) comprehensive and coordinated legal and social services.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued by AOC on August 19, 1999 (RFP-2000-068) to fund pilot UFC sites in judicial districts with “...statutorily authorized judicial complement of at least five judges.” The three pilot sites below were funded for the 1999-2001 biennium based on this RFP. The RFP process resulted in three funded pilot sites located in Snohomish, Thurston, and King Counties, all with very different designs and approaches to the basic model. Original

proposals submitted by each of the three sites can be reviewed in Appendix K. All of the pilots included an enhanced case management component and centralized case processing in which multiple cases for the same family were heard by the same judge, commissioner, or judicial team, allowing for increased consistency and less conflicting orders. Case management provides a link for families to social services and court-ordered treatment, as well as enhanced tracking of the legal cases and compliance with orders.

### **3. Unified Family Court Pilot Evaluation Objectives**

The overall evaluation seeks to evaluate how well the three sites have implemented the following objectives:

- 1. Better Informed Judicial Decision-making**
- 2. Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**
- 3. Better Access to and Coordination of Services**
- 4. Emphasis on Providing ADR**
- 5. Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**
- 6. Better Family Outcomes**

RCW 26.12.804 (see Appendix A) defines case management and coordination as major components of UFC in Washington. RCW 26.12.804 also established education requirements for judges in unified family court programs. UFC judges are required to receive training in the following six topics: childhood development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness and attend eight hours annually of continuing education relevant to UFC. The three pilot sites each had individual interpretations of the UFC criteria and operationalized accordingly.

## B. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 1. Evaluation Approach

The purpose of the evaluation is threefold:

- 1) To evaluate and report to the legislature of the State of Washington the extent to which the three Unified Family Court (UFC) pilot sites in Thurston, King, and Snohomish Counties are meeting stated objectives.
- 2) To provide consultation and feedback in the form of recommendations to the pilot sites regarding organization, procedures, and policies.
- 3) To provide practical information regarding the operations of Unified Family Courts for other jurisdictions planning to form or evaluate such a court.

Important first steps to any evaluation include determinants of whether the program is operating as intended, and whether the program is reaching its target population (i.e. the *process* evaluation). A *formative* evaluation approach is often used in evaluating court programs that are relatively new, and entail descriptions of the operation and suggestions for improvement (Braver & Smith, 1997). In contrast, a *summative* evaluation addresses the more basic and limited questions such as whether a program is cost effective or should be eliminated, without detailed review of strengths and weaknesses of particular components and other useful formative feedback. It was essential to design the evaluation around the UFC objectives (1-6) stated above. The researchers felt it was important to utilize a combination of these approaches in the evaluation of the UFC pilot.

It is also important to evaluate the impact of new programs on the actual consumers and to relate such findings back to the original intention of the program. At times the bigger picture can get lost in the face of "available data," and may require creativity in the form of consumer interviews and surveys. Focus groups have also been suggested in the literature to gather consumer impact information via open-ended questions and discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

With respect to performance evaluation of family courts, when a family court is in pilot form, a summative evaluation reviews the objectives and how well they have been met. A formative evaluation is more appropriate if the court has been permanently established and requires feedback on overall effectiveness. Additionally, "...a comparative analysis is necessary to determine the level of

*performance of the family court system*" (Kuhn, 1998). In their discussion on measuring court performance with family cases, the National Center for State Courts noted that assessment entails, "...evaluating the quality of the process, timeliness of the decision making, accessibility, and satisfaction of those who use court services," (Flango, Flango, & Rubin, 1999). One option is to compare data of UFC families to those in another jurisdiction. Of course, the difficulty with this approach is that there are alternative explanations to differences found between groups in addition to the presence of the UFC. Other comparison approaches include collection of pre- and post-UFC data on the same or similar families or cases, which must take into account any historical threats to validity (e.g. legislative changes, economy). Finally there is the preferred research approach of a randomized design, in which families who are screened as eligible for UFC would have an equal chance of being assigned to either UFC or not. Because a truly experimental approach is used, differences between groups could then confidently be attributed to the existence of UFC.

## **2. Literature Review**

There is little empirical research establishing the effectiveness of the UFC model compared to the usual system (Schepard, 2001). One evaluation most similar to the current endeavor was completed by the National Center for State Courts (2000) for a pilot in Minnesota. This study sought to evaluate three pilot sites and faced similar challenges to the current evaluation in Washington State. The evaluators found that the three sites had different models and required differing approaches to evaluation. Data collection was discontinued for one site that had too few families and that discontinued operation prior to evaluation completion. Process measures such as professional interviews helped to describe the programs, as well as to guide the quantitative analyses. Descriptions of "optimal" and "problem" scenarios added to the process portion of the study. An attempt to make pre- and post- comparisons within families proved difficult due to different case compositions (i.e. families had different varieties of case types) and the number of cases filed much earlier than the pilot period. It was concluded that "time to disposition" would be skewed if analyzed at the family level, and that case level analyses were more appropriate for duration outcomes. The researchers also found that looking beyond the life of a case was somewhat futile (e.g. days filing to final action), as most pilot cases had ongoing activity beyond the pilot period. Case level analyses included duration (filing to disposition), number of contempt orders, number of judges/referees per case, and number of cases per family. One of the three sites had identified pre-pilot families, although there seemed to be some overlap in that some "pre-pilot" families went on to experience the one-judge model. The pre- and post-pilot

families were also quite different in case composition, making calculations such as time to disposition distorted. The evaluation of the Minnesota model did find a direct relationship between the life of a case and the number of judicial officers, with a significant difference between pre- and post-pilot cases.

Another study of a family court pilot program that involved dependency cases, took place in Adams County, Colorado (2001). Cases involving dependency and neglect were randomly assigned to a family court division or continued with the traditional court process. Cases assigned to family court experienced interventions such as bundling of all active cases and a one-judge/one-family approach and a facilitator conference to promote early case planning. Multi-disciplinary review teams consisting of professional volunteers reviewed cases and provided recommendations. The approach in this evaluation involved both court and social services data, in addition to professional interviews and case-specific surveys completed by attorneys. With a total of only 27 family court and 28 control cases, quantitative analyses were limited, although results suggested a trend towards reducing the total number of hearings and time to resolution for the dependency and neglect cases heard in family court. Family Court children also had shorter out of home placements than control group children. Consensus among professionals working in this court was that the bundling of cases created a more informed bench and allowed a family's problems to be approached in a more holistic manner. It was suggested that the multidisciplinary review teams could be used more selectively to minimize difficulties with communication and limited authority. Recommendations included assigning experienced judges and requiring longer rotations (at least three years) for judges assigned to family court.

### **3. Methods and Procedures**

A combined qualitative and quantitative approach was used to evaluate the three Washington UFC pilot sites upon completion of the pilot term. The current UFC evaluation is both formative, in that it addresses implementation of the model in three pilot sites, and it is summative, in that it addresses intended outcomes of UFC. The methods employed are primarily *quasi-experimental*, as is typical in program evaluation of social and court programs (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Cook & Campbell, 1979). An experimental design was actually implemented by the Snohomish site, in that families were randomly assigned to UFC and comparison groups following screening for criteria.

For all three sites, UFC participants were identified and associated data drawn from court and social services databases and compared to appropriate

comparison samples to assess potential differences. Qualitative analyses included professional surveys and interviews, litigant focus groups, observations, and case scenarios. All methodology focused on the UFC objectives defined above. The evaluation also took into account the NCSC's *Trial Court Performance Standards* (Casey, 1998), which were incorporated into several measures.

#### **4. Participants/Pilot Sites**

The population of interest for this evaluation is families with children and multiple cases in the juvenile and family court system. Common cases are Dependency, Dissolution of Marriage with Children, Paternity, Child Custody, and Domestic Violence. Although juvenile offender matters were originally included in the definition of UFC (RCW 26.12.802), the pilot sites did not include these cases because of due process concerns. Case managers at each pilot site were responsible for screening and tracking UFC cases following referral to UFC by a judicial officer, attorney, or social worker. Generally, the criteria include families with at least two family law, dependency, or children in need of services (CHINS) cases and/or multiple filings of domestic violence orders, protections orders, restraining orders or parenting plan orders or modifications. Additionally, parties are identified as potentially benefiting from UFC case management either for monitoring of compliance or to track cases. A minimum of 100 pilot families was required for each of the three sites. This allowed for a minimum of 50 UFC and 50 comparison families per site. Each site identified the first 50 UFC participants for the purposes of the evaluation, although this number was slightly higher in Thurston and King. Because of the varied approaches to screening and different definitions of UFC, comparative analyses differed dramatically by site. Screening criteria for each site is available in Appendix K.

#### **5. Study Design**

All UFC and comparison families have or have had active Superior Court cases including domestic (case type 3, e.g. dissolution, custody), paternity/adoption (case type 5), and/or dependency (case type 7) cases. Two of the three pilot sites were up and running in some form prior to the pilot, making randomization impossible. Additionally, actual case compositions differ by site and UFC screening protocols. Families were screened by the individual UFC sites as part of the pilot process, and lists of participants were provided by the sites to AOC for the purpose of evaluation. Site differences and resulting variations in evaluation designs are described below.

**a. King County**

A unified family court operation has been existence in King County in some form since 1997. King County's pilot proposal mainly involved expansion and continuation of an existing UFC at the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent. The model in King County is somewhat similar to that in Thurston in that the focus is on intensive case management and concurrent jurisdiction for all UFC cases. Case management is coordinated via King County's Family Court Services. All eligible cases screened at the RJC in Kent are assigned to UFC. Since King County has two Superior Court locations and the UFC was located at one of these, a comparison group was developed by identifying families in Seattle with similar case compositions to the UFC group in Kent via court files. This is a quasi-experimental design or what is commonly known as a 'natural experiment'. In designs such as this, where no true comparison group exists, the comparison sample was for data analysis only and subjects did not experience anything related to UFC referral. A pool of comparison families was identified by the WSCCR research team and screening was performed by the case managers who screen actual UFC participants.<sup>1</sup> Those families identified as UFC families by UFC staff located at the RJC were then compared to families with similar case compositions in Seattle's Superior Court. Case level and family level analyses were performed, controlling for any demographic variables deemed necessary.

**b. Snohomish County**

Snohomish was the one site that accepted a true experimental design by randomly assigned qualifying participants to either a UFC or "court as usual" condition. Participants and/or their attorneys were notified of the condition upon assignment. The focus of the UFC model in Snohomish has been on families with dependency cases who have lingering additional domestic cases. The case management component is more administratively focused with the idea that there are procedures and/or paperwork in one case that are holding up the other. Cases are followed by one judge in order to avoid conflicting orders and further delay. From the onset of the pilot, Snohomish County has been using random assignment to assign UFC eligible families to either UFC or a non-UFC comparison condition. Families in the comparison condition experience customary family and juvenile court protocols.

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<sup>1</sup> A complete description of our procedures to create a comparison group can be found in Appendix I.

**c. Thurston County**

Thurston considers all individuals entering their Family and Juvenile Courthouse facility to be participants in UFC, thus no appropriate comparison sample is available in the same county. Those families identified as “UFC managed cases” and “concurrent cases” by UFC staff are the focus of the evaluation. Concurrent cases are defined as families with both a domestic and a dependency case that have been linked for administrative and judicial efficiency. Managed cases are those that have been identified as appropriate for case management. The case manager at Thurston County Superior Court monitors these cases closely, tracks compliance with services ordered, and generally keeps cases on track for resolution. Descriptive statistics of the managed and concurrent cases and qualitative analyses will be the focus in Thurston County. Since comparative analysis was considered essential, some comparisons were performed using another county of similar size and demographic composition. While this design could also be considered as quasi-experimental, it does differ significantly from the King County design in that in King County (and Snohomish) the unit of analysis at times is at either the family or individual level whereas in Thurston, for practical purposes, it is at the case level.

**6. Qualitative Data Sources**

**a. Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather information from identified key informants and key stakeholders. The interview was designed specifically for the purposes of this research and focused on general UFC issues such as case processing, interviewees’ perceptions of judicial decision-making, access to and coordination of services for litigants, and UFC staff responsibilities. No specific case or subject data was collected during the interviews.

**b. Observation**

Observation of court proceedings was performed by the research team as a means of becoming familiar with each pilot site’s procedures, staff responsibilities, and case flow. Observation was primarily informal and involved observation of actual hearings, planning conferences, and meetings with staff to verify procedures and implementation of the model. Examination of materials (e.g. screening criteria, referral forms) provided by each site and “shadowing” of some core UFC staff were also necessary in order to closely examine individual responsibilities and tasks. All observations were documented via researcher notes and findings were incorporated into the interview section of this report.

### **c. Practitioner Survey**

A practitioner survey was distributed, collected, and tabulated. The focus of the survey was on the perception of professionals (e.g. attorneys, social workers, guardians ad litem, CASA staff, etc.). A sample of the survey instrument and results are contained in the Appendix D. No specific litigant data or identifying information of survey participants was gathered as a function of this measure.

### **d. Focus Groups**

Although surveys are perceived as easy to distribute and collect for the family litigant population, they are often tainted by social desirability and selection bias (Braven & Smith, 1997). Focus groups allow for a more personal explanation of the purpose of the evaluation and that it will not be used in the litigants' cases. The Administrative Office of the Courts contracted with Washington State University Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) to implement this component of the evaluation. The scope of work required groups consisting of 8-12 participants each to be recruited by SESRC based on a list provided by AOC. Group participants were asked to share their perceptions of UFC in the context of their personal experiences with the court. The groups were transcribed and verbatim transcripts and final technical reports were generated. Informed consent for both participation in the focus group and audio taping (if necessary) was obtained. The groups were conducted by one facilitator with the presence of a transcriber. By using a facilitator not affiliated with the court system, the hope was that some of the perceived bias in this process would be eliminated.

## **7. Quantitative Data Sources & Analyses**

We have gathered data from three different sources in an attempt to find objective measures that may indicate differences between UFC and non-UFC outcomes. In most cases, the analyses consist of descriptive statistics and group comparisons. For the latter we take standard techniques for analyzing experimental (or quasi-experimental) data. Specifically, our general approach is as follows: Preliminary analyses have been performed to assess for preexisting differences between treatment and control groups on variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and education, using simple *t*-Tests and Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics. Where differences are detected between groups, the variables are entered into subsequent analyses as covariates. When covariates are identified, analyses of variance (ANOVA), analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) and/or logistic regression models are applied to assess for differences, depending on the nature of the outcome variable. Where no pre-existing differences have been detected, analyses are run for each outcome to assess for group differences using *t*-Tests or Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics, depending on the variable type. An overall

outline of objectives and relevant measures for all sites is described in Chapter 3, with supporting materials in Appendices F through I.

**a. Judicial Information System (JIS)**

Core evaluation questions that require objective measurement of case management data are addressed primarily from data in the Superior Court Management Information System (SCOMIS) and the larger Judicial Information System (JIS). These measures include an array of data elements such as the underlying cause of action, proceedings held, appearances, continuances, active time from filing to case resolution, and other important elements from each study case docket.<sup>2</sup> For Thurston County's pilot site, analyses were also performed using aggregate case-level data in which countywide data on specific case types were compared to Kitsap County.

Table 1-1 below summarizes the analysis of measures we created from JIS data. The exact specification, and sub-groups examined will in some instances vary by site due to the differences between the sites in the evaluation design (see Chapter 3 for details).

To the extent possible, treatment and control subjects have been matched via site screening on case composition. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the case types for both UFC and comparison groups.

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<sup>2</sup> As some important data elements are contained in archived JIS docket files, internal requests were processed to allow "unarchiving" of needed fields for our study groups.

**Table 1-1: Measures Drawn for the Judicial Information System (JIS)**

Metric	Cause Codes	Data Type	Analysis I: Descriptive	Analysis II: Group Comparisons **
Days in Court	Dissolutions, Child Custody, Dependency	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ***
Number of Continuances	Dissolutions, Child Custody, Dependency	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ***
Case Duration	Dissolutions, Child Custody, Dependency	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ***
Time to Final Parenting Plan	Dissolutions, Child Custody	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ***

*\*\*For Thurston, there will be no comparison for this portion of the analyses. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) are presented for those families that have been identified as “UFC cases” (managed and concurrent). \*\*\*ANCOVA is used when significant covariate(s) are identified. Sample size may be an issue in using covariates.*

For Thurston County, case-level analyses comparisons are conducted for cases filed after 1/1/98 and before 12/31/2002, using Kitsap County as a comparison site. We look at the number of cases and average duration from filing to completion for several causes of action.<sup>3</sup> Additionally we examine the number of days in court at the case level.

**b. Case File Compliance Review**

Other important data necessary for addressing core evaluation questions, specifically services ordered and compliance with court orders, were generated from a review of the physical case files for treatment and non-treatment cases. Pilot site staff also provided defined case file data to AOC as requested. Data from site staff consisted primarily of family lists and case compositions for UFC and comparison families. AOC research staff members were on site to design the collection protocol and to review case files as needed in the early stages of the data collection. A sample compliance data collection form is in Appendix G. Interns collected most this data by reviewing all listed case files for UFC and comparison families. Table 1-2 below summarizes the analyses of compliance data.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, Dissolutions, Child Custody, Dependency, & Paternity actions.

**Table 1-2: Measures Drawn from Superior Court Case Files**

Metric	Data Type	Analysis I: Descriptive	Analysis II: Group Comparisons **
Range of Services Ordered	Categorical	# individuals receiving each service type	( $\chi^2$ ) Chi-square
Compliance Rate	Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation	t-Test
Duplication of Orders	Interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

*\*\*For Thurston, there will be no comparison for this portion of the analyses.*

*Those families identified as having “managed” or “concurrent” cases by UFC staff will be the focus of the evaluation.*

**c. Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)**

To further address family outcomes, it was determined that DSHS data would be necessary to identify the range of services received for UFC families, allowing us to quantify their access to services compared to non-UFC families. For those families with dependency cases, it is also important to know whether children in UFC families have less out of home placements and less time in foster care than their non-UFC counterparts. This will also support our qualitative findings related to stability for children, which was assessed primarily via surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Therefore, data were requested from three divisions of DSHS (Mental Health, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, and Children’s Administration) for those UFC and identified comparison families. Names, social security number and date of birth were drawn from court files (either electronic or paper) for UFC and comparison group participants, and were utilized to request data from DSHS, as well as to link data from JIS to the confidential DSHS records. To ensure the protection of privacy and participant confidentiality, a WSIRB application was completed, reviewed, and approved in accessing these records.

Table 1-3 below focuses on that aspect of the evaluation that will include DSHS data, as requested via WSIRB. Analyses will be at the individual level and will address family members’ access to and successful attendance and completion of services. Pre-existing differences (e.g. age, gender, case composition) were assessed prior to conducting the comparisons. Because of the limited sample sizes and the necessity to run analyses individually by site, more sophisticated multivariate statistics would be inappropriate.

Table 1-3 summarizes the analyses of DSHS variables. A detailed explanation of the DSHS data elements requested and variable composition can be reviewed in Appendix H.

**Table 1-3: Measures Drawn from DSHS Databases**

Metric	Data Source	Data Type	Analysis I: Descriptive	Analysis II: Group Comparisons **
Inpatient Days	Mental Health	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
Outpatient Hours	Mental Health	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
Service Type	DASA - Treatment database	categorical	# individuals receiving each service type	( $\chi^2$ ) Chi-square
Completion Rate	DASA - Treatment database	ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation	<i>t</i> -Test
Attendance Rate	DASA - Activities database	ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation	<i>t</i> -Test
Service Hours	DASA - Activities database	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
CPS referrals	Childrens Administration	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
Placement Episode Duration	Childrens Administration	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
Returned to Parents (censored)	Childrens Administration	interval	Mean, Standard Deviation	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

## **CHAPTER 2: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

The qualitative components of the evaluation arguably offer the most insight into how well the various UFC pilot sites are meeting their stated objectives. The Legislature, in establishing the UFC pilot program, recognized that the increased complexity of family law cases required "an efficient and effective response" via a unified court system centered on the family and one that:

1. Provides a dedicated, trained, and informed judiciary.
2. Incorporates case management practices based on a family's judicial system needs.
3. Enables multiple case type resolution by one judicial officer or judicial team.
4. Provides coordinated legal and social services.
5. Considers and evaluates the needs of the family as a whole.

With the possible exception of #3, the degree to which the pilot sites are meeting these program expectations is best informed through detailed surveys of knowledgeable insiders. Insiders in this sense includes all professionals who are interacting with the UFC on a somewhat routine basis and would include staff from the court, the clerk's office, DSHS, the Attorney General's office, as well as private attorneys and CASA/VGAL/GALs, among others. The evaluation team took two avenues to survey these key practitioners. First, fairly early in the evaluation process, we sent out a detailed hard-copy survey to approximately 350 attorneys, advocates, and social workers who had experience in the UFC of at least one of the pilot sites. Second, later in the evaluation process, we interviewed key informants in one-on-one structured interviews.

The advantages of the first approach (survey format) are that a larger sample can be obtained and anonymity is guaranteed. The disadvantages are that responses are constrained to limited choices and the responses rate cannot be controlled. The second approach (interview format) basically flips the advantages and disadvantages of the first approach<sup>1</sup> - hence our two-pronged strategy for extracting the knowledge and experience of UFC from key informants. We feel that these two components of the evaluation provide the best mechanisms for information on how the three UFC pilot sites operate and how well they are meeting the stated goals of the program. In Sections I and II below, we summarize the results from the interviews and in Section III we do the same for the practitioner survey.

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<sup>1</sup> Although we guaranteed the anonymity of all interviewees, some may yet be less candid in an interview situation versus a paper-and-pen type survey.

In Section IV we briefly discuss some findings obtained from litigants involved in UFC cases. This section is the most problematic in terms of making any statements which can be generalized. There are two main concerns with litigant input. First and foremost is the difficulty in reaching this population. A significant number of UFC litigants cannot reliably be reached by either telephone or post as many tend towards an itinerant lifestyle. Second, even assuming successful contact, litigants have little basis for evaluating how well the UFC pilots are either operating or meeting the program objectives, and little to no comparative knowledge. For many participants their experience is one of emotional loss, acrimony, and rage. The court experience is a direct reminder of their loss of agency with respect to their family situation. Naturally, this experience influences the responses from this population.

Nevertheless, with these cautions in mind, we felt that litigant feedback was essential for a complete evaluation. We chose initially to attempt to conduct a survey by mail. In this effort we sent out a pre-test to eight-six (86) litigants in King County. Our analysis of the pre-test suggested that litigants did not feel that this approach was a good vehicle for capturing their experience. Thus we abandoned the full survey and opted for a second approach - focus groups - which we contracted out with the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University.

Focus groups by their nature are not representative. They provide a forum for more detailed information to be conveyed as well as a sharing of similar experiences. Although SESRC went to great lengths to recruit litigants, the response rates were quite poor. Nevertheless, a few themes emerged and these are briefly discussed in Section IV.

**SECTION I. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS**

A total of 30 semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted. The interview questions are available for review in Appendix C. Table 2-1 breaks down completed key informant interviews by site and position.

**Table 2-1: Key Informant Interviewees**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>Attorney</b>	<b>Social Worker</b>	<b>Judicial Officer</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Total</b>
King	4	2	4	3	<b>13</b>
Snohomish	3	1	2	1	<b>7</b>
Thurston	4	1	4	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>

Lists of potential key informants were provided by each site and then selected based on position, UFC experience, and availability. Interviews lasted between one and two hours each and were typically conducted on site, in a courthouse facility, or in the individual’s office.<sup>2</sup> All interviews were conducted by one researcher. An introductory statement was read aloud to each interviewee to explain the purpose of the interview, as levels of participation and understanding of the pilot varied widely. Interviewees then read and signed the informed consent form<sup>3</sup>. Questions that were not applicable to the individual were omitted.<sup>4</sup> Interviews were audiotaped for accuracy of documentation whenever possible and with permission of the participant.

The compilation of responses begins with across-site generalizations and then is broken down by site. Of course interviewees have various levels of knowledge, but broadly speaking the design of the interviews centered on three areas:

1. Conceptual: Is the UFC concept well understood and accepted? - the definition and goals of the program, etc.
2. Operational : What is the understanding of how the UFC works? - roles and responsibilities, resources, implementation, referral process, etc.
3. Effectiveness: How well are the stated goals of the UFC being met?

<sup>2</sup> Because of scheduling difficulties, two interviews were conducted via telephone.

<sup>3</sup> (see Appendix C)

<sup>4</sup> All interviewees responded to the scaled questions (G3, A9, A10, and N1-N5), except for one individual whose responses were based on a particular specialty court within the Thurston UFC.

The conceptual level questions are important as they are the message and image being conveyed - both internally and externally. The operational level is critical to ascertaining how key informants see the UFC differing from 'traditional' court - and if they understand how to navigate the program. These two levels must be addressed before the effectiveness of the program - in terms of the stated goals - can be assessed because both a good concept and a good execution/operation are necessary conditions for program effectiveness. If the concept is flawed, then the program is likely to be resisted by key players, thus limiting effectiveness. If the execution of the program is poor, the end results will be poor regardless of the intensity of commitment to the program. As a hypothetical example: if a UFC utilizes a referral process, and the necessary key professionals misunderstand this process, then it is likely that either referrals would not be forthcoming or the wrong population would be referred to UFC, either of which would significantly impact the effectiveness of the program in terms of stated program goals. Similarly, if the UFC concept is not accepted or well articulated by the court then it is unlikely that many referrals would take place. Hence, questions covering these two areas need to be addressed in addition to a discussion of the specific program goals. In the sections below then, this is the order in which the results are presented. Section A - Background - roughly covers the conceptual level questions. Section B covers the operational level and section C covers the specific program objectives. Additional information regarding the evolution and history of the pilot sites are interspersed throughout the narrative for context and background. We begin with some general observations and then discuss the individual results for each of the pilot sites.

## **§ I.1 GENERAL RESULTS**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

#### **1. Goals**

All three sites share goals of judicial efficiency and better decision making via case management of families and improved knowledge. Other common goals include consumer access to necessary social services and consistency in decision making and judicial orders. Interviewees indicated that there was substantial to high accomplishment for most goals listed with two exceptions. Those listing increased efficiency, judicial economy, and consistency were more likely to choose “high accomplishment in all goal areas.” Goals listed as low or low to substantial accomplishment seemed related to limited resources such as availability of services.

The majority of informants viewed their listed goals as worthy endeavors, although difficult to implement with limited resources and staffing to support coordination and services. An emphasis on further educating judicial officers, attorneys, and the public as to the definition, purpose, and structure of UFC was suggested to increase understanding. There was some concern expressed regarding the notion of expeditious case processing as a goal, which could compromise family and individual outcomes. “We need to recognize that the speed with which a family moves through the legal system is not a reflection of quality.” (S04) An example was given of a family seven months post final orders. The family members are all in treatment and moving towards functioning at the highest level possible. They have multiple mental health, substance abuse, and other psychosocial problems, and are complying with services which they would not have without UFC. The mother has now been clean for seven months with no relapse.

#### **2. Strengths**

There were several strengths of the UFC model noted across sites. These included judicial leadership, in that the success of the UFC model has been linked to a strong judicial leader in the startup phase. Additionally, coordination of cases enables judicial officers to become familiar with the issues of a family. This lessens the likelihood of litigants abusing the system: “...there are less cracks to fall through because the case manager is aware of issues and [they] have to answer to the court if [they] do not comply.” Mention was also made that there is less of a burden on litigants, less time is taken from work, and there is less worry about transportation because cases are coordinated. The issue of monitored compliance and accountability in family law matters was listed as one of several

variables related to better information and decision making. Parties have to answer to the court when they are not in compliance with orders. The linking of cases was seen as efficient from a judicial perspective.

Two of the three sites utilize planning conferences and noted them as a strength in identifying issues and goals and communicating the required steps for all parties. "All parties know what they have to do because they are told by the judge at the planning conference." (A06) Since all parties are present, documents can be reviewed and forms signed without delay. Perceived improvement in timeliness in moving domestic and juvenile dependency cases was noted across all sites. UFC was also seen as helpful in getting litigants connected with community services via case manager coordination.

### **3. Weaknesses**

One weakness noted by all sites was the lack of attorney representation for family law cases. Defense attorneys appointed for dependency cases are aware of family law actions, but are not typically appointed to work on them and may not have adequate training to serve as family law counsel. It was also noted that public defenders do not feel comfortable advising on family law issues and do not have liability coverage to do so. Snohomish has dealt with this by routinely appointing attorneys in family law matters, however it was noted that funding is limited and the criteria for appointment on such cases is unclear.

Because strong judicial leadership is so important in the UFC model, frequent judicial rotations were viewed as disruptive, resulting in differing interpretations of procedures. Commitment to the model may vary by judicial rotation and absence of protocol in some situations was viewed as rendering UFC "personality dependent."

Another weakness consistently noted among sites was the lack of resources available to support the model. This theme was applied to lack of funding to support a UFC coordinator/case manager position or additional positions that would allow UFC to serve more families. "UFC has made judicial officers aware that decisions cannot be made in a vacuum and this should apply to all families (J01)." Lack of funding for more general community social services was also repeatedly mentioned, although this issue is not specific to UFC.

### **4. Success Factors**

Having support of both the Bar and the Bench were cited as essential to the success of UFC at all three sites. Coordinated and cooperative efforts of the

court, clerks, attorneys, and social services were themes for all jurisdictions. Co-location was also noted as helpful for King and Thurston.

## **5. Confidentiality Issues**

The most frequently stated procedural issue concerns confidentiality, in that the combination of different case types results in sharing of information between parties not involved in all cases. As one interviewee put it, "Dependency and paternity cases are usually sealed. In a UFC planning conference, all parties from all cases are present. Orders entered may be applicable to the sealed case, but would be filed in all cases. They also hear what happens in court." (A05) One example was given of multiple case types, including a paternity case, being discussed at a proceeding when the mother blurted out that the other party was not the real father of the child who was also present. Another example was given in which a case manager read the address of a parent out loud with others present and then was told by an attorney that it was confidential. A new statute enacted in 2002 which related to dependency hearings (RCW 13.34.115 - see Appendix A) resolves some issues, but it is still unclear what information can be shared between case types. For example, if a Dependency CASA collects family information, can that be shared at trial regarding a parenting plan? What if there is information relevant to the paternity case? Some judicial officers (e.g. Snohomish) have apparently asked parties to leave the courtroom at times while a sealed file matter is discussed. Before permitting parties to remain in the courtroom, one judge in King County had parties swear not to reveal information discussed in the dependency case.

Concern regarding ex parte communication between case managers and judges was noted. This was addressed in King County with the creation of a Family Update Form (see Appendix B) which is distributed to everyone involved. Concern was also expressed that judicial officers familiar with individuals' backgrounds could not remain neutral. One judicial officer mentioned that this would be the case in any rural court setting. In Thurston County, a judge would hear a termination trial to assure fairness, whereas a commissioner would have heard pre-termination matters and other cases.

## **6. Suggestions for Improvement**

Training for attorneys and newly assigned judicial officers on the UFC model and referral procedures and longer rotations (2-5 years) were suggested. Earlier identification of UFC or potential UFC families was stated as a need that could be addressed via improved communication or information technology, including a system to flag new cases for UFC families. It was also suggested that UFC

publish a pamphlet for pro se families that explains UFC proceedings, timelines, and expectations.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

The development of a formal set of UFC procedures (in the form of a UFC manual) to establish an infrastructure that would be preserved with turnover was well-received, although it was stressed that such a manual would need to be site specific. It was cautioned that statewide procedures could be difficult to implement given the different models and jurisdictional sizes. Site specific UFC manuals would be helpful to attorneys and other professionals new to UFC. The only downsides of developing a manual would be time, cost, and dedication of staff to write and maintain it.

When asked about the organization and/or contractual structure of UFC, the responses pertained more to resources and specifically to the need for additional case managers and/or UFC coordinators to allow for better coordination between UFC and providers. Other suggestions were dedicated UFC calendars, and longer rotations for judicial officers (two or more years, Snohomish).

### **1. Implementation/Startup**

In King County, a local rule known as the “Zero Rule” was written when UFC was established and applied to pilot projects in general (see LR 0.18 in Appendix A). A similar procedure for pilot projects was established in Snohomish (see RULE 0.04 in Appendix A). King County also established a new procedure and coding system for UFC designation as UFS (Seattle UFC) or UFK (Kent UFC). In Thurston, Title 94.00 established UFC, 94.01 concurrent jurisdiction, 94.02 case management procedures, and 94.08 judicial officer training (see Appendix A). Pro tem commissioners are also required to have GAL training.

The most common training or preparation prior to the commencement of UFC seemed to be self-education and experience. The judicial officers involved with planning and startup of the three pilot sites were experienced in family and juvenile law matters. Each site had its own approach to training for judicial officers, attorneys, and staff working with UFC cases. Snohomish had procedural training for UFC and King developed a Training Oversight Committee (although judicial attendance at sponsored trainings tapered off following startup). Thurston spent two years planning for UFC with no UFC-specific training, but now has a monthly education program.

The obstacle most common to UFC implementation was limited resources, including services for families in the community and funding for UFC staff. Having different court sites was noted as a difficulty in Snohomish and for King County's planned UFC expansion into Seattle. Short judicial rotation and lack of specialization were also seen as challenges in Thurston.

## **2. Training**

UFC judges are exposed to the required topical areas (child development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness) through continuing education and conference training. The additional training was viewed as improving UFC judicial officers' ability to make informed and consistent decisions. They are more informed regarding legal and psychosocial issues and know the resources in the community. Attendance at national conferences allows judicial officers to become familiar with innovative methods for working with families that can be applied in their own jurisdictions. A consistent need was expressed for more cross training for both judicial officers and practitioners who need to understand concurrent jurisdiction, their roles in UFC, and both juvenile dependency and family law. An intensive 35-hour judicial leadership curriculum has been developed by AOC that consists of a 5-day/6-unit highly interactive curriculum that covers judicial roles/responsibilities/leadership in family/juvenile court, child development, dependency, juvenile offender/Becca, and family law. The "Juvenile Justice, Family Law, and Judicial Leadership Curriculum" may be presented in whole or in part.

## **3. Referrals**

For all three sites, interviewees perceived that "opting out" (i.e., litigants choosing not to participate following referral to UFC) was not permissible. "The Court's function is to manage the cases and case management services may be terminated if they are no longer necessary." (J02)

## **4. Resources**

### **a. Facilities**

The resources most lacking in all three sites were social and treatment services for UFC litigants. Interviewees acknowledged that this is a systemic problem, not one specific to UFC. It was also noted that UFC utilizes these limited resources more efficiently, because services are not duplicated and because families' cases are brought together. Also, judicial officers are more aware of treatment availability in the community, treatment providers are more aware of court proceedings, and compliance with orders pertaining to treatment and other

services is monitored more closely.

There were very few issues of facility security that were specific to UFC. It was acknowledged that domestic violence, family law, and dependency cases can be volatile, and security is always a concern. Additional security in the courtroom is requested if a “dangerous” client is coming in. This may be more easily identified in UFC, as “case managers let us know if it is a volatile case because they are familiar with them” (J03).

#### **b. Information Management**

Databases typically accessed for UFC proceedings (both planning conferences and review hearings) included JIS (SCOMIS, JABS, DISCIS, JUVIS) and court files. The most common information gathering challenge was getting information on cases from other counties. This includes criminal history and domestic violence protection order detail. Often only SCOMIS docket screens are available for these data.

#### **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Recommendations pertaining to primary roles and responsibilities referred mostly to increasing education and training and not staff composition or organization. One exception was the suggestion that courthouse facilitators and case managers work in closer proximity. At the time of this writing, this issue was being addressed in Thurston with the creation of the new court-based facilitator position that works directly with Family Court litigants. Negative aspects of working in UFC included resistance of others to the model. Interviewees in all three sites expressed frustration at working with litigants who were not motivated to change, who attempted to take advantage of the system, and often have “insolvable” problems. Many interviewees responded that there were no personal or professional sacrifices made related to UFC, however, judicial officers noted that UFC involves more of their time. Hours are longer due to increased administrative responsibility, meetings, and review of UFC case files. All sites seem to schedule lunch hour and/or after hour meetings to discuss programmatic issues, although these were more consistent at the beginning of the pilot period. Attorneys also noted that there is more time spent on cases. Judicial officers and some UFC staff saw the work as emotionally draining, especially when dependency cases and termination issues are involved. Reactions of peers and colleagues suggested skepticism at the onset of UFC that generally evolved into enthusiasm for the program.

**a. Judicial Officers**

Some activities of judicial officers specific to UFC are noted below. It was apparent that the judge's role is more comprehensive than in the usual family law or dependency system and involves knowing the family beyond the immediate case facts. "There is more tracking of a family by the judge, who is aware of multiple legal actions and not just one case. The judge's role also includes more education and consultation" (S01). The role of judge was more similar than different between the three pilot sites. The roles of commissioners in UFC varied dramatically between sites.

**b. Case Managers**

Generally, the case manager position would not exist outside of UFC. Case managers have a variety of duties and titles which vary by site. Responsibilities seem to vary with the size of the jurisdiction, staffing needs, and funding. Some themes are consistent in describing the case manager position, which is central to the functioning of UFC. As one judicial officer put it, "**They are the pituitary gland of UFC**" (J01). The case manager collects information on families, makes sure court orders are followed, and refers family members to services. Case managers for all sites were involved with tracking UFC family information for purposes of this evaluation.

**c. Facilitators**

Except where otherwise indicated, "facilitator" here refers to those employed by county clerks' offices or court administration to assist self-represented litigants in family law matters.

**d. County Clerk's Office**

The role of the Clerk's office is generally not different because of UFC, although the cooperation of clerk staff was viewed as essential to the success of UFC in all sites.

**e. Assistant Attorney General**

The role of an Assistant Attorney General (AAG) was noted by most as being the same as in a non-UFC setting, in that they represent the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in child dependency matters.

**f. Social Workers**

The role of a DCFS social worker was also noted by most as being the same as in a non-UFC setting, in that they represent the best interest of a child in dependency matters.

**g. CASA or VGAL**

A CASA is a court-appointed special advocate, who represents the best interest of children, usually in a dependency proceeding. Most CASAs are volunteer community members appointed through the auspices of local CASA programs, which are affiliated with Washington State CASA. A VGAL is a volunteer guardian ad litem, an individual charged with representing the best interest of the person on whose behalf the VGAL is appointed. VGALs may be guardians ad litem who perform dependency or domestic relations guardian ad litem services at no charge to the parties.

**h. Guardian ad litem (GAL)**

Many responses to this question referred back to the responses regarding CASA and VGAL roles.

**i. Private Attorneys**

The role of private attorneys is representation of parties in family law cases, although this can become confusing to clients who have different representation in other case types (e.g. dependency). Attorneys may also be required to attend more proceedings unique to UFC. All sites agree that it can be frustrating when there is overlap between family law and dependency cases because of the specialization of attorneys, and that it would be nice to have a segment of the bar specialized and able to provide representation in both.

**C. OBJECTIVES**

**1. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

Judicial officers across all sites agreed that UFC increases their workloads. This is because of multiple case types per family that involve more file review. UFC also reportedly increased their administrative responsibilities, and community activity. On the other hand, it was noted that combining cases enhanced efficiency of time spent for judicial officers. For all sites, review hearings are required for dependency cases based on federal guidelines. Additional reviews may be scheduled concurrently or separately to review domestic and other related cases. The model for doing so varies by site.

**2. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

The majority of interviewees for all three sites felt the availability and intensity of treatment and case management services are sufficient for the majority of cases, although, several respondents noted that they could not speak to both treatment and case management equally, so it is not possible to separate the responses in

Table 2-2 below.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, interviewees rated collaboration between court staff and treatment providers, social workers, and attorneys as sufficient for the majority of cases or all cases. The breakdown of responses is presented in Tables 2-2 and 2-3. One individual’s responses pertained only to Dependency Drug Court and were removed from this analysis.

**Table 2-2: Availability and Perceived Intensity of Treatment and Case Management Services (Question A9)**

SITE	insufficient for all cases	sufficient for minority of cases	sufficient for majority of cases	sufficient for all cases	don't know/not sure
KING	2	4	6	1	0
SNOHOMISH	1	0	3	1	2
THURSTON	0	1	6	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

**Table 2-3: Collaboration between Court Staff and Treatment Providers, Social Workers, and Attorneys (Question A10)**

SITE	insufficient for all cases	sufficient for minority of cases	sufficient for majority of cases	sufficient for all cases	don't know/not sure
KING	1	1	9	1	1
SNOHOMISH	0	1	3	1	2
THURSTON	0	0	6	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

### 3. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation

Interviewees from all three sites felt it is too early to determine the impact of UFC on post-resolution litigation, with or without available data analysis. It was also noted that, “Some chaotic families will always have modifications.” It was also noted that child support modifications are appropriately brought to the court post-decree, as situations (financial and otherwise) change.

<sup>5</sup> Responses are summarized with an “average” rating.

**4. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

Most of the questions pertaining to Objective 6 are compiled by site. There was consensus among all three sites regarding child safety in dependency cases, in that it is not approached differently in UFC, although there is a perceived positive impact on safety *because of and directly related to UFC*. Safety needs of children are still addressed through the dependency action and investigation and decisions are made relative to that case. However, because of the nature of UFC, more information is available to the judicial officer and awareness of the dependency case results in more consistency of family law orders.

**D. TABULATED RESPONSES FOR NCSC QUESTIONNAIRE**

The responses for items N1 through N5, adapted from a National Center for State Courts (NCSC) questionnaire (Flango, Flango, & Rubin, 1999) are tabulated by site in the tables below. Respondents for all three sites unanimously perceived court decision making as being of the highest professional quality (48.3% Agree Somewhat; 51.7% Definitely Agree).

**Question N1: Court decision making is of the highest professional quality**

SITE	Agree Somewhat	Definitely Agree
KING	8	5
SNOHOMISH	2	5
THURSTON	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>

Similarly, the majority of respondents indicated somewhat (62.1%) or definite (20.7%) agreement with the statement, "Courts and human service agencies collaborate to tailor services to the strengths and needs of families and other participants."

**Question N2: Courts and human service agencies collaborate to tailor services to the strengths and needs of families and other participants**

SITE	Definitely Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Definitely Agree
KING	1	0	0	9	3
SNOHOMISH	0	1	1	3	2
THURSTON	0	1	1	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>

There was more variability among responses for item N3: “Disputes are resolved without undue hardship and cost, with 14 respondents (48.3%) agreeing somewhat, and seven disagreeing somewhat (24.1%). Responses for this question were spread relatively evenly among attorneys, social workers, staff, and judicial officers.

**Question N3: Disputes are resolved without undue hardship and cost**

SITE	Definitely Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Definitely Agree
KING	0	5	2	5	1
SNOHOMISH	0	0	0	7	0
THURSTON	3	2	1	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>

Most respondents (82.2%) felt cases in UFC are resolved in an expedient manner. Specifically, 42.9% agreed somewhat and 39.3% definitely agreed with the statement, “Cases are resolved in a timely manner.”

**Question N4: Cases are resolved in a timely manner**

SITE	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Definitely Agree
KING	2	1	4	6
SNOHOMISH	1	1	4	1
THURSTON	0	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>

There was disagreement among respondents regarding litigant satisfaction, with 20.7% disagreeing somewhat, 48.3% agreeing somewhat, 24.1% not sure, and one definitely disagree and one definitely agree response. Most informants disagreeing with this statement were attorneys.

**Question N5: Litigants are satisfied with the process, regardless of the outcome**

SITE	Definitely Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Not Sure	Agree Somewhat	Definitely Agree
KING	1	4	2	6	0
SNOHOMISH	0	0	2	5	0
THURSTON	0	2	3	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>

## § I.2 KING COUNTY PILOT SITE

### A. BACKGROUND

#### 1. Definition of UFC

The definition of UFC in King County was generally consistent among interviewees and was defined as a single judicial team that focuses on all of a family's legal issues. "Families come in with a multitude of problems and we contain them by providing one judge and one commissioner. The staff get to know who they are and what their issues are, and intervene when problems are interfering with the health and well-being of their children. It is also a way in which parents are held accountable."

#### 2. Goals

The primary goals listed for King County included case management and coordination of cases to allow for consistency in orders and efficiency of the court, as well as coordination of case proceedings and services for families with multiple legal issues in superior court. Judicial officers educated in specialized areas of the law and issues affecting families were listed as vital for working on complex cases. The protection and safety of children was also mentioned as an important goal.

#### 3. Strengths

Having at least one judicial officer involved and dedicated to UFC administration was noted as essential for King County, which has now designated a UFC Chief Judge, who carries a 50% caseload to allow for UFC administrative time. Co-location of juvenile and domestic cases - at the RJC in Kent only - was noted as a strength. The planning conference was considered a strength as they let all parties "know what they have to do". Also mentioned was the assignment of judges very committed to the program.

#### 4. Weaknesses

King County is working on a protocol to terminate UFC case management once families reach a designated milestone, however, the cases retain system flags (UFC & UFS) that identify them as UFC cases. "Contentious families tend to have post-adjudicatory issues that are not always appropriate for UFC."

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

In King, accountability via monitoring of treatment and services was seen as particularly rewarding. The lack of policy and procedural consistency, plus resistance of some judicial officers to the model has been difficult for those working in UFC. Note however, that the current judicial leadership has placed an emphasis on formalizing policies and eliminating procedural inconsistencies. Also, it was noted that sometimes referrals are made to UFC with no feedback or communication to the referral source following screening - which is no longer true given the subsequent creation of a response letter (see Appendix B). In King, it was noted that historically people outside of the UFC have not had a good understanding of UFC, and that initial success and support was associated with strong judicial leadership. One attorney stated that initially peers were worried about the time commitment of planning conferences, but that over time they realized the model was “better for kids.” (A05) It was noted that some attorneys in King still do not understand the UFC model and continue to resist. Social services staff reported appreciation for the trainings and coordinated efforts.

### **1. Implementation/Startup**

When UFC was implemented as a pilot project in King County, the Superior Court amended its zero rules (local internal administrative rules) to include a reference to pilot projects. A copy of the rule (LR 0.18) is in Appendix A. A similar procedure for pilot projects was established in Snohomish.

In June 2004, the court amended its local family law rules to include more explicit rules for UFC (see King local rule LFLR 7 in Appendix A). King County also has established a new procedure and coding system for UFC designation as UFS (Seattle UFC) or UFK (Kent UFC).

Judge Bobbe Bridge (now Supreme Court Justice) was identified by stakeholders as a founding “parent” of UFC in Washington State. She became interested in the model during her tenure on the King County Superior Court bench, 1989-1999 and attended a UFC conference hosted by NCJFCJ. The UFC in King County was initiated with a workgroup set up by Judge Bridge in 1994. An executive committee approved a startup at the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent in May 1997, with one judge and one case manager. The RJC UFC was later expanded to two judges. Judge Bridge, other judicial officers, the bar, public defenders, family law attorneys, and DSHS were all involved in the startup. Nearly three years were spent in committee meetings and drafting reports.

## **2. Training**

Presenters for Training Oversight Committee trainings are typically service providers from the community and are considered experts on the topics presented. Trainings are open to anyone (including court staff) working with families in the legal system and attendance and representation varies by topic. It was noted that judicial attendance at these trainings has decreased since the inception of UFC.

UFC judges receive TOC-provided training in the six topical areas (child development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness). Subsequent to these interviews, TOC has become more oriented towards providing information regarding community providers. Several judicial officers have also attended national domestic violence trainings. A need was identified for more intense training on child development, domestic violence, and psychological issues. Training for handling multiple case types that is geared specifically for judicial officers was also requested. Increased emphasis on child development and attachment as they pertain to custody and visitation were requested. More training in basic tax and child support were requested by one judicial officer who wanted more flexible approaches that do not set up litigants for contempt.

UFC staff has had the option to attend the state Children's Justice Conference and have attended and have presented at the TOC trainings. The UFC program manager will present at different department meetings and provides training for other players and staff with respect to UFC protocols. Additional training needs for staff listed were Web Putty, UFC structure and procedures such as referrals [for all staff and attorneys], cross-training on family and juvenile law administrative and legal issues, and training on multiple case types at all levels of involvement.

## **3. Referrals**

Cases may be referred by judicial officers, attorneys, AAGs, public defenders, DSHS social workers, the litigants themselves, or Family Court Services staff. While all family law with children cases are assigned exclusively to the UFC judges, only a smaller subset of those cases receive intensive case management supervision by the judges and UFC case managers. It is these cases which are given UFS/UFK designation. Thus there are many family law cases in UFC with no specialized case management. Cases are screened for eligibility based on a very specific list of criteria (see Appendix K).

The criteria for referral to UFC in King are the most concrete of the three sites, although it was mentioned that requirements are still not well understood and that some sources refer all abuse and neglect cases. Some attorneys make referrals because they have a “messy case” and desire judicial intervention. There are also some families who meet criteria but are on track and have attorneys, and therefore may not benefit from the additional case management. However, once cases are referred, case managers conduct formal screening based on the nine criteria to identify those most appropriate for UFC. It was noted that judicial referrals are prioritized. In screening, case managers review relevant legal files and SCOMIS and talk to case parties.

There are three types of UFC referrals in King: (1) An administrative referral where multiple cause numbers are flagged by staff for screening. These are identified at the earliest possible point in time; (2) Personal referrals made by attorneys, GALs, or other case parties via referral forms; and (3) Judicial referrals. A UFC case manager does the screening but judicial officers have the ultimate decision to accept or not. The process has become formalized over time, although some decisions are made because of limited resources and full caseloads.

#### **4. Resources**

##### **a. Facilities**

Resources most often mentioned as lacking in King County include drug and alcohol evaluation, affordable and available mental health evaluation and treatment, and supervised visitation. The most valuable resources listed were the Family Law Information Center, drop-in child care, UFC case managers, and UFC trainings.

King is the only site that is able to offer onsite childcare, and although this service is not specific to or a result of UFC, it was viewed as an important resource in getting family members to court and not bringing children to hearings where sensitive material is presented (e.g. domestic violence protection order hearings). As one judicial officer put it, “Parents can’t not attend because of childcare issues.”

Having cases co-located at the RJC was seen as advantageous for families and allowing for better communication among staff. Individuals also found the south county location beneficial, with ample parking and less ‘chaotic’ activity than the downtown courthouse.

## **b. Information Management**

There are two components to the information management system in King County. One component is simply document management. Cases in King County filed during calendar year 2000 and later are scanned onto ECR and documents details are easily viewed, but only for that county. One judicial officer noted that ECR is difficult to use with UFC, as one cannot flip pages of multiples files at once. The second component is a case management system, which is essential for UFC operations. Since the spring of 2003, King County has implemented a Web-based case management system (KCMS) which, among other functions, acts as a central repository for information for UFC case management. The system takes initial information from SCOMIS and tracks judicial caseload, thus allowing court staff - specifically, the civil case specialists - to manage a judge's entire family law caseload. These specialists can use the system to identify problematic case management issues and track UFC managed cases. The system also effectively works as a coordination tool between the UFC case managers and the civil case specialists, in that any duplicative hearings can be identified and eliminated. The database is also used by UFC case coordinators for pre-screening and continuing case management.

## **5. Roles & Responsibilities**

### **a. Judicial Officers**

In King, judges are more attuned to resource issues and case management, and remain directly involved with a UFC family's cases. There are also administrative duties involved in identifying community resources and working with community groups. The judges work toward facilitating settlement and function within a less adversarial system. The UFC model in King County is more "judge focused" (J02), and commissioners are less involved in managing families, although they may make referrals to UFC when they identify areas where UFC management would be appropriate (e.g. a third party custody where father contests the petition but paternity has not been established).

King County UFC judges are on staggered, two year rotations which have been voluntary at this point. Rotations are staggered so that one judge leaves every year, while one with substantial experience remains. Recruitment for these voluntary rotations has been a challenge. In Kent, UFC judges spend 100% of their time on family law with children cases. As of August 2003, the same is true for Seattle.<sup>6</sup> The chief judge (50% caseload) hears family law with children cases exclusively.

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<sup>6</sup> Prior to this, a Seattle UFC judge heard 75% family law with children and 25% civil cases.

**b. Case Managers**

Originally when the UFC was limited to the Regional Justice Center in Kent, the UFC employed both a case manager and a UFC coordinator. The case manager had case management duties in addition to administrative, program management, and program development responsibilities. The UFC coordinator was responsible solely for case management.

As might be expected, the actual positions and the respective responsibilities have changed over time, with a greater division of labor in order to take advantage of the gains from specialization. As of February 2004, King now employs one program manager who consolidates all of the management and program development responsibilities, and has no case management duties. This individual is able to focus on keeping the program information current as well as fine-tuning the manuals to meet the needs of the changing environment. She provides orientation for incoming UFC judges and bailiffs, as well as training of new UFC staff. She identifies and coordinates training opportunities and resources for UFC judicial officers. She is responsible for expanding the resources for the UFC, such as identifying organizations to provide more pro bono time from local attorneys, and increasing and keeping current the referral network. Additional program development functions would include collaborative efforts with other professionals that are designed to eliminate duplicative efforts and improve overall system efficiencies.<sup>7</sup> In short, the program manager is central to managing the flow of information regarding the program and identifying ways to better leverage information.

King currently employs two full-time case managers and one half-time UFC coordinator at each site. The UFC coordinator as currently defined is responsible for pre-screening referrals. Typically this individual will enter the initial information into the database for full screening by a case manager. The coordinator also provides general administrative support duties for the case managers, such as assisting in the drafting of administrative orders and mailing documents to parties. The case managers screen referrals, set up cases, prepare orders, set and attend planning conferences and review hearings, staff cases with judges, identify processing issues, troubleshoot, assist litigants in identifying community resources and services (both legal and treatment), and may help to de-escalate clients when stresses are high. The case managers know the legal documents, track and monitor progress of court-ordered services, track family issues that are before the court. They work up the legal profile for the judge,

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<sup>7</sup> For example, collaborating with BECCA case managers.

contact parties regarding scheduling, draft orders for the judge, monitor cases, report compliance to judge, keep track of cases so they are closed out when appropriate, and participate in judges' meetings. The case managers gather all the information, keep track of parties' addresses, roles, and makes certain orders are filed.

**c. Facilitators**

The family law facilitators in King County work for Family Court Operations and generally provide procedural information to self-represented parties and make referrals to UFC for case management. They also review documents of pro se litigants prior to presentation in court as well as staffing both status and non-compliance calendars.

**d. County Clerk's Office**

Clerks facilitate the linking of cases so that they are identified as UFC and are assigned to the correct judicial officer. The Clerk's office in King was very involved in UFC program development. They worked with the UFC in developing identification codes (UFK and UFS) to better track UFC families in both Seattle and Kent. The Clerk's office has worked closely with the court in King County in setting up UFC procedures and codes. Clerk employees have received training to increase efficiency and staff UFC meetings in Kent and Seattle to ensure this link.

**e. Assistant Attorney General**

The AAG represents DCFS in dependency matters. In UFC the AAGs attend special UFC hearings and make some referrals. The AAG's role is not unique in UFC, with the added planning conference to attend. They may note a hearing before a judge as opposed to a specific commissioner. They are helpful to pro se litigants in family law matters when asked by a judge and give informal help, although this is not typical. The role is the same in that AAGs represent the Department, regardless of the courtroom. The number of hearings may be the same since in dependency court they would be waiting for parenting plans that would not get done and dependency reviews would continue.

**f. Social Workers**

DCFS social workers reported attending more hearings as a function of UFC. They can also make referrals to UFC. As one judicial officer noted, the only difference is the complexity of the cases. There is more effort in engaging parties in services and social workers are sending more UFC referrals. For example, one social worker volunteered at the planning conference to retain therapeutic

childcare for a family.

King also has Family Court Services social workers who work strictly on family law cases. They will conduct assessments and make recommendations at the beginning of a case but otherwise have no continuing involvement with UFC families.

**g. County Prosecutor**

In paternity cases, there is nothing different regarding the role of the prosecutor, although they attend the planning conference and review hearings because of UFC. They have also participated on committees. They may be asked by judge to give informal help in pro se matters. They also go beyond paternity cases and help with modification of parenting plan. "The prosecutors have helped to expedite paternity cases, which can be a real obstacle in UFC." (J02). One attorney noted that the role is different because they serve the best interest of the child (i.e. no client), and are viewed as neutral, which cuts across cases.

**h. CASA/VGAL**

In King County, the court-based CASA program for family law matters was closed at the time of the interviews (it has since been resurrected). The dependency CASA program does not provide services for family law issues. Work is taking place toward cross-training CASAs and family law attorneys. King County CASAs attend more hearings in UFC and are asked to broaden their roles to encompass more case types. There are different, more complex issues to review all at once and more people to interview. They also may be asked to make recommendations regarding parenting plans. They attend planning conferences and review hearings and communicate with the case manager regarding issues hindering progress with their reports. In rare instances - only by agreement of the parties - CASAs have had an increased role because they are appointed on family law matters and then get the dependency case and vice versa so as to continue the role. It was noted that, because it is a volunteer CASA program and there are more specific statutorily-required training for GALs, there is some difference between the two positions even though the basic training is the same.

**i. Guardian ad litem (GAL)**

The role is mostly the same as in non-UFC cases; GALs must attend the UFC planning conferences. Although it was not considered especially burdensome, it was reported that more hours were put in on UFC cases because of case overlap.

**j. Private Attorneys**

The main differences are the planning conferences and review hearings. There is an instruction form that is sent to pro se litigants and attorneys describing some UFC procedures, including review hearings and UFS/UFK designation (see Appendix B). They now file pleadings that bear a UFK or UFS number. Their increased awareness sometimes prompts them to remind judges in a non-UFC setting that case rulings affect more than one case. There are also more players at the table than they are accustomed to. Public defenders are reluctant to practice family law; they do not have the training and their supervisor's policies vary by agency. It is therefore sometimes difficult to determine the attorney's role, which may differ by case (e.g. dependency and dissolution). Another difficulty is that UFC is a more holistic problem-solving model but attorneys are trained to be adversarial.

**C. OBJECTIVES**

**1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

Since the expansion of UFC to Seattle, there are now six King County judges seeing UFC cases: three of these in Kent, the original UFC pilot site; the remainder sit in the downtown UFC location. There are also Family Law, BECCA, and Dependency commissioners who may be involved with specific cases. The judges have either volunteered or have been assigned to work in UFC. For commissioners, it is a rotation assignment. A UFC family with multiple cases is typically seen by one judge and one or two commissioners. Family law and dependency commissioners continue to hear reviews (e.g. regularly scheduled dependency reviews) as cases move towards resolution, with one judge presiding over all at trial, planning conferences, and review hearings. Commissioners hear regular motions that would typically go before them. One exception is the case where a CHINS or truancy review is scheduled within days of a planning conference and the review may be rolled in and included concurrently in the planning conference (and so do not go to BECCA commissioner). If multiple commissioners would be involved, the dependency matter may go to the family law commissioner or vice versa, although there is no specific policy on this.

Regarding information for decision making, having records available on parties' additional cases was seen as helpful and access has been made easier by ECR. Judicial officers get the "big picture and not just a snapshot in time. The general belief among interviewees was that UFC has improved the consistency of court orders within the same family. The collaborative effort between case managers

and judges and communication between players was noted as key. If there is a dependency matter, the court will be aware of what has occurred with family law matters pertaining to visitation and custody.

Judicial officers seem to have improved awareness of services because of TOC and other trainings, as well as because of increased communication with Family Court Services and case managers. Appropriate referrals for services and availability are discussed with the judges. It was noted that judges think about services earlier than trial because of their involvement in planning conferences.

## **2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

### **a. Caseflow**

The typical progression for UFC families in King is as follows:

- 1) Referral to UFC.
- 2) Screening by a case manager.
- 3) The case is accepted into UFC & an acceptance or rejection letter is sent.
- 4) A planning conference in which:
  - a. Services ordered previously ordered are reiterated or new services are ordered for the first time.
  - b. Procedural difficulties are identified.
  - c. Cases are consolidated or linked.
  - d. Trial dates are coordinated.
- 5) Case manager tracks service compliance.
- 6) Cases progress to settlement or trial.
- 7) Final orders are entered (continued monitoring possible).
- 8) UFC case management terminated.

Typical proceedings required for UFC families include planning conferences, review hearings, and regular case schedules and pre-trial conferences as required.

### **b. Proceedings**

#### ***Planning Conferences***

Planning conferences are the only proceeding unique to UFC, and review hearings may be scheduled regularly following the planning conference to assess compliance with orders. At the planning conference, services previously ordered under several causes are combined into one order for all cases. All parties are present and expectations are communicated, allowing for understanding and accountability. Also, procedural difficulties are identified and addressed at the

planning conference. Releases of information may be signed and outstanding discovery issues identified. Review hearings may be scheduled to make sure cases are on track. An “order on acceptance” lays out the objectives of the planning conference, which may include:

- 1) Linking and scheduling of cases, hearings, and trials.
- 2) The potential for utilizing dispute resolution.
- 3) Addressing & coordinating services previously ordered.
- 4) Possible appointment of GAL/CASA.
- 5) Steps toward conclusion of case.

### ***Review Hearings***

Review hearings are scheduled in King to assess case status and monitor compliance with ordered services. They are typically scheduled when non-compliance or lack of progression comes to the attention of the case manager. It was suggested (S04) that formalized scheduling of review dates would be helpful for some families. Subsequent to these interviews, the King UFC now has an update report with time frames. Another problem noted was that parties are not always aware of the items or issues to be reviewed and often are unprepared for hearings. For example, a new issue may have come up but no one has filed a motion so the court cannot address the issue resulting in an additional appearance. This was noted by several attorneys who have worked with UFC cases. Also, dependency reviews continue to be heard by the dependency commissioner instead of the UFC judge unless the UFC judge retains the matter.

### **c. Case Consolidation**

Dependency cases are not typically consolidated because of federal timeline requirements and because often there are sealed file matters involved. They are linked in that they are managed together, but stay on their own calendars. At times, judges may hear dependencies bundled with other family cases. The linking of cases was said to create a “spirit of cooperation” (J01).

### **d. Case Management and Expediency**

Interviewees felt that UFC cases are more focused on getting to completion and that case management creates an expectation of progression. It was unclear whether cases were completing more quickly and it was noted that this may differ by case type. One interviewee remarked that some UFC cases may actually take longer to get to trial because there are so many parties involved, resulting in scheduling difficulties and more time in court. The contact with the UFC case manager is the primary distinction for litigants in UFC. UFC parties receive a

letter and order that they are in UFC and are assigned a case manager who is a central point of contact to discuss procedures and expectations without giving legal advice.

### **3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

#### **a. Access to Services**

UFC was perceived as increasing access to appropriate services because case managers are familiar with the resources and connections. This provides for a more direct communication between the Bench and providers, and service providers are impressed with the increased specificity of orders. Access to services is perceived as faster because case managers make the links directly instead of families “figuring it out.” Referrals are monitored for compliance and do not get “dropped” or forgotten. “It is easier for pro se clients to get referred, or to have other options if one does not work out. Also, the court orders are clarified so they cannot say they did not understand what was expected.” (S01).

Services typically ordered include:

- 1) Parenting evaluations
- 2) Mental Health treatment
- 3) Drug and alcohol treatment
- 4) Parenting classes
- 5) Supervised visitation
- 6) Family counseling
- 7) Psychiatric or psychological evaluation
- 8) Family reconciliation services
- 9) Urinalysis
- 10) Batterer assessment
- 11) Domestic Violence (certified batterer intervention)

#### **b. Attendance**

The UFC case manager attends planning conferences and UFC review hearings. DCFS social workers, CASAs, and GALs also attend. BECCA social workers usually do not. Treatment providers do not typically attend unless litigants invite them or they are subpoenaed for trial. They primarily communicate via letters and certificates provided to the court. The majority of those interviewed felt this approach was working well although overall they expressed no clear opinion on any benefits accruing from the presence of treatment providers in court.

### **c. Service Needs**

Service needs may arise at the planning conference or at any point following referral to UFC. “The need for services often predates any legal involvement but may be brought to light because of current cases.” (J02). In reviewing files, it may be noted that services have been previously ordered without compliance or monitoring mechanisms, so those will be ordered and monitored via UFC. If there is a dependency case, services will likely have been ordered and tracked by DCFS. The UFC case manager identifies the issues and possible resources and the judge ultimately decides what services to order. Parties may make allegations that result in services ordered for other parties. The Department recommends service needs in dependency cases. The needs identification process seems to work relatively well in King. Careful and thorough screening by the UFC case manager is critical to this process. The UFC in King has had a standardized referral form in place for some time, and which is used to create a profile of the family issues, service needs, and procedural issues for the family.

## **4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is discussed as an option at the planning conference. ADR is mandatory in King County, however, it may be waived by the court in appropriate cases (e.g., presence of domestic violence issues). If it is an option, the order on planning conference will include ADR. Settlement conferences are more commonly used for those who have agreed on parenting plans but have other issues to resolve. In some cases ADR resolves cases and enables families to avoid trial, but this approach is not specific to UFC. It was noted that including all of the issues (paternity, etc.) would be difficult with ADR. Most felt that ADR is rarely used with UFC, and that this was appropriate given the nature of the cases. There is also a shortage of low cost options and those existing have long wait-lists (greater than two months). It was also mentioned that UFC families are more accustomed to dealing with problems via the legal system and do not understand the mediation process. “UFC cases tend to be high conflict and not appropriate for mediations.” Often, ADR is brought up later in the life of a case when volatility is high, making it difficult to consider alternatives to trial.

## **5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

### **a. Modifications**

It was suggested that it may be helpful to have scheduled post-decree review hearings for families who may benefit. More structured education for parents involved in both dissolution and dependency cases would also be helpful. Parenting plans should be feasible and understood by both parties.

## **b. Compliance**

“The planning conference motivates parties to initiate services. Having a judge reiterate orders, plus the consistency in orders helps compliance.” (S01). Improved compliance was also attributed to case manager intervention and coordination of services. “UFC catches non-compliance much faster and gets [parties] back on track.” (J02). Apparently parties do not want to return to see the judge who told them to do nor not do something and seem to understand the expectations and consequences better in UFC.

Coordination of services seems to ease the stress of participants in finding and accessing them. However, it was also noted that compliance is more difficult for litigants when money to pay for services is an issue. To monitor compliance, litigants sign releases so that UFC case managers can check in periodically with service providers. This may be by phone or providers may give written reports at specific intervals. If not in compliance, parties are either issued a letter of warning or pulled in for a review hearing. A motion of contempt may be filed by another party. King County has been moving towards monthly progress reports on all families to review compliance.

## **6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

### **a. Desired Outcomes**

Reported desired outcomes for families included:

- Permanency and stability for children.
- Appropriate orders with more clarity and understanding.
- Compliance with orders.
- Less future interaction with the court (i.e. leave families with more tools to deal with problems outside of court system).
- Decreased conflict and disputes among family members.

### **b. Current Benefits**

UFC provides clarity to families and specialized judicial staff write tight orders that are easier to follow. The case manager helps parties define their responsibilities and be accountable for them. Early identification of needs and services is accomplished and followed up prior to trial. Families attend consolidated hearings so they may be in court less often and are working in a less adversarial environment that focuses on their needs. Resource referrals are more appropriate. “UFC looks at families globally, ensuring a safe environment for children to develop.”

**c. Suggested Changes**

To better serve UFC families, it was suggested that cases could be identified earlier (they were primarily administrative referrals at the time of the interviews, however, subsequent changes widened the sources of referrals). Also, with additional case manager resources, UFC could monitor more families.<sup>8</sup> Other suggestions were onsite resources and a centralized facility in Seattle to better accommodate families with multiple cases. One interviewee suggested that there are advantages to employing case managers with legal backgrounds. It was also cautioned that UFC orders result in monitoring that could result in overemphasizing parent's behavior instead of what is best for the child. In fact, one attorney listed the order of family-oriented goals as: (1) getting people to services; and (2) placement of children in the best environment possible.

**D. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

1. What makes case management difficult is ex parte communication. There is a lot of gray area procedurally on what should be done in that respect.
2. King County has challenges compared to other sites because of the split sites and changes over time. This site has had to develop and restructure and rework case management procedures. There are unique factors they have needed to overcome (e.g. technology) that will establish a nice model for others.
3. UFC is quite progressive in recognizing the non-traditional blended family models that are becoming more the norm. It is an incredible opportunity to help families, but needs more resources.
4. The focus of UFC is on parents as the only voice for the child and we need more focus on children's needs. It would be helpful to engage the network (e.g. schools).
5. It is still unclear how the juvenile offender piece fits into UFC. Additionally, from the December report, it is not clear if the State is looking to have UFC cover everything in family law, even if no children are involved. There is no money for training requirements and this has been a burden. The judges get no credit for their backgrounds and this makes it difficult to recruit experienced judges. Eight hours is required but nothing is available except judicial conferences.

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<sup>8</sup> Subsequent to the interviews, King secured one more case manager position.

6. It would be nice if UFC could be done for all family cases (i.e. one family courthouse where everything to do with relationships is in one place, including one-stop shopping and clear expectations).
7. Suggestions for new UFC jurisdictions: (1) Develop an evaluation process at the outset and take a snapshot of the system before startup; and (2) Figure out how to access consumers for feedback.
8. Training for case managers and judges in UFC is crucial. The case manager should have knowledge of services plus a legal background. UFC needs judges committed to family law and with more extensive training on specifics (dependency, child support calculations, etc.).
9. I'm glad it's there.

## § I.3 SNOHOMISH COUNTY PILOT SITE

### A. BACKGROUND

#### 1. Definition of UFC

The definition of UFC in Snohomish was similar to that of King, with a more specific focus on linking family law and dependency cases. The UFC model in Snohomish is very dependency driven in that, with typical UFC referrals, a parenting plan or modification needs to be finalized and/or paternity established in order to resolve the dependency cases for a family.

#### 2. Goals

In Snohomish, having the dependency case dismissed and assisting families in family law matters to move towards this were noted as goals. Other goals included better judicial decision making based on increased information, expedited case resolutions, and consistency due to case management and streamlined proceedings. Getting families legal assistance via dependency or other defense attorneys for family law matters was also addressed as a goal. Finally, informing parties so there is understanding of legal matters and expectations was listed.

#### 3. Strengths

The most oft noted strength was the UFC facilitator<sup>9</sup> who was deemed central to "keep things moving along." With the focus in Snohomish on resolving procedural difficulties in the family law action, the facilitator is the central contact person for all parties and is responsible for keeping all of the case information up to date. Other noted strengths included the co-location of family law and dependency cases and having one judicial officer hearing all of the matters associated with the family. The overall process worked well to move the dependencies along. The UFC was deemed better able to provide parents with a way to get an acceptable parenting plan completed.

#### 4. Weaknesses

The separate facilities in Snohomish were seen as a liability, particularly when there were domestic violence cases heard at the main courthouse ("downtown"). Because these cases are heard downtown in another facility, files are not easily accessible and are not routinely screened for UFC families. This did not seem to be an issue when there were dissolution and dependency cases only. It was also

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<sup>9</sup> As described below, the UFC facilitator in Snohomish is very similar to a UFC case manager in King County.

suggested that Snohomish broaden its UFC goals and scope to address other family matters and to focus on family outcomes other than case disposition.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

Expedient dismissal and/or resolution of cases due to collaboration and coordination were noted as rewarding. “In the startup phase, there was uncertainty and concern among the legal community. As time went on attorneys saw the benefits and wanted their cases to be in UFC to resolve dependency cases. Judges have appreciated having more information before making decisions. Some would not refer to UFC because their cases may end up in the control group” (S02). Most interviewees thought combining parties’ cases increases efficiency, although they had anticipated the scope of UFC would be broader. There were some complaints about unnecessary time spent in court and additional trips between locations.

### **1. Implementation/Startup**

The UFC in Snohomish was started as the result of the AOC pilot project grant. An executive committee/oversight team included an AAG, dependency and family law attorneys, a family court supervisor, DSHS, and a VGAL. The oversight team was involved with UFC planning and coordination.

### **2. Training**

There has been very little formal staff training specific to UFC in Snohomish County. Most has been on the job or informal training at meetings. It was suggested that new staff receive training on UFC legal issues and attend conferences pertaining to dependency, family law, and child development. UFC judicial officers have attended several local and state conferences pertaining to family and juvenile law, as well as VGAL and UFC training on the required topics. More UFC-oriented training was requested on working with multiple case types and child development.

### **3. Referrals**

Cases are identified for UFC when members of the same family have active family law and dependency cases, and a parenting plan is needed to dismiss the dependency or a dissolution of marriage is in process. The criteria for referral seem to be well understood, but too narrow. It was also suggested that marketing would help referral sources remember that UFC is an option.

“There is a referral form used by the court, attorneys, social workers, and VGALs, who give it to the UFC facilitator who then screens for UFC (see form in Appendix B). This could be at any point in the life of the dependency case. Some criteria have evolved from experience. For example, we screen so that children are placed with one of the parents and has had placement for at least three months so there is some stability with that placement. Sometimes if the case was coordinated too early the placement ends up not working out.” (S02).

#### **4. Resources**

##### **a. Facilities**

Guardian ad litem time was noted as limited. Although VGALs can be utilized efficiently if there is a dependency case, they are limited in number. Funding for attorney time to work on parenting plans is also a challenge. Other limited resources in this jurisdiction include supervised visitation, affordable drug and alcohol treatment, and psychological evaluations. Some felt the issue of treatment resources was almost irrelevant to the Snohomish UFC model since many parents have already completed required services for dependency cases by the time they are in UFC. However, it was also noted that lack of funding can even limit availability of DSHS services.

Childcare is not available onsite. Interviewees suggested that factors other than childcare typically prevent litigants from showing up. Transportation challenges were cited as a more typical issue. Concerns were expressed about liability and putting limited resources to better use. The co-location of cases in Snohomish is less complete than the other sites in that domestic violence cases cannot be heard at the juvenile courthouse. Similar to the RJC in King County, the Denney Justice Center was also described as “more accessible and less overwhelming,” than its downtown counterpart. Parking is also available and free. The lack of complete co-location in Snohomish was seen as a frustrating barrier.

##### **b. Information Management**

The case manager in Snohomish accesses SCOMIS and relevant files to gather complete information and case history. There is less direct contact with litigants by the case manager.

#### **5. Roles & Responsibilities**

##### **a. Judicial Officers**

It was noted that in Snohomish the judge presides over UFC dependency and family law proceedings, whereas in the usual system commissioners would have heard these matters until trial. Commissioners do not hear UFC matters once

they are designated as UFC. The judge is more informally involved in moving cases along and reviews may be set periodically to check in with players. There is more multi-tasking with difficult files and multiple cases. The judge has to think holistically (e.g. how will domestic violence affect the dissolution case?) instead of one case at a time, resulting in better time and case management. “Prior to UFC, family law cases were seen by commissioners in the front lines who would not know the juvenile cases” (J10). Now only two judges are involved with UFC cases. Judges are assigned to juvenile court for one year and this is staggered at six month intervals. They are assigned dependency cases during that time.

**b. Case Managers**

The case manager in Snohomish is also known as a UFC facilitator. (The UFC facilitator is to be distinguished from the clerk’s office family law facilitator program, which provides assistance to self-represented parties with their family law cases and is located in the downtown courthouse). The UFC facilitator screens incoming referrals for UFC criteria, develops family legal profile and identifies legal steps for parties to enter parenting plan, and child support. The UFC facilitator also schedules UFC hearings, staffs UFC planning conferences, compiles and tracks UFC program data, serves as the contact person for UFC and monitors cases to ensure parties and attorneys are doing what is required. There is no direct contact with the treatment providers, just documentation from the social worker, parties, or VGALs. Data gathered by the UFC facilitator is used to give updates for the court at review hearings. The UFC facilitator is more proactive with court (than usual specialists/social workers in dependency cases) and organizes and coordinates proceedings.

**c. Facilitators**

The family law court facilitators work for the clerk’s office. They provide family law pro se litigants with procedural assistance, conduct pro se dissolution workshops, and review documents before presentation to the court. Domestic violence clerks are co-located and help individuals obtain protection orders.

**d. County Clerk’s Office**

The role of the clerk’s office is generally not different because of UFC, although the cooperation of clerk staff was viewed as essential to the success of UFC in all sites.

The clerk’s office in Snohomish supervises the facilitators, docketed UFC matters, and help get files transported for UFC proceedings. They were instrumental in helping UFC deal with domestic violence transfers of jurisdiction. The Clerk’s

office in Snohomish has worked with UFC to set up procedures to get files. It was suggested that they provide facilitators on site at the Denney Justice Center.

**e. Assistant Attorney General**

The AAG is the attorney working with the DCFS social worker in dependency cases. They attend all dependency and UFC hearings. The AAG and social worker need to review and approve parenting plans before dependency case can be dismissed. The AAG and social worker also attend settlement conferences. They help the social worker look at parenting plans for compliance with legal requirements under RCW 26.09.181. If there are still dependency requirements, they ensure the parenting plan addresses those.

**f. Social Workers**

The social workers for DCFS work with parents regarding services pertaining to dependency cases, make referrals, and check on compliance. They provide the main link to service providers. They are also there to approve the parenting plan and to make sure it provides for the safety of the child, whereas they would not typically do this in the family law arena.

**g. County Prosecutor**

In some paternity actions prosecutors are involved if the state has an interest in the case. This may be in a modification or dissolution if there is a financial interest (e.g. public assistance). They can help with paternity and child support. The role is not different in UFC, but they may be more proactive in getting modifications filed.

**h. CASA/VGAL**

Snohomish County has a VGAL program. A VGAL appointed in some dependency cases to have “extra eyes and ears” on the case. They review parenting plans and offer changes. Sometimes they will attend settlement conferences. When the UFC facilitator position was cut to halftime in 2003, the position was filled by an employee who was also the halftime coordinator of the VGAL program.

**i. Guardian ad Litem (GAL)**

The GAL is appointed in some family law cases and all private paternity actions. They interview parties and recommend appropriate parenting plans. Sometimes a GAL and VGAL is the same person. Only a small percentage of litigants get a GAL appointed, usually families with high conflict, or history with a GAL, or as necessary in private paternity actions.

**j. Private Attorneys**

Attorneys may be: (1) appointed or hired dependency attorneys that contract with the county for dependency defense. These attorneys may be involved or appointed to help with parenting plans; or (2) private attorneys hired to help with family law portion of UFC case, but there are not many of these. It depends on whether the judge orders them to help in family law matters, which has been happening increasingly in this county.

**C. OBJECTIVES**

**1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

In Snohomish, the two judges assigned to one-year juvenile court rotations preside over UFC cases. Once a family is considered assigned to UFC, they are seen by one judge and no commissioners. Settlement conferences are seen by the other UFC judge in case they go to trial later. If there is a multi-day trial, the assigned UFC judge may go uptown (to the main courthouse) for trial. The family may have appeared before other judicial officers prior to UFC acceptance. In Snohomish, “the roles are necessarily consistent because it is the same judge.” The focus is on domestic orders required to dismiss a dependency. Judges have access to all case information and know exactly what is needed for a parenting plan (e.g. drug and alcohol evaluation). UFC has not seemed to impact judicial awareness of services due to the nature of the model. Because these involve dependency matters, DCFS social workers are involved with referrals and typically much of this work is complete before families are considered “UFC.”

**2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

**a. Caseflow**

In Snohomish, the case flow depends on the complexity and level of agreement between parents. New placements for children may not work out, and this can slow down the process. A typical caseflow is as follows:

- 1) Referral to UFC.
- 2) Screening by UFC facilitator.
- 3) Facilitator develops family legal profile of all relevant recent legal actions.
- 4) Identify necessary legal actions and make recommendations to court to accept them.
- 5) Planning conference: review compliance with services; identify steps and deadlines for next review hearing.
- 6) Coordinate schedules of hearings and reviews on monthly basis. Reminders may be sent.

7) Parenting plan finalized and case resolved.

## **b. Proceedings**

### *Planning Conference*

Parties are expected to attend a UFC planning conference, UFC review hearings, dependency case hearings, and settlement conferences or trials if applicable. Planning conferences are held to identify legal steps necessary to establish parenting plans, to review compliance with services, and to coordinate future hearings. Goals and steps for the next review are established and broken down for parties. This is the first time all players are in one room. Strategies to move cases towards resolution are laid out.

### *UFC Calendar*

Snohomish UFC has a Monday morning calendar for UFC planning conferences and review hearings, and cases are “linked” so as to be heard together on this calendar, although dependency cases may go through the “regular” calendar process prior to UFC involvement. Cases could include dependency, dependency for siblings and step siblings, adult criminal, domestic violence, dissolution, paternity, and juvenile offender. The dependency case(s) is seen as the primary case.

## **c. Case Consolidation**

At the planning conference, determination is made as to what cases will be linked and an order is entered. In SCOMIS, cases are linked by order when a case enters UFC so that calendars can be coordinated. The court monitors progress towards entering a parenting plan and directs further action. Similar to King, Snohomish may also use review hearings to review compliance with orders and this is coordinated with other hearings. Progress towards goals is monitored with a focus on parenting plans. It was noted that this model works best if specific deadlines are set for parties.

## **d. Case Management and Expediency**

Because Snohomish is focused on finalizing parenting plans, interviewees perceived dependency cases as resolving more quickly than they would have without UFC intervention and specifically, the monitoring by the UFC case manager. “Regarding case management by the UFC facilitator: the system would fall apart without it” (J10). The facilitator is on top of “what happens next” (A12). All cases are heard by one judge and at the same location, which makes more sense to litigants. There is less of a burden on litigants, less time is taken from work, and there is less worry about transportation because cases are coordinated.

Parties see progress towards goals via steps and parenting plans. Litigants are given more focus and the facilitator helps them understand all components of their cases. The dependency attorney also gains a better understanding of all issues.

### **3. Objective #3: Better Access To and Coordination Of Services**

#### **a. Access to Services**

The general consensus is that Snohomish UFC does not improve access to or coordination of services in Snohomish because it is such a dependency driven model. One judicial officer remarked that the approach is simply more focused and unified, with more clear direction towards completion. Cases are not assigned to UFC until they are stable so services may have been ordered and compliance issues addressed prior to UFC involvement.

Services typically ordered for families prior to their UFC involvement may include:

- 1) Parenting classes
- 2) Drug and alcohol assessment
- 3) Drug and alcohol treatment (and/or AA)
- 4) Domestic violence assessment
- 5) Anger management assessment and class
- 6) Individual mental health counseling
- 7) Family preservation services
- 8) Parenting evaluation
- 9) Psychological or mental health assessment
- 10) Urinalysis: Random or day of court hearing

#### **b. Attendance**

Both the Snohomish UFC coordinator and DCFS social workers attend court proceedings. The coordinator sets the stage for the case and gives an update on status. Treatment providers do not usually attend court proceedings. Participants bring certificates and/or social workers (or VGALs) give updates on compliance.

#### **c. Service Needs**

At the point of acceptance into UFC, dependency cases are moving towards dismissal and services may be in place or even completed. Other needs may be identified later. Additional service needs are identified by social workers, VGALs, and attorneys involved with the dependency cases.

#### **4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

ADR is rarely, if ever, utilized because of the dependency driven model in Snohomish's UFC. Settlement conferences may be used if both parents are involved and cannot agree on a parenting plan or residential schedule. Historically, dependency cases do not use ADR and one judicial officer felt it would not be effective when issues of abuse and neglect are present.

#### **5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

##### **a. Modifications**

It was generally felt that there would not be much change in post-resolution litigation or compliance with orders attributable to UFC because of the model in Snohomish.

##### **b. Compliance**

Since UFC is dependency driven and becomes involved later in the life of cases, parties have either complied or not prior to their acceptance as UFC families. As noted by one interviewee, "It could make a huge difference if UFC accepted domestic-only cases." It was noted, however, that parties seem more willing to comply with expectations following the planning conference because they are more clearly communicated and better understood.

Compliance is generally monitored through required periodic dependency hearings. Follow up letters are sent to parties following the planning conference and proof of compliance is required. Such compliance is monitored by DCFS social workers more as a function of the dependency case than UFC, and compliance is often established by the time families are accepted into UFC.

#### **6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

##### **a. Desired Outcomes**

The desired outcomes for families in Snohomish UFC included:

- Dismissal of dependency cases.
- Putting a parenting plan together that establishes a stable and safe environment for children and keeps them out of the court system.
- Getting cases resolved more quickly.
- Getting appropriate services for parents.
- Moving to termination if cases cannot be resolved.

Reunification and the best interests of children were noted as goals pertaining to dependency cases.

**b. Current Benefits**

Reported current benefits to families include:

- Having multiple cases heard in one court (easier access).
- More oversight and guidance in required steps.
- One judge with access to the “big picture.”
- More expedient resolution [of dependency cases].
- Granting attorney time for help with parenting plans.

**c. Suggested Changes**

Suggestions to better serve families included UFC becoming more service-oriented (i.e. more oriented towards access to needed services), more work with high conflict cases, and better preparation of all parties prior to review hearings. Most of this would involve broadening the scope of UFC in Snohomish County. It was also suggested that social workers who primarily work with dependency cases could benefit from more training on the structure and procedures of family court.

**D. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

1. Parents feel better, safer, and more confident when parenting plans are in place to protect children (from other parent, etc.).
2. I would like to see UFC used for more case types instead of strictly as an administrative tool. It could be used for contested cases.

## § I.4 THURSTON COUNTY PILOT SITE

### A. BACKGROUND

#### 1. Definition of UFC

UFC cases are defined much more broadly in Thurston, as most or all cases heard in the Family and Juvenile Court building, although this definition varied slightly among interviewees. Concurrent calendars were listed as a *component* of UFC, as were managed cases (those needing a case manager to monitor ordered services), high conflict cases, and “anything involving families in this building.” Some interviewees included juvenile offender cases in the definition but most did not. Thurston was also described as a court that allows judicial officers to hear multiple matters and coordinate cases for one family. Since Thurston houses all of these proceedings under one roof, there was also a perception among some that UFC involved a “court in which family and juvenile proceedings are housed in one facility,” although one judicial officer noted that the building is not a necessary component, so long as files are available and moved between sites as needed. Training of judicial officers on family issues and coordination of services and cases were also emphasized for Thurston.

#### 2. Goals

A goal listed consistently in describing the UFC in Thurston was providing better service to families. One interviewee noted that this goal is achieved by “...having one judge per family and ensuring dedicated court staff to serve families and children.” Consistency, overall better judicial decision making, and judicial economy and efficiency were also stressed, as well as a problem-solving, holistic approach to working with families and better quality of judicial time.

#### 3. Strengths

The co-location of domestic and juvenile cases was clearly seen as a strength; however, this was noted as a helpful but not necessary component to the model. It was also stressed that the tenure of the commissioners and their familiarity with juvenile and family issues has been an asset to the program. Regarding timeliness, the change in trial scheduling for family law cases was seen as a strength. Family law matters were previously scheduled behind criminal and other civil cases and would frequently get “bumped” from trial dates.

#### 4. Weaknesses

Weaknesses noted for Thurston included lack of acceptance by some players, including some attorneys and judicial officers. Also, Thurston includes a shorter term rotation judicial position, making consistency difficult. The separation of

duties between the family law and juvenile commissioners was also viewed as inhibiting the broad perspective of the model.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

It was suggested that everyone working in UFC receive more training so as to understand the goals of UFC and the concurrent caseloads. More training specifically for attorneys and CASA/GALs was also suggested. A relevant issue was inability to appoint defense counsel on family law issues because of lack of cross-training and funding. Another related suggestion was more free education for pro se litigants. One judicial officer noted that the philosophical change of UFC means that every decision is based on more information to “best serve consumers” (J08). Attorneys in Thurston have found the trial calendaring system helpful in having at least one week advance notice of trial dates. Although this system was put into place prior to relocating to the new building, this was viewed by attorneys as a function of UFC. Settlement conferences and trials also seem to happen much more quickly because of case manager coordination.

Initially there was resistance to the UFC model among judges, who did not want to see dependency and domestic violence cases together because it was a change in protocol. Attorneys were also skeptical at first and did not want the court taking a hands on approach to social work and case management, although this has reportedly changed over time as they saw client outcomes improve and enhanced scheduling efficiency. Since a move into a new building coincided with the UFC startup, that seemed to be a focus of UFC from the attorneys’ perspective. Attorneys were focused on the benefits of specialized calendaring and parking, and seemed less aware of concurrent case management since it impacts very few of their cases.

### **1. Implementation/Startup**

The UFC in Thurston County was modeled somewhat after King County’s UFC and an early King County task force report was referenced in the development of Thurston’s UFC. Thurston County was planning a new detention center and decisions were being made as to remaining space. Family Court needed space and so a request was made to add courtroom space onto the detention site, essentially co-locating juvenile and family court under one roof. Thurston also formed an advisory committee that included a judge, two commissioners, the County Clerk, an administrator, members of the bar, assigned counsel, an assistant attorney general, a prosecutor, and the dispute resolution community. Policy changes are proposed to judges for approval. It was noted that all

stakeholders were not on board at the beginning, which would have been helpful. Thurston has adopted local court rules regarding concurrent jurisdiction in family and juvenile court cases (LSPR 94.01 & 94.02) and for judicial officer training (LSPR 94.08).<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Training**

Training needs listed for staff in Thurston include drug and alcohol treatment and available services, third party custody actions and criminal background checks, and required training in the same areas identified for judicial officers (child development, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, and diversity).

Judicial officers received required training and are able to attend the available lunchtime trainings. They are also active in NCJFCJ and attendance at national conferences was noted as improving decisions involving domestic violence and placement of children. More training was requested to meet the requirements defined in the local rule (LSPR 94.08 - see Appendix A). The judicial leadership training curriculum was suggested for all UFC judicial officers, as well as a 1-2 week orientation to UFC prior to beginning rotations.

## **3. Referrals**

Given the all-encompassing definition of UFC, the issue of referral was not applicable in Thurston. It was noted that referrals for case management are sometimes not made because of staffing limitations. At times, orders are entered to allow tracking of cases until they are closed. Clerks or others may identify concurrent cases. A definition of UFC, provided to the public on Thurston County's website, is available in Appendix B. There are no specific criteria for referral to case management, although families may be referred because of "high conflict" findings or non-compliance with orders. They could be referred by judicial officers, clerks, or the new facilitator.

## **4. Resources**

### **a. Facilities**

Resource limitations listed included mental health treatment and evaluation, domestic violence services, supervised visitation, social workers, parenting classes, housing, prescription drugs for mental health, and therapeutic daycare. Resources listed as most valuable were UFC case management, treatment resources (although it was noted that there is very little or no funding for

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A.

substance abuse treatment of low income dissolution parties who do not meet Department criteria for coverage), onsite drug testing (now available on the day of hearing), and the increased availability and sharing of information. It was noted that the clerk's office is an integral component to this flow of information via movement of files.

Although onsite childcare is not provided, toys are available in the courthouse hallways for entertainment during court proceedings. Interviewees suggested that childcare, either onsite or respite childcare in the community, would increase compliance with orders and services.

Thurston is unique in that all juvenile and family cases are co-located in one facility at the onset. There is also plenty of free parking; however, bus access is limited. Interviewees felt that the location of the new facility away from downtown allows for a calmer environment.

#### **b. Information Management**

The case manager is able to report on compliance via familiarity with the case, contact with social workers and treatment providers, and through direct contact with litigants.

### **5. Roles & Responsibilities**

#### **a. Judicial Officers**

In Thurston the UFC judge works somewhat as an administrator and has the final say regarding procedural changes or decisions. The judge also presides over revisions, settlement conferences, and trials. Judges are more aware of services and are proactive within the community. Judicial officers are responsible for awareness of multiple files related to a family and coordination of hearings. It was consistently noted that the commissioner role in UFC has the same unique characteristics of the judge's role in this setting. There are two commissioners in Thurston, one who deals primarily with family law matters and the other with juvenile offender, ARY, and dependency matters. When the case manager finds there are concurrent cases, chronology of the cases determines jurisdiction. If the dependency was first, the family's cases goes to that commissioner. If the dissolution was first, then other cases would go to the family law commissioner, with the exception of juvenile offender cases. The commissioners are seen as "front line" judicial officers.

There are two UFC judges. One has a two-year assignment to family court. The other judge is a rotating judge who is there for only two months. The

commissioners are said to provide more consistency since they do not rotate and therefore have the opportunity to become experts in their areas of family and juvenile law.

**b. Case Managers**

The case manager identifies concurrent cases, assigns them to the correct commissioner, and makes sure individuals are compliant with court orders. This position is challenging as the case manager is also serving as courthouse reception and is performing scheduling for the court. The case manager works closely with the family law commissioner and also writes reports, administers U/A's, monitors cases, and drafts letters for the judge to refer cases to CPS for investigation. The case manager identifies families with multiple cases and follows up to make sure parties are complying with ordered services, and helps them move to the next step. The case manager identifies and follows families identified as "high conflict." In Thurston, the case manager works more with the family law commissioner because the "dependency side" has social workers and CASA's.

**c. Facilitators**

The family court facilitators work for the clerk's office and primarily assist self-represented family law litigants with procedures and paperwork. This role is not different or specific to UFC. A court-based facilitator program was recently established by superior court. The court-based facilitator screens all cases, sorts them (e.g. by appropriateness for mediation), makes sure they are coordinated or linked when filed and that hearings are set (e.g. for temporary restraining order). The new model employs a "triage" approach, with parties appearing on the hearing date for a morning orientation and presentations made by the clerk-based facilitator and the local Family Support Center (regarding parenting classes). A dispute resolution center (DRC) representative is on site for free mediation sessions. The superior court facilitator reviews cases for the day and determines which ones are appropriate for mediation. Those still needing hearings will have one in the afternoon. The goals of this newly established position include:

- 1) Decrease the number of hearings.
- 2) Get to mediation more quickly.
- 3) Access parenting classes more quickly.
- 4) Decrease judicial officer time.

**d. County Clerk's Office**

The clerk's office assists in identifying families with multiple cases. They get additional files and schedule calendars. "They are the key to success in UFC because of the need for information" (J08). Training of clerk staff on the UFC model was noted as insufficient. They are invited to the lunchtime education program but do not attend regularly. There was also a need expressed for increased communication between the clerk's office and UFC. The request for cooperation would include regular meetings to discuss procedures and file needs for UFC and concurrent and other special calendars.

**e. Assistant Attorney General**

The AAGs rotate to different assignments and thus change often. In Thurston, the AAG is only involved if there is a dependency case and the role is no different. AAGs may be more instrumental in referring to paperwork to complete actions to finalize cases. They have helped get funds for lawyers to help with paperwork and may get involved in more adoptions because they take place in juvenile court (i.e. they are co-located with other cases). One interviewee stated that the AAG role is the same except they need to know more law than is typical.

**f. Social Workers**

Social workers in UFC are perceived as taking a more problem-solving approach and may appear on different case types. In the old system there may have been one social worker assigned to a CHINS and another to a dependency case for the same family. In UFC, one social worker attends one hearing, and all dependencies are scheduled on one day. One interviewee noted that the AAG and social worker are more "spectators" in UFC court and are active in the dependency portion only.

**g. County Prosecutor**

With child support, prosecutors in UFC are aware of other pending actions involving the same players. It was noted that with juvenile offender prosecution, there is not much difference because offender matters are not consolidated (J06). They are involved on the criminal side and with paternity cases and there is no difference (J08).

**h. CASA or VGAL**

They speak for children in dependency matters like a GAL, but volunteer. In UFC there is some overlap between the work of CASAs and GALs if there is more than one action pending. CASAs are appointed on every dependency and

GALs for family law matters if appropriate. If there are two assigned, they will consult each other, although having the same one do both was noted as ideal. The work is essentially the same but training in new areas would be appropriate.

**i. Guardian ad litem (GAL)**

In family law cases the GAL role is to investigate parent-child relationships and report to the court any recommendations. In UFC, they may be transferred to a dependency case if already assigned to the family.

**j. Private Attorneys**

Attorney roles are the same but the UFC model and the facility force specialization and the players know each other well in the juvenile and family court arenas. If there are multiple actions, they are likely to be involved and the expectation is that they will focus more on problem solving. In UFC, attorneys need to be able to deal with a multitude of proceedings and to prepare for different possible outcomes. Attorneys reported appreciating the building, the availability of parking, and having long-term rotation judges. There are ample meeting rooms and all of their work is done in one building. There is typically only one judicial officer to educate on multiple cases and they do not need to argue the same facts repeatedly. One attorney noted that they have become more like facilitators and there is less litigation with some of the specialty programs (e.g. drug court). Attorneys are more likely to ask about drug and DV issues and to recommend their clients get evaluations before they are seen in court. Attorneys are appointed to represent parties in family law cases only if the party may face sanctions of jail time (e.g. contempt of child support), and contracted public defense attorneys are used for this. There are also contracts for dependency cases and juvenile contracts for public defense.

**C. OBJECTIVES**

**1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

There are two judges and two commissioners assigned to the juvenile and family court in Thurston. Judges hear motions for revision, trials, and settlement conferences, while commissioners work on cases prior to trial. Typically a family with concurrent cases is seen by one commissioner and one judge. The “longer-term” (two year) judges have volunteered for these extended rotations.

It was noted that the UFC model in Thurston has made a difference in that compliance with orders is monitored by the case manager. With respect to

concurrent cases, the same judicial officer works with both and so is making orders based on more complete family information. With regard to rotation, there was a level of consistency prior to UFC because the commissioners were the same. However, attorneys and pro se litigants could “shop around” by scheduling revision motions to reach a particular judge for a desired outcome. This is no longer possible since one judge (the long-term rotation judge) hears all the motions to revise. It was noted that the “laptop orders” used by one commissioner provide consistency and orders that are clear and easy to follow. (This commissioner uses a laptop to write tailored orders during hearings; orders are printed and signed on the spot.) Judicial awareness of services has increased in Thurston because of seminars and increased communication with providers and between judicial officers because of co-location. The long-term rotation judges have benefited the most from this.

## **2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

### **a. Caseflow**

This case flow example is from a case management perspective and assumes there is a dissolution case filed in Thurston UFC.

- 1) Cases are identified as UFC (concurrent caseload). If the case shows on the calendar of a commissioner, and the case manager or commissioner is aware that there is an additional case pending, the second case is transferred to the commissioner assigned to the first case.
- 2) The UFC case manager monitors court orders in managed cases.
- 3) One judicial officer hears everything on temporary orders until the case is completed.
- 4) The case manager monitors compliance until requirements are satisfied.

### **b. Proceedings**

#### ***Orientation***

With the addition of the new facilitator position, parties attend an “orientation.” Evaluation and/or services may be expected and required. Thurston does not utilize planning conferences, but may have review hearings to assess compliance as necessary.

#### ***Review Hearings***

Planning conferences are not a component of the UFC model in Thurston. Review hearings may be set for entry of orders and to monitor cases, but are primarily used to assess compliance and establish a structure for accountability. It was noted that more compliance hearings are needed in family law cases but

that there are not enough resources. Parties in dissolution cases are expected to attend a four hour parenting class and attempt mediation if there is dispute about the parenting plan. Other appearances depend on case types and requirements. An individual involved in a dissolution and dependency case may be required to attend both dependency and concurrent calendars.

#### ***Program Specific Calendars***

Parties involved with Thurston specialty courts may be required to attend regular calendars such as Family Drug Court and Dependency Drug Court.

#### **c. Case Consolidation**

Families with multiple cases in Thurston may have cases linked and assigned to a concurrent calendar with one judicial officer. ARY, CHINS, domestic violence, third party custody, and paternity cases may be bundled. In Thurston, both commissioners are allotted one half day per week for concurrent calendars and also have special calendars for treatment courts and domestic violence.

#### **d. Case Management and Expediency**

The focus in Thurston has traditionally been more on the quality of case outcomes than on expediency, although case completions and trial dates were viewed as happening more quickly with fewer scheduling setbacks. The case manager assigns settlement conference dates and coordinates schedules for trial. The case manager will call parties and attorneys, setting a deadline if cases are not moving forward.

It was noted that litigants seem to appreciate the guidance they receive via case management. Other benefits listed by interviewees included having a more informed decision maker, increased access to services, more information, and a central contact person. As one attorney stated, "Litigants are more involved and less confused about the process." (A04)

### **3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

#### **a. Access to Services**

It was generally felt that UFC has improved access to services via the case manager, and that judicial officers are more aware of non-compliance. The lunchtime education program has enhanced awareness of local services among attorneys, judges, and social workers. Access to services can be difficult because of lack of insurance and affordable and available services. Some programs, such as inpatient treatment, have long waiting lists. The "one-stop shop" approach is designed to improve coordination of services. According to interviewees,

however, the one-stop shop is not occurring for all cases as planned, although appointments do get set up for services at shelter care hearings.

Services ordered typically include:

- 1) Substance abuse evaluation and treatment
- 2) Domestic Violence assessment
- 3) Parenting classes
- 4) Mental health counseling
- 5) Psychological evaluation
- 6) Anger management
- 7) Urinalysis

**b. Attendance**

In Thurston, the UFC case manager attends court hearings when necessary, but otherwise does not typically attend. The case manager may file declarations regarding compliance. An exception to this is Family Treatment Court, which the UFC case manager does attend and is actively involved in presenting cases. DCFS social workers attend dependency reviews and Dependency Drug Court. Treatment providers attend these two specialty courts, but do not typically appear for concurrent or other UFC calendars. Letters and other documents pertaining to compliance are forwarded to the court, and the UFC case manager is actively involved with monitoring compliance via phone calls with providers.

**c. Service Needs**

Service needs may arise at the initial custody hearing, or in a dependency case, during fact finding. Initially, the commissioner and GAL may identify service needs for domestic cases. Attorneys may identify and recommend services needs for parties and DCFS social workers identify needs in dependency cases. CASAs and defense counsel may also identify service needs. It was suggested that the new facilitator orientation will help litigants identify needs earlier on. Prior to the new orientation, service needs in family law cases may not have been identified until if and when a GAL was appointed, often much later in the process. The court has no standardized protocols to identify service needs. DSHS social workers have some screening tools to determine referrals.

**4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

Mediation is encouraged and utilized regularly in Thurston. The court has a grant that allows two free sessions of mediation by a local firm. There is a push to have mediation even more available right at the courthouse as part of the

“orientation” process. One obstacle to ADR listed was that grant funding gets utilized by “regular cases” and may not be available for those with higher conflict. “Family conferencing” is sometimes used to try and get families to their own resolution to avoid finding dependency. It was suggested that this could be used more by DSHS. On the juvenile side, there are frequent referrals to DRC to work with victims. It was also noted that the system requires parties to “show cause” to implement a temporary parenting plan, which sets the stage for a more adversarial model. It was suggested by one interviewee that dissolution could be handled via administrative hearings to avoid going through the court unless it becomes necessary. (In Washington, superior court has exclusive jurisdiction in dissolution of marriage proceedings.)

## **5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

### **a. Modifications**

Originally, it was intended that with one judicial team and less opportunity to manipulate, litigants would return to court less often. It was unclear to interviewees whether this is the case. The case manager may show cause for non-compliance, possibly increasing post-resolution activity in the form of modifications. As per attorneys interviewed, “Cases post-trial are often resolved on the show-cause calendar.” (A03) Decisions are more consistent because of the links made between cases. The new orientation process at Thurston is expected to decrease early case conflict. More education for litigants regarding what can and cannot be changed post-decree was suggested to prevent future unnecessary proceedings.

### **b. Compliance**

Interviewees at Thurston unanimously expressed the perception of increased compliance among litigants because of judicial and case manager monitoring, as well as the added availability of courthouse U/A’s. One attorney felt that case management simply “gets the horse to water” more quickly, making services more clear and accessible, whereas the actual compliance remains the responsibility of the litigant. The case manager is clearly a key element in monitoring compliance. Parties sign releases so that treatment providers and others can be contacted, and the case manager is then able to communicate regularly with service providers and schedule hearings if there is non-compliance. Compliance with orders is monitored in several ways:

- 1) The case manager receives a letter of compliance weekly or monthly from providers.
- 2) Random U/As in which the case manager calls and has parties report by

5:00 that day.

- 3) Weekly reports from providers presented for those participating in Family Treatment Court.

## **6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

### **a. Desired Outcomes**

Some desired outcomes include:

- Compliance with services ordered.
- Increased accountability.
- Judicial officers with more complete information and better decision making ability, especially with concurrent cases.

### **b. Current Benefits**

Both the benefits and desired outcomes for families in Thurston UFC seem to depend on the programs and services they are involved in. Those with managed cases are more likely to complete treatment and are held accountable via case monitoring, while those on concurrent calendars have one judicial officer with more complete information and decision making ability. It was also noted that better trained judicial officers with holistic approaches also make better decisions generally. Other benefits of UFC perceived by interviewees included:

- More financially efficient.
- Larger pro se calendar.
- Trials occur within 8 months instead of 2 years.
- Cheaper U/A's (about \$7 instead of \$100).
- County pays GAL.

### **c. Suggested Changes**

It was suggested that the new court-based facilitator will help with earlier intervention and problem-solving. "UFC could develop a panel of attorneys that is experienced in juvenile litigation." (A01) Other suggestions included a parenting seminar, increased case management, a pro se calendar with lawyer priority, and more education on legal issues for litigants.

## **D. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

1. Sometimes knowing players is the key to UFC.
2. Thurston's UFC has made changes in how child and family cases are handled

in court, and has raised the stature of the work of family and juvenile law. The data may not reflect this because there was an influx of pro se litigants around the same time UFC was developing. There have also been coinciding problem-solving approaches and other system changes must be considered.

3. Other jurisdictions that do not have the luxury of one building can go a long way to develop a UFC via philosophy, mindset, and file transfers. The physical building (co-locating) is nice, but decision-making and information flow can happen without it.

4. We should increase the use of local resources to do background checks (on petitioner) in 3rd party custody cases.

5. We should be able to schedule more time for a settlement conference (2-3 hours). One hour is not enough for a complicated fact pattern. Having the judge present would be better than getting back to them later.

#### E. SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Thurston UFC provides two family treatment courts, one for parents in dependency proceedings, and one for parents in family law matters.

##### 1. Dependency Drug Court

Dependency Drug Court (DDC) was presented as a strength-based approach to dependency case processing. DDC addresses visitation, placement, and treatment all in one place with the involvement of social services. A referral form is filled out and reviewed by the team. Clients begin the process by waiving confidentiality and agreeing to participate.

The commissioner in DDC reviews reports, participates in pre-conference and court hearings, continues hearing the dependency case, shelter care hearings, and may invite clients to observe DDC (recruiting and referring). When dependency is established DCFS social workers follow until there is a permanent plan established and completed (same as regular court). There is more court (e.g. AAGs may have to be in court twice in the same day) and preparation time because there are hearings every week (estimates 8-12 hours more work per week). However, there is a reported decrease in *total* hearings per case over time. Caseloads for social workers are adjusted so these count as 1.5 cases each for Department purposes. The CASA director attends every week and participates. One contract attorney comes to pre-conferences and encourages clients to join the

DDC program.

The staff has found the collaborative environment of Dependency Drug Court rewarding. Other perceived advantages of DDC listed by staff were:

- Shared decision making and better access to community resources.
- Lower recidivism for families entering the system (only 2 have come back).
- Permanency is quicker for the kids.
- There is a higher rate of children returning home.
- It is a less adversarial model (for example, some parents have chosen to relinquish rights instead of trial) and there is more open adoption.

For dependency drug court it was noted that criteria are somewhat loose, with no referral or acceptance matrix. Parties of shelter care hearings are required to attend and observe DDC 2-3 times and they may choose not to participate, but most opt for DDC. One issue expressed was that the “non-drug involved party” (e.g. spouse, child) does not have the opportunity to opt out of this process. Dependency drug court has increased efficiency because DSHS and the treatment provider are “here and participate (J08).” Because there is a grant (UFC, Department, and the treatment provider), more services are set aside for these families. There are weekly reports from the treatment provider on Tuesday mornings and clients report on their week in court. These are filed and discussed at pre-conferences on Wednesday.

## **2. Domestic/Family Law Drug Court**

The domestic/family drug court (FDC) focuses on domestic cases and is very similar in model to the dependency drug court described above. One difference is that dependency issues are not the driving force in FDC, which means that social services are not directly involved with this court. Parties may be individuals involved in custody or visitation difficulties that are related to substance abuse. The UFC case manager is involved with tracking FDC cases, communicating directly with treatment providers and litigants, and participates actively during the weekly proceedings. Updates are given to the judicial officer on each participant in the courtroom by the case manager during every session. The judicial officer takes an active role in verbally reinforcing behavior that demonstrates litigants are moving towards established goals (e.g. actively engaging in treatment).

## **Section II. KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

### **A. BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

Interviews were also conducted with a list of key stakeholders. These interviews consisted of a more general and open-ended discussion of UFC as it pertains to policy recommendations, strengths and weaknesses of the program, and funding issues. A list of questions and the key stakeholders interviewed is in Appendix C. These interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Themes that emerged in conducting these interviews were as follows.

### **B. EMERGENT THEMES**

#### **1. Perception of the Family and Juvenile Court Systems**

The UFC model seemed innovative yet intuitive to most for families with multiple case types and allows for earlier and more effective judicial intervention. Coordination of cases and consistency of judicial officers prevents conflicting orders and moves cases, particularly dependency cases towards resolution more quickly. The screening process brings a family's multiple issues together and gives judicial officers full information in larger jurisdictions. This holistic approach was viewed as a shift in attitude for the court, from *reactive* to *proactive*. The traditional "pigeon holing" or case by case approach was viewed as spending time on redundant matters with no cohesive direction. Judicial education was regarded by stakeholders as a necessary component towards the goal of enhanced decision making. The list of topics referenced in RCW 26.12.804 has been helpful in designing training curricula.

#### **2. UFC and Resources**

Stakeholders unanimously felt that UFC is a wise use of public resources, and resources are needed to effectively implement any of the models studied in this pilot. The key stakeholder interviews were conducted following the decision by Snohomish County to discontinue their program in June 2005. This decision was based on the county's inability to fund the 1.0 FTE necessary to coordinate UFC cases (this position had already been cut to a 0.5 FTE by the county the previous year).

It is expected that better informed decisions and case management will reduce later stress on social services, thus resources spent on UFC are viewed as long-term investments. Cost-benefit analysis to support this opinion was requested.

Co-location, when feasible, was viewed as an asset for UFC, and a liability of jurisdictions without the ability to co-locate cases. Coordination with a committed clerk's office was viewed as essential in this situation. It is necessary to identify and coordinate multiple case types in a system where it is difficult to identify cases by family and some files are sealed. Case management was perceived as essential to UFC, regardless of the model. Case managers involve families in the process to insure understanding and accountability.

### **3. Public Relations**

Public relations was seen as essential to gain support for UFC from the Bench, especially for a program that requires resources. Suggestions were to emphasize quality and savings through continued study of the qualitative model and cost. Family law attorney forums and CLEs that focus on UFC were suggested for outreach to stakeholders. A family law newsletter focusing on the UFC model was also suggested. Information for the general public was viewed as more difficult, yet equally important. A pamphlet that describes the UFC model was suggested to improve the awareness of litigants, referral sources and attorneys.

### **4. Recommended Policy Changes**

- Establish a state court rule for long-term rotations for UFC judicial officers in jurisdictions of substantial size (e.g. four or more judges).
- Legislation regarding specific information sharing and use would eliminate guesswork for all parties. This could include schools and history on all dependency case parties. It could be mandated that judges be given information on all open cases for a family when children are involved, in addition to information and history on all dependency cases.
- Development of information systems that address the UFC model and give users the ability to screen for and review cases in detail.
- State funding for UFC staff was recommended.

### **5. UFC Strengths**

Listed strengths included:

- There is an expressed commitment and enthusiasm of UFC judges. UFC has also provided an opportunity for judicial officers working in the areas of family and juvenile law to learn from each other, both within and between jurisdictions. Communication has occurred regarding case management, procedural issues, and approaches to handling multiple

- complex cases for one family simultaneously.
- A core group of judges are able to focus on family law issues. UFC judges become quite savvy in family law and understand what *will work* through experience.
  - The collaboration among parties was listed as a strength of the UFC model, which is a step away from the adversarial process that was viewed as not always appropriate for families. Proceedings such as planning conferences take a problem-solving approach and are not focused exclusively on procedural trial issues. Such collaboration was perceived as being associated with increased accountability for all parties.
  - Dedicated staff is needed to assist families in accessing services, not merely distribution of referral lists. This was perceived as crucial for families who may need additional guidance. Having service providers on site was viewed as ideal.
  - Enhanced information for decision making.
  - Longer rotations and judicial commitment.

## 6. Areas for Improvement

Areas for improvement mentioned were:

- Availability of judicial training.
- More non-judicial staff (e.g. case managers) and dedicated resources are needed to address multiple cases and enhance availability to more families. Resources are lacking for parents who are unable to pay for required evaluation, treatment, and urinalysis.
- Staffing could be better geared towards the UFC model. For example, GAL's and CASA's could work together in gathering information on overlapping cases.
- There was concern expressed regarding the "one judge one family" concept that in reality is more of a "one judicial team" approach. For example, in King County, families may continue to see various commissioners for difficult case types, with less of a holistic approach to case processing. It was noted that a true unified approach requires more consistency. Some cases (e.g. domestic violence protection orders) may not be viewed as complex, but could benefit from being addressed in conjunction with other cases via screening.
- Clarify and clearly state policies pertaining to confidentiality and ex parte communication.
- More communication with the social services community was suggested. Feedback regarding referrals and what is needed to accomplish their goals

- in assessment, treatment, etc., was recommended.
- More clarity is needed regarding the referral process (this comment was specific to King County). A simplification of the referral and acceptance process was recommended, including a form and protocol.<sup>11</sup>

## **7. Summary**

Some UFC concepts - such as information management - were perceived as not applicable to small counties, yet quite essential to larger courts such as King, in which judicial officers and facilities are spread out and families can easily “slip through the cracks.” However, the concept of better informed decision making via enhanced judicial education applies to jurisdictions of all sizes. UFC coordination allows for increased efficiency, yet requires more immediate resources in pursuit of long-term goals.

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<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, this has subsequently been done in King County.

### **Section III. PRACTITIONER SURVEY**

#### **A. BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

In August 2001 surveys were mailed to family court practitioners, as identified by the site coordinators in each of the three UFC pilot counties (King, Snohomish, and Thurston). Survey recipients included attorneys (attorneys general, prosecutors, public defenders, and private lawyers), advocates (BECCA representatives, guardians ad litem, family law CASA/VGAL [court-appointed special advocates] staff and volunteers), social workers, juvenile probation counselors, family court services staff, and others (such as mediators, commissioners, mental health practitioners).

A total of 356 surveys were mailed, and a follow-up was conducted to encourage action by those who did not respond to the initial mailing. The final response rate was 58.4%, with 208 completed surveys returned.<sup>12</sup> The survey was comprised of four major question areas in which respondents were asked to rate various objectives or outcomes on a categorical scale. In the discussion below, the survey results are presented in terms of the six UFC objectives, with reference back to the original survey question. One can see the complete tabulation of responses is listed in Tables 2-4 through 2-11 at the end of this section. Further breakdowns by practitioner type and site follow. For the most part, responses were consistent across both sites and practitioner specialties. The exceptions are noted in the discussion below.

#### **B. OBJECTIVES**

##### **1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

One of the objectives of UFC is to ideally have the same judge presiding over all of the families issues from start to finish. This objective was addressed indirectly in the survey via two questions. The first question (Q2.1) asked about "continuity of judicial oversight" in the UFC setting. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents felt that the UFC setting was better in establishing this continuity. As a group, attorneys were the most positive (86%) with respect to continuity whereas social workers were the least positive (64%). Among the sites, 86% of all respondents in Snohomish felt that the UFC was better in this area.

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<sup>12</sup> The survey instrument, additional respondent information, and response frequencies are located in Appendix D.

For the second question (Q4.1), the majority of respondents (87%) felt that the UFC had fewer or about the same number of judicial officers per case, with an even split between the two responses (44% and 43% respectively). King and Thurston County figures generally mirror that split. However, the subset of practitioners who have experience with both UFC and non-UFC family cases in the past 12 months (and therefore are the most qualified to make a comparison) more frequently reported fewer (54%) judicial officers in UFC. That finding is mirrored in Snohomish County's 49% "fewer" response.

Around 66% of respondents felt that "Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues" (Q2.4) was better in the UFC. Here again attorneys as a group were above the mean and social workers below. In Thurston County, 80% of respondents rated the UFC as better in this area.

One of the most distinct and important findings is the strong majority consensus that UFC produces fewer inconsistent or conflicting orders (Q4.3). This was affirmed by 75% of all practitioners and 86% of those with recent experience in both UFC and non-UFC. It held up impressively across all types of practitioners (attorneys, advocates, and social workers) and in all three counties. This is an example where objective #1 overlaps with objective #2 - namely that better informed judicial decision-making is equivalent to improved efficiency.

Finally, although the question did not pertain to judicial officers per se, 81% of respondents felt that the UFC was 'Better' in "Handling of families with multiple active cases" (Q2.5). Yet again, attorneys and social workers represented the high and low range, although again all being positive overall. Among the sites, 90% of respondents in Thurston County rated the UFC as better in this area.

## **2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

Several of the survey questions can be classified as addressing this UFC objective area. As implied in the last paragraph under objective #1, the question regarding the handling of families with multiple active cases could fit under this objective as well. Reiterating, respondents overall were very positive with respect to UFC in this area. Respondents were also positive overall with respect to the UFC environment being better for the "Resolution of procedural difficulties" (Q2.2) and for the "Scheduling of events for case disposition" (Q2.10), providing 65% and 62% favorable rating respectively. Among sites, Snohomish came in particularly strong in both of these areas, with 78% and 81% favorable ratings respectively.

The majority of respondents (62%) felt that the UFC setting was no different when it came to trial date certainty (Q2.12), although 50% of respondents in Thurston County felt that it was better. With respect to continuances (Q4.2) and court appearances (Q4.5):

- Continuances - 58% of social workers reported there are fewer continuances in UFC. All other practitioners tended toward ranking continuances as the same, but with “fewer” the second most-common response.
- Appearances in court - Again, the most common response across all practitioner groups and all counties was “about the same.” However, this item yielded a higher rate of “more” responses (26% for all practitioners, 29% for those with experience in both settings, and 16-31% in the individual counties) than did other items.

Strong majority positions did not emerge with respect to questions regarding time (Q3.1 & Q3.2). Respondents were split fairly evenly between the view that UFC requires about the same amount of time for case resolution (40%) and the view that it requires less time (37%). Similarly, permanency in dependency cases was deemed to require about the same time by 41% of respondents, but less time by 40% of respondents.

By county, however, the trends become a bit more distinct. King County respondents leaned slightly toward the perception that case resolution requires the same (43%) or more (33%) time in the UFC setting. In contrast, a clear majority of Snohomish County respondents (70%) stated UFC case resolution requires less time. Thurston respondents split between the same (51%) and less time (44%). These differences are undoubtedly tied to the three pilot programs’ varying structures and scope of activity.

King County’s responses regarding time required for permanency in dependency cases didn’t yield any clear consensus, with roughly a third falling into each view (less, the same, more). A majority (76%) of Snohomish respondents stated permanency requires less time, while a majority (74%) of Thurston respondents stated it is about the same.

### **3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

A slight majority (53%) of respondents rated the UFC as better with respect to the court ordering appropriate services (Q2.7). Those with recent UFC experience

were more positive in this regard (61%), whereas only 40% of social workers rated the UFC better. Respondents gave Thurston County relatively higher marks in this area (63%).

A majority of respondents (57%) indicated that a UFC setting was better for "court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system" (Q2.3). Thurston was again a standout in this regard with 83% rating the UFC setting as better in this area. Among practitioner groups, those with recent experience and attorneys represented the high end of the range (62% and 68% respectively) whereas only 35% of social workers rated UFC as better.

On the issue of compliance with services ordered, a majority of respondents (62%) indicated that UFC was no different with respect to "compliance of the parties with court-ordered services" (Q2.8). With respect to "hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services" (Q4.4), the dominant response across all sites and professional groups was that such hearings are "about the same" as in the non-UFC setting. The second most-common response was "fewer." Only very low percentages (ranging from 16% to 3%) reported more of these hearings.

#### **4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

Only one question addressed the use of alternative dispute resolution (Q2.11). Overall, the majority of respondents (60%) rated the UFC as no different in this area. Thurston County was the exception, with 54% of respondents rating the use of ADR as better under the UFC.

#### **5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

UFC was largely rated as no different from a non-UFC setting in respect to the following goals:

- (Q2.13) -Post-resolution child support compliance (80% of respondents)
- (Q2.14) - Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (residential and visitation schedule) (63%)

Post-Resolution Domestic Violence Occurrences (Q4.6): Strong majorities across all counties and all types of practitioners (ranging from 67% to 81%) felt post-resolution domestic violence occurrences were about the same in the UFC setting. However, roughly a quarter of respondents in all groups thought there were fewer, and only negligible percentages (ranging from 1% to 4%) reported more in the UFC setting.

Post Resolution Petitions and Appearances (Q4.7): Similarly, fairly strong majorities (ranging from 55% - 77%) emerged for the “about the same” response to post-resolution petitions and appearances. As with other questions, there was a solid second-place showing for “fewer,” with negligible reporting of “more” post-resolution activity in the UFC setting. Social workers were the most pronounced group in rating UFC as yielding less post-resolution activity (45% “fewer”; 55% - “about the same”).

Practitioners were asked to rate the UFC setting with respect to 'impairing family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions' (Q2.15). The majority (62%) felt that the UFC environment was no different in this respect.

## **6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

The survey focused more on UFC process and methodology with respect to this objective. Practitioners were asked to rate, on a scale of one to four, the overall helpfulness of UFC case management practices with respect to: their client, the children/child, and the family (Q1.2-Q1.4). Across all sites, practitioners overwhelmingly rated UFC case-management as helpful in each of these three categories. In all four categories, over 70% rated UFC case management as either helpful or very helpful, with 40% or more rating it as 'very helpful'. Only 6-7% rated it as not helpful for their clients, the children, and the family. Around 10% rated it as not helpful for their job.

These findings were fairly consistent across the three counties. Practitioners found case management particularly beneficial in Snohomish County, with “very helpful” ratings hovered around 50%, with not a single response of “not helpful.” Advocates (Becca representatives, GAL’s, CASA volunteers and staff) and social workers as a group were more positive on the benefits to clients, children, and the family (“very helpful” approximately 50%) than were attorneys (“very helpful” fewer than 40%).

## **7. Summary of Results**

Overall, questions one and two (Q1, Q2) broadly addressed the benefits from process and environment. On question two - which queried respondents on the UFC versus non-UFC environment for several scenarios and objectives, very few felt that the UFC was a worse environment (no more than 7% on any one category). In other words, over 90% of respondents felt the UFC setting was better or no different in the fifteen objectives presented. Likewise on Q1, which pertained to the benefits of UFC case management, very few respondents (10% or less) found it to be not helpful.

Questions three and four (Q3, Q4) broadly pertained more to process efficiencies and frequencies of events. In some instances the respondents were clearly quite positive (e.g., fewer inconsistent or conflicting orders), whereas others no clear direction can be discerned (e.g., frequency of appearances in court; time to case resolution). Around 75% of respondents felt that the UFC required about the same or more time with respect to their involvement with a family case.

### **C. TABULATED RESPONSES**

The following pages contain the complete results for the survey. Table 2-4 tabulates the responses of all practitioners. Tables 2-5 through 2-8 tabulate the responses for practitioner types (e.g., attorneys) and Tables 2-9 through 2-11 are the responses by county. See Appendix D for further information on methodology and response rates.

**Table 2-4: Practitioner Survey - All Respondents**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	41.0%	32.0%	17.0%	10.0%	198
2 Your client	40.0%	37.0%	16.0%	6.0%	188
3 The child(ren)	45.0%	34.0%	15.0%	7.0%	193
4 The family	41.0%	39.0%	14.0%	7.0%	192

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	79.0%	18.0%	3.0%	194
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	65.0%	31.0%	4.0%	194
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	57.0%	41.0%	2.0%	186
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	66.0%	31.0%	3.0%	193
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	81.0%	16.0%	3.0%	188
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	38.0%	58.0%	4.0%	183
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	53.0%	44.0%	3.0%	189
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	36.0%	62.0%	2.0%	182
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	49.0%	48.0%	3.0%	184
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	62.0%	31.0%	7.0%	188
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	33.0%	60.0%	6.0%	171
12 Certainty of the trial date	35.0%	62.0%	3.0%	187
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	18.0%	80.0%	2.0%	156
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	35.0%	63.0%	2.0%	165
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	35.0%	62.0%	4.0%	167

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	37.0%	40.0%	23.0%	191
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	40.0%	41.0%	18.0%	147
3 Your involvement with a family case.	25.0%	37.0%	37.0%	187

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	44.0%	43.0%	13.0%	178
2 Continuances.	34.0%	51.0%	14.0%	183
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	75.0%	23.0%	2.0%	185
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	32.0%	58.0%	9.0%	170
5 Appearances in court.	30.0%	44.0%	26.0%	187
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	25.0%	73.0%	2.0%	123
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	29.0%	67.0%	4.0%	134

**Table 2-5: Practitioner Survey - Practitioners w/ Both UFC & Non-UFC Experience in Past 12 Months (King & Snohomish Counties Only)**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	49.0%	29.0%	12.0%	9.0%	85
2 Your client	42.0%	38.0%	13.0%	8.0%	79
3 The child(ren)	49.0%	33.0%	12.0%	6.0%	82
4 The family	44.0%	41.0%	9.0%	6.0%	80

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	84.0%	13.0%	4.0%	85
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	73.0%	22.0%	5.0%	85
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	62.0%	37.0%	1.0%	79
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	71.0%	26.0%	4.0%	85
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	85.0%	12.0%	2.0%	81
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	37.0%	60.0%	3.0%	78
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	61.0%	39.0%	0.0%	82
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	39.0%	60.0%	1.0%	77
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	58.0%	39.0%	3.0%	79
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	66.0%	24.0%	10.0%	82
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	20.0%	73.0%	7.0%	70
12 Certainty of the trial date	37.0%	62.0%	1.0%	81
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	17.0%	81.0%	2.0%	63
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	37.0%	60.0%	3.0%	68
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	27.0%	72.0%	1.0%	67

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	39.0%	32.0%	29.0%	85
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	42.0%	33.0%	25.0%	57
3 Your involvement with a family case.	24.0%	32.0%	44.0%	82

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	54.0%	33.0%	14.0%	80
2 Continuances.	37.0%	48.0%	15.0%	81
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	86.0%	13.0%	1.0%	83
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	33.0%	51.0%	16.0%	75
5 Appearances in court.	31.0%	40.0%	29.0%	83
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	24.0%	74.0%	2.0%	50
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	30.0%	64.0%	6.0%	53

**Table 2-6: Practitioner Survey - Attorneys (Prosecuting Attorney, Assistant Attorney General, Private Attorney, Public Defender)**

Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	37.0%	34.0%	20.0%	10.0%	112
2 Your client	31.0%	41.0%	21.0%	6.0%	112
3 The child(ren)	37.0%	37.0%	19.0%	7.0%	109
4 The family	31.0%	43.0%	19.0%	7.0%	108

Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	86.0%	14.0%	0.0%	112
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	66.0%	28.0%	5.0%	110
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	68.0%	32.0%	0.0%	107
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	69.0%	30.0%	1.0%	109
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	87.0%	12.0%	1.0%	110
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	34.0%	61.0%	5.0%	106
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	57.0%	43.0%	0.0%	109
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	37.0%	62.0%	1.0%	106
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	50.0%	49.0%	1.0%	107
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	69.0%	25.0%	6.0%	107
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	29.0%	66.0%	5.0%	99
12 Certainty of the trial date	38.0%	59.0%	3.0%	108
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	12.0%	87.0%	1.0%	91
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	29.0%	70.0%	1.0%	92
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	29.0%	69.0%	2.0%	97

Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	39.0%	42.0%	19.0%	108
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	33.0%	53.0%	14.0%	76
3 Your involvement with a family case.	26.0%	37.0%	37.0%	105

Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	46.0%	41.0%	13.0%	107
2 Continuances.	25.0%	59.0%	16.0%	108
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	79.0%	21.0%	1.0%	107
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	29.0%	64.0%	7.0%	97
5 Appearances in court.	21.0%	53.0%	26.0%	111
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	18.0%	81.0%	1.0%	74
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	20.0%	76.0%	4.0%	79

**Table 2-7: Practitioner Survey - Advocates (BECCA Rep., GALs, Dependency or Family Law CASA/VGAL volunteers and staff)**

Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	54.0%	28.0%	11.0%	8.0%	65
2 Your client	47.0%	39.0%	7.0%	7.0%	57
3 The child(ren)	55.0%	27.0%	11.0%	8.0%	64
4 The family	52.0%	32.0%	8.0%	8.0%	63

Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	75.0%	20.0%	5.0%	64
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	65.0%	33.0%	2.0%	63
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	59.0%	38.0%	3.0%	58
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	65.0%	31.0%	5.0%	62
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	78.0%	17.0%	5.0%	59
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	44.0%	53.0%	4.0%	57
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	52.0%	43.0%	5.0%	60
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	32.0%	63.0%	5.0%	56
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	57.0%	39.0%	4.0%	56
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	59.0%	31.0%	10.0%	61
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	41.0%	49.0%	10.0%	51
12 Certainty of the trial date	28.0%	68.0%	3.0%	60
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	22.0%	76.0%	2.0%	46
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	38.0%	60.0%	2.0%	50
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	38.0%	56.0%	6.0%	52

Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	39.0%	35.0%	26.0%	62
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	42.0%	40.0%	19.0%	48
3 Your involvement with a family case.	28.0%	34.0%	38.0%	61

Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	51.0%	35.0%	15.0%	55
2 Continuances.	34.0%	48.0%	18.0%	56
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	71.0%	24.0%	5.0%	58
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	33.0%	52.0%	15.0%	52
5 Appearances in court.	40.0%	32.0%	28.0%	60
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	29.0%	69.0%	3.0%	35
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	28.0%	67.0%	5.0%	39

**Table 2-8: Practitioner Survey - Social Workers**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	37.0%	32.0%	17.0%	15.0%	41
2 Your client	55.0%	25.0%	10.0%	10.0%	40
3 The child(ren)	53.0%	28.0%	13.0%	8.0%	40
4 The family	51.0%	32.0%	10.0%	7.0%	41

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	64.0%	28.0%	8.0%	39
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	61.0%	34.0%	5.0%	41
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	35.0%	60.0%	5.0%	40
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	59.0%	37.0%	5.0%	41
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	69.0%	23.0%	8.0%	39
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	36.0%	59.0%	5.0%	39
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	40.0%	55.0%	5.0%	40
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	31.0%	67.0%	3.0%	39
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	38.0%	58.0%	5.0%	40
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	56.0%	36.0%	8.0%	39
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	39.0%	58.0%	3.0%	38
12 Certainty of the trial date	29.0%	68.0%	3.0%	38
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	22.0%	76.0%	3.0%	37
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	46.0%	51.0%	3.0%	39
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	42.0%	55.0%	3.0%	38

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	34.0%	39.0%	27.0%	41
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	45.0%	28.0%	28.0%	40
3 Your involvement with a family case.	29.0%	24.0%	46.0%	41

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	31.0%	57.0%	11.0%	35
2 Continuances.	58.0%	39.0%	3.0%	38
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	71.0%	26.0%	3.0%	38
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	34.0%	60.0%	6.0%	35
5 Appearances in court.	39.0%	44.0%	17.0%	36
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	30.0%	70.0%	0.0%	27
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	45.0%	55.0%	0.0%	29

**Table 2-9: Practitioner Survey - King County**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	40.0%	33.0%	14.0%	13.0%	119
2 Your client	42.0%	37.0%	13.0%	8.0%	109
3 The child(ren)	48.0%	33.0%	11.0%	8.0%	115
4 The family	41.0%	39.0%	11.0%	9.0%	115

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	77.0%	19.0%	4.0%	117
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	63.0%	35.0%	3.0%	118
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	49.0%	49.0%	3.0%	111
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	61.0%	35.0%	3.0%	116
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	77.0%	19.0%	4.0%	113
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	28.0%	70.0%	3.0%	109
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	51.0%	46.0%	3.0%	112
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	32.0%	64.0%	4.0%	107
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	50.0%	46.0%	4.0%	108
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	56.0%	34.0%	11.0%	113
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	27.0%	66.0%	7.0%	100
12 Certainty of the trial date	29.0%	68.0%	4.0%	112
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	20.0%	78.0%	2.0%	86
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	34.0%	64.0%	2.0%	94
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	34.0%	62.0%	4.0%	92

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	24.0%	43.0%	33.0%	115
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	31.0%	39.0%	30.0%	83
3 Your involvement with a family case.	22.0%	32.0%	46.0%	111

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	42.0%	46.0%	12.0%	105
2 Continuances.	31.0%	55.0%	14.0%	109
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	74.0%	23.0%	3.0%	111
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	29.0%	58.0%	13.0%	103
5 Appearances in court.	32.0%	38.0%	31.0%	114
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	24.0%	75.0%	1.0%	67
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	33.0%	63.0%	4.0%	73

**Table 2-10: Practitioner Survey - Snohomish County**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	49.0%	27.0%	24.0%	0.0%	37
2 Your client	46.0%	41.0%	14.0%	0.0%	37
3 The child(ren)	56.0%	31.0%	14.0%	0.0%	36
4 The family	54.0%	37.0%	9.0%	0.0%	35

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	86.0%	11.0%	3.0%	36
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	78.0%	16.0%	5.0%	37
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	54.0%	43.0%	3.0%	35
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	68.0%	30.0%	3.0%	37
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	86.0%	11.0%	3.0%	36
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	60.0%	34.0%	6.0%	35
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	49.0%	49.0%	3.0%	37
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	49.0%	51.0%	0.0%	35
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	51.0%	49.0%	0.0%	37
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	81.0%	14.0%	6.0%	36
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	28.0%	69.0%	3.0%	32
12 Certainty of the trial date	37.0%	63.0%	0.0%	35
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	9.0%	91.0%	0.0%	32
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	38.0%	59.0%	3.0%	32
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	33.0%	64.0%	3.0%	36

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	70.0%	22.0%	8.0%	37
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	76.0%	18.0%	6.0%	33
3 Your involvement with a family case.	27.0%	30.0%	43.0%	37

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	49.0%	31.0%	20.0%	35
2 Continuances.	49.0%	37.0%	14.0%	35
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	89.0%	11.0%	0.0%	35
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	42.0%	55.0%	3.0%	33
5 Appearances in court.	34.0%	46.0%	20.0%	35
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	29.0%	67.0%	4.0%	24
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	27.0%	65.0%	8.0%	26

**Table 2-11: Practitioner Survey - Thurston County**

<b>Q1: On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to:</b>					
No. Category	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Total No. of Responses
1 Your job	38.0%	33.0%	19.0%	10.0%	42
2 Your client	31.0%	36.0%	26.0%	7.0%	42
3 The child(ren)	29.0%	38.0%	24.0%	10.0%	42
4 The family	31.0%	38.0%	24.0%	7.0%	42

<b>Q2: Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Better	No Different	Worse	Total No. of Responses
1 Continuity of judicial oversight	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	41
2 Resolution of procedural difficulties	59.0%	33.0%	8.0%	39
3 Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system	83.0%	18.0%	0.0%	40
4 Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40
5 Handling of families with multiple active cases	90.0%	10.0%	0.0%	39
6 Ability of parties to complete case-related forms	46.0%	46.0%	8.0%	39
7 The court ordering appropriate services for the parties	63.0%	35.0%	3.0%	40
8 Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services	35.0%	65.0%	0.0%	40
9 Cooperation with other involved agencies	46.0%	51.0%	3.0%	39
10 Scheduling of events for case disposition	62.0%	38.0%	0.0%	39
11 Use of alternative dispute resolution	54.0%	38.0%	8.0%	39
12 Certainty of the trial date	50.0%	45.0%	5.0%	40
13 Post-resolution child support compliance	21.0%	76.0%	3.0%	38
14 Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (resid. and visit. schedule)	36.0%	64.0%	0.0%	39
15 Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions	38.0%	59.0%	3.0%	39

<b>Q3. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time or more time for the following:</b>				
No. Category	Less Time	About the Same	More Time	Total No. of Responses
1 Case resolution.	44.0%	51.0%	5.0%	39
2 Permanency in dependency cases.	26.0%	74.0%	0.0%	31
3 Your involvement with a family case.	33.0%	59.0%	8.0%	39

<b>Q4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:</b>				
No. Category	Fewer	About the Same	More	Total No. of Responses
1 Judicial officers.	45.0%	47.0%	8.0%	38
2 Continuances.	31.0%	54.0%	15.0%	39
3 Inconsistent or conflicting orders.	67.0%	31.0%	3.0%	39
4 Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services.	32.0%	62.0%	6.0%	34
5 Appearances in court.	24.0%	61.0%	16.0%	38
6 Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	32
7 Post-resolution petitions and appearances.	23.0%	77.0%	0.0%	35

## **Section IV. LITIGANT FOCUS GROUPS**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

In order to gain insights from UFC litigants, we settled on conducting focus groups. The intent of the focus groups was to provide an opportunity for litigants to offer their UFC experiences in a way structured to address the six major objectives of the UFC. Focus groups have some inherent limitations that are important to bear in mind when interpreting the results. One, since focus groups are small and individuals self-select into the group, the sample cannot be generalized to the larger population. The individuals with the strongest views have more of an incentive to participate and so often the group is skewed towards these type of individuals. Second, while the moderator is responsible for keeping the group focused, the actual conversation can move in many directions. Third, participants are not technically knowledgeable and thus lack understanding on process issues and perhaps some of the program objectives.

In the report that follows, the overall sentiment of the participants can be characterized as negative. This is not unexpected given the target UFC population. It is not clear that many of the comments pertain to UFC per se but rather are more indicative of the highly-charged nature of family court and dependency actions in general.

AOC contracted with Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University to conduct the focus groups. SESRC has extensive experience in focus group design, recruitment, and implementation. Additionally we wanted to provide an independent layer between the evaluation team and litigants so that participants would have a higher comfort level that their comments would be confidential. SESRC completed the focus groups in early 2004 and submitted a report to the AOC evaluation team. Other than some minor editing of headings to fit the overall report format and references to supporting materials, the complete report from SESRC is below in Section B.

### **B. SESRC REPORT**

#### **1. Executive Summary**

The State of Washington Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University for assistance with its legislatively mandated evaluation of the

Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Program. The purpose was to obtain qualitative data from program participants that could be used to supplement, if not better understand, quantitative data from administrative records. That is, AOC wanted information on experiences with and opinions about the UFC directly from program participants themselves.

SESRC conducted focus group discussions or telephone interviews with participants of the UFC Pilot Program in King County and in Thurston County. While each focus group was either male-only or female-only, and held at a central location within the respective county, no marked differences were observed in attendees' comments by gender or by county. Highlights from the focus groups and interviews, then, are reported here in the aggregate, as though they summarize the experiences and opinions revealed in one discussion.

By combining the focus group discussions and telephone interviews, though, the highlights reported here come from only 20 (of about 430 in the recruitment pool) of the UFC program participants. Even with a higher recruitment rate, focus group attendees are likely to be the most vocal among – not necessarily the most representative of – any sample from which they are drawn. An extra measure of caution is required in attempting to generalize from the experiences and opinions of these few to the hundreds who were in the UFC Pilot Program.

The Unified Family Court was established to accomplish six general goals: (1) better informed judicial decision-making; (2) Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of case processing; (3) better access to and coordination of services; (4) emphasis on providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR); (5) reduction in post-resolution litigation; and (6) better family outcomes. Focus group attendees and telephone interviewees were asked – in questions worded in non-legal terms – how well they thought the Unified Family Court was working toward meeting those goals. As is their wont, however, attendees and interviewees often answered indirectly (if at all) those questions, yet answered clearly other questions that were not asked.

Focus group attendees and telephone interviewees exhibited the following opinions regarding how well they thought the Unified Family Court was meeting its six goals.

- Judicial officers and/or judicial teams usually were seen as neither more familiar with the family's case(s) nor more knowledgeable about the legal aspects of their case(s), as a function of the Unified Family Court.

- Case(s) processing usually was ongoing, with the minimum time invested to-date 15 months and the maximum 7 years.
- Court-suggested or –order services usually were viewed as prohibitive in terms of cost as well as time and redundant as well as contradictory of each other.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution was cancelled for the one family who reported having been enrolled.
- Participants usually were so consumed by current, pre-resolution litigation that they could not consider anything post-resolution, whether it be litigation or not.
- Family outcomes usually were believed to be in the best interests of the children if custody, placement, and visitation matched the participants' preferences.

Three other issues were consistent themes in the discussions and interviews. They provide necessary context for interpreting the above opinions on the success of the UFC.

- Participants were not clear on exactly what the UFC is or does.
- Participants perceived the UFC, especially in its suggesting or ordering of services, as driven by money rather than family justice.
- Participants saw the UFC as self-policing and wielding inordinate power over litigants, who have no recourse but to follow its inexplicable demands.

## **2. Purpose and Methods**

In April of 2003, the State of Washington Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University (WSU) to conduct, and to report on the results of, focus group discussions among participants of the Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Program. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide qualitative data from program participants that could be used in conjunction with quantitative data from administrative records in support of AOC's legislatively mandated evaluation of the UFC.

SESRC obtained approval to conduct the focus groups from the WSU Institutional Review Board on April 9, 2003. A copy of the approval letter and the Human Subjects Form may be found in Appendix E.

SESRC and AOC professional staff collaborated on developing discussion topics that derived directly from the Legislature's goals in establishing the UFC. A list of these topics may be found in Appendix E.

Six gender- and site-specific focus groups were scheduled for the second week in June: a female and a male group from King County, a female and a male group from Snohomish County, and a female and a male group from Thurston County. Participants were given a \$25 check at the conclusion of the focus group discussion.

Only one male and one female appeared for their respective focus groups in King County. SESRC received approval to modify the study protocol for King County focus group recruits only on January 20, 2004. A copy of the approval letter and Request for Modification of Study Protocol may be found in Appendix E.

Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with people who had agreed to, but did not, attend a King County focus group. Interviewees were mailed a \$15 check right away.

### **3. Recruitment and Participation**

AOC provided SESRC with the names and contact information of participants in the Unified Family Court in King, Snohomish, and Thurston counties. Table 2-12 shows the distribution of those participants by county, by gender group, by number to which a recruitment letter was mailed, and by number of those letters returned to sender (RTS). SESRC did not send a recruitment letter to participants: (a) whose mailing address was out-of-state, (b) whose mailing address was a correctional facility, or (c) for whom there was no name listed, i.e., the name field was blank or "unknown/confidential" was entered. Couples were a female and a male, listed as one UFC participant, with the same mailing address. Each member of the couple was sent an individual, gender-specific, recruitment letter in the same envelope.

**Table 2-12: UFC Participant List by County, Gender Group, and Valid Mailing Address**

County	Gender Group	# in Sample	# Mailed	# RTS
<b>King</b>	<b>all combined</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>35</b>
	female	60	55	21
	male	58	52	14
	couple	3	2	0
<b>Snohomish</b>	<b>all combined</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>21</b>
	female	47	37	12
	male	46	33	9
	couple	0	n/a	n/a
<b>Thurston</b>	<b>all combined</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>60</b>
	female	161	143	30
	male	127	106	26
	couple	14	14	4
<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	<b>all combined</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>116</b>
	female	268	235	63
	male	231	191	49
	couples	17	16	4

On May 19, 2003, SESRC mailed a prior notification letter to participants with valid addresses. A total of 442 letters were mailed: 235 were sent to females (55 King County, 37 Snohomish County, 143 Thurston County), 191 to males (52 King County, 33 Snohomish County, 106 Thurston County), and 16 to couples (2 King County, 14 Thurston County). The letter described the purpose of the focus groups, emphasized that attendance was voluntary and confidential, and indicated that they would be given a \$25 check at the end of the focus group discussion. Included with the letter was a reply form (and stamped, pre-addressed envelope) that recipients could use to let SESRC know the best time and number to call them with additional information about the focus groups. A copy of the letter and of the reply form may be found in Appendix E.

As Table 2-12 documents, a sizable proportion of UFC participants could not be reached by mail. For the total sample, about 14 percent did not have valid addresses ( $74/516=14.3\%$ ) and about 26 percent of the recruitment letters were

returned to sender (116/442=26.2%). In King County, about 10 percent did not have valid addresses (12/121=9.9%) and about 32 percent of the recruitment letters were returned to sender (35/109=32.1%). In Snohomish County, about 25 percent did not have valid addresses (23/93=24.7%) and 30 percent of the recruitment letters were returned to sender (21/70=30.0%). In Thurston County, about 13 percent did not have valid addresses (39/302=12.9%) and about 23 percent of the recruitment letters were returned to sender (60/263=22.8%).

Further, we learned from a focus group attendee that she typically does not receive mail until three weeks or so after its postmark. (She received SESRC's recruitment letter just the day before the focus group was scheduled. Luckily, we had been able to reach her by telephone.) Because she is under the Court's protection, her address is a "bogus" one that routes all mail through a central location before it is forwarded to her. We learned from another focus group attendee that the name we had for her (and to whom the check was written) was an alias, again because she is under the Court's protection. We suspect that these are not isolated cases, but we can only wonder about the magnitude of the effect such arrangements might have had on SESRC's ability to contact UFC participants.

On May 27, 2003, SESRC began calling sample members who had not opted-out of the study. A copy of the recruitment telephone script may be found in Appendix E. Table 2-13 shows the results of these recruitment calls by county. Not everyone who completed the recruitment interview agreed to participate in a focus group.

**Table 2-13: Results of Recruitment Calls to Sample of UFC Participants by County**

Result	All Counties	King	Snohomish	Thurston
<b>Completed Interview</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>42</b>
Refusal	9	2	3	4
Non-working number	252	77	69	106
Unable to reach	163	19	10	134
Unable to interview	17	4	1	12
Electronic device or other	12	5	3	4
Total Cases	516	121	93	302
<b>Agreed to attend focus group</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>

On June 5, 2003, SESRC mailed confirmation letters to the focus group recruits. A total of 49 letters were mailed: 25 to females (4 King County, 1 of which was in the couples sample, 21 Thurston County, 4 of which were in the couples sample) and 24 to males (6 King County, 1 of which was in the couples sample, 3 Snohomish County, 15 Thurston County, 4 of which were in the couples sample). The letter thanked them for their willingness to participate, provided the date, time and location of their focus group, and included a list of topics to be discussed in the group. A copy of the letter and of the discussion topics may be found in Appendix E.

Date, time, location, and number of participants in each scheduled focus group are listed below. Dretha Phillips from SESRC moderated, and Gloria McDougall from Clearwater Reporting transcribed, each session.

Snohomish County: June 10, 2003 Howard Johnson’s Plaza Hotel, Everett

10:00 a.m. Males only – 0 attendees

1:00 p.m. Females only – 0 attendees

King County: June 11, 2003 West Coast Gateway Hotel, SeaTac

10:00 a.m. Males only – 1 attendee

1:00 p.m. Females only – 1 attendee

Thurston County: June 12, 2003 Phoenix Inn, Olympia

10:00 a.m. Males only – 5 attendees

1:00 p.m. Females only – 8 attendees

In January of 2004, SESRC attempted to conduct telephone interviews with the King County recruits who did not attend their scheduled focus group. Completed interviews were obtained from two females and two males. A copy of the telephone interview script may be found in Appendix E.

#### **4. Synthesis of Discussions and Interviews**

Focus group discussions are non-linear by nature, if not by design. Participants respond to each other's comments as much as to a moderator's probes, often taking the conversation far afield of its intended topics.

What follows is an attempt to glean the pertinent nuggets of data from the focus groups as well as the telephone interviews and bring those together in ways that are likely to be most useful in evaluating the impact on participants of the Unified Family Court. This synthesis, then, is organized around the six general goals that prompted the establishment of the Unified Family Court.

**Do respondents view the UFC as having produced better informed judicial decision-making?** One female and one male were satisfied overall with their judicial officer's or team's knowledge of all legal aspects of their cases. These two respondents felt that court personnel were familiar with their cases and that their family's cases were handled fairly. The majority of respondents expressed negative views, characterizing court personnel as "diligently refus[ing] to familiarize themselves with the case" and the process as "misinformed, lack of investigation, not wanting to investigate, false information given, not looking into things, flat out lies."

**Do respondents view the UFC as having improved expedition and timeliness of case processing?** No comparison between the UFC and other courts was offered. The shortest time reported for a resolution was six to nine months; the longest period was more than seven years, for a case that had yet to be resolved. One female and one male felt that the time actually spent in court was about right, while another female and another male (who happened to be "partners" in the UFC case) felt that there wasn't enough time spent in court.

**Do respondents view the UFC as having provided better access to and coordination of services?** One female and one male felt that they were able to get the services suggested or ordered by the court and that the providers worked in sync on their family's cases. The majority of respondents expressed negative views, characterizing the providers and the process as "really corrupt" because "you don't have a hope to be treated fairly or justly unless you have got a lot of money."

**Do respondents view the UFC as having emphasized Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)?** One female indicated that ADR was "set up and canceled" for her case. No other respondents reported having received mediation or settlement conferences. One male had "never heard of it."

**Do respondents view the UFC as having resulted in a reduction in post-resolution litigation?** One female and one male indicated that it was unlikely that they would be coming back to court on any issue, whether or not it was the same as or different from the one that brought them to the UFC. One female and one male thought they would be back in court, but probably on an issue unrelated to their UFC cases. When asked the question directly, the majority of respondents focused on problems with their current cases.

**Do respondents view the UFC as having produced better family outcomes?** Two females and one male felt that they were better parents as a result of UFC, that there was enough focus by the court on the needs of their children, and that their children are secure in their present homes or placements. The majority of respondents expressed negative views, characterizing the family outcomes as not always in the best interest of the child, but "always [favorable] to the [other parent], even if [that parent] is abusive."

**What other issues did respondents consistently discuss that have a bearing on how well they think the UFC is working toward meeting its goals?** In describing their cases and their frustrations with the legal system, respondents often indicated that they were not sure whether they were talking about the Unified Family Court or about another program such as Family Treatment Court or Drug Court. Nearly everyone mentioned the high costs associated with pursuing their cases or securing court-mandated services. Some had gone bankrupt; others had been found in non-compliance because they could not afford to pay for the services. Many echoed the lament of one female, who felt that "all [the court personnel] care about is who's got the money and who's got the powerful attorney, not what the truth is" and that she "would have more

rights under family law as a criminal than [she] did as a family and parent.” A common complaint centered around court personnel, especially guardians ad litem, who did not execute their duties as respondents understood them. Respondents reported that when they did file a grievance, the individual against whom they had filed was a member of the grievance committee. Not only was the individual not reprimanded, but also things became even more difficult for those respondents.

## **CHAPTER 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

### **A. BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

The quantitative data analysis provides an opportunity to develop measures from objective data sources that may be able to provide empirical support (or not) that the various UFC pilot sites are meeting the stated program objectives. As with any data collection and analysis proposal, there are many factors that must be considered in determining the feasibility and applicability of the measures employed. This section begins with an overview of various study design options and potential data sources. Next we discuss the study designs and sampling criteria for each of the sites. Finally, the results from our various data sources are presented for each of the sites.

#### **1. Study Design Options**

There are specific limitations to the research designs chosen and utilized for each site. Each is briefly discussed below.

##### **a. Static Group Design (King & Thurston)**

In this design, outcomes are compared to other jurisdictions without a similar program. This is a quasi-experimental design that is sometimes termed a 'natural experiment'. The problems with this design include: (1) too many alternative hypotheses rendering it difficult to determine that differences are due to the program evaluated; (2) survey data is difficult and possibly impossible to collect from comparison groups. Examples of competing hypotheses for this evaluation include demographic differences, judge-specific personalities and procedures, and attorney representation.

Both King and Thurston counties had pre-existing UFC programs when the evaluation was being designed. The downtown Seattle location provided a natural alternative from which to draw a control group; Kitsap County was chosen as a county of comparable size and demographics for Thurston, although in both sites one can identify likely demographic differences. These differences could include: (1) differing industrial bases which would result in differences in observed aggregate income levels and the educational attainment of the residents, (2) age, marital status, & age when married, (3) population turnover, (4) differences in substance abuse patterns, (5) race/ethnicity, among others.

### **b. Pretest-Posttest**

In this type of design the control group is created out of cases handled in the jurisdiction prior to the implementation of the program. The problem with this design is that differences or changes detected in the data may be due to the passage of time (history effects) and not necessarily the program in question. This was originally the design proposed for Thurston County, however, the difficulty in controlling for effects of history (e.g. changes in legislation, procedures, etc.) was determined to be too great to overcome and we instead eventually opted for a static group design as described above.

### **c. Randomized Control Group (Snohomish)**

This is the design of a true experiment, the idea being that groups are equivalent on other factors and thus any differences found following intervention can be reasonably attributed to the effects of the program under study. One difficulty with this approach in the court system is that there is judicial resistance to withholding available services from a group who could benefit from such available services.

## **2. Potential Data Sources & Issues**

### **a. Judicial Information System (JIS)**

The statewide Judicial Information System (JIS) in Washington is essentially an electronic case management system that all courts use to track and manage their caseload. The portion of JIS that is used by Superior Courts (SCOMIS) allows data entry for case events, outcomes, and participants. The system is screen-based, with separate screens for participants & roles, case outcomes, and events. Given that the system is designed for business purposes, the underlying database is what is known as a 'transactional database' as opposed to one designed for research purposes. This distinction has implications for both the database design (which can impact data linkages and retrieval) and for data quality via data entry practices. Data entry for transactional databases is performed by line staff and so from a researcher's perspective - in general - there is a diminished ability to verify the accuracy of the data (irrespective of the actual quality of the data entered). Additionally, data that may be of interest to the researcher may have little business value and so are either not entered, or are entered only sporadically.

In the case of SCOMIS, although AOC has instituted uniform data entry procedures in many instances, actual coding can vary across counties in certain instances due to heterogeneous business practices. On a practical level, with respect to the purposes of this evaluation, this is only a factor with the SCOMIS

docketing screen. The bottom line is that quality of participant and outcome data (e.g., case resolution, type of resolution, and resolution date) in SCOMIS are very good and consistent across jurisdictions; however, proceedings data are often neither. This will be a factor in our Thurston County design where we use cases from Kitsap County for our comparison group.

**b. Superior Court Case Files**

The county clerks are responsible for maintaining files of all required and relevant paper documents that constitute the official legal file for each case. While there is a wealth of information in the case files, gathering that information would require a primary data collection effort which is very labor-intensive and thus quite expensive. Furthermore, much of the information contained in these files that would be suitable for developing objective quantitative measures is already available electronically through SCOMIS. The one area in which data from SCOMIS is not available would be in court-ordered services and compliance review. Since compliance with services ordered is such a key part of the UFC, we felt that a primary data collection effort was warranted to obtain this data. We hired interns with experience in the courts to go through all of the case files associated with a family to record: (1) the type of service ordered and on whom, (2) the date of the order, (3) the date of all subsequent reviews of that order, and (4) whether or not the individual was in compliance with the order at each review. This effort began in June 2003, with completion by early September 2004. Details on the data collection protocol can be found in Appendix G.

**c. DSHS Data**

There are several divisions within the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services which would have data pertaining to the UFC population that might be informative with respect to the UFC program objectives. Specifically, we were interested in: (1) substance abuse treatment and activities, (2) mental health treatment, and (3) child protective services referrals. On July 8, 2003 the AOC research team submitted an application to the Washington State Institutional Review Board (WSIRB) to obtain access to this data associated with our study groups. We received approval on August 29, 2003.

The main issue with respect to DSHS data is that we are likely to have incomplete records. There are two potential mechanisms at work here. First, individuals must be matched via personal identifiers. The common identifiers are: name, date of birth, address, and social security number. Therefore data entry into JIS is critical in obtaining a quality match. Social security numbers are captured inconsistently in JIS. Birth dates are also inconsistent, although more

often captured. Names and addresses are always captured but both are subject to change over time (a more acute problem with the UFC population). Thus the lack of a complete list of personal identifiers is a problem that affects the quality of the match in all of the DSHS databases.

The second potential mechanism leading to incomplete matches affects only the treatment databases. These databases will only capture litigants who use services through DSHS. Given the financial resources of the UFC population, it is likely that most individuals who are in treatment would be relying on public assistance for treatment funding. This will not be an issue with CPS referrals as there obviously is not private alternative.

Thus the bottom line is that we can estimate the magnitude of missing records with CPS data but not with DASA or Mental Health. Missing records can impact the results in two ways: (1) the potential introduction of biases, and (2) reduced sample size. Concerns about potential biases would be high if data entry policies and personnel differed between treatment and control groups. This is not the case for either King or Snohomish since both treatments and controls are within the same county and court system. Since we do not collect person-level data for the Thurston evaluation (described below) this is a moot issue.

#### **d. Pilot Site Databases**

King Superior Court has various internal databases, the most relevant being the Family Court Services database which is used by the social workers and case managers. We looked at this database and determined that this was a redundant source of information with respect to the measures we were interested in.

### **3. Pilot Site Designs & Sample Selection**

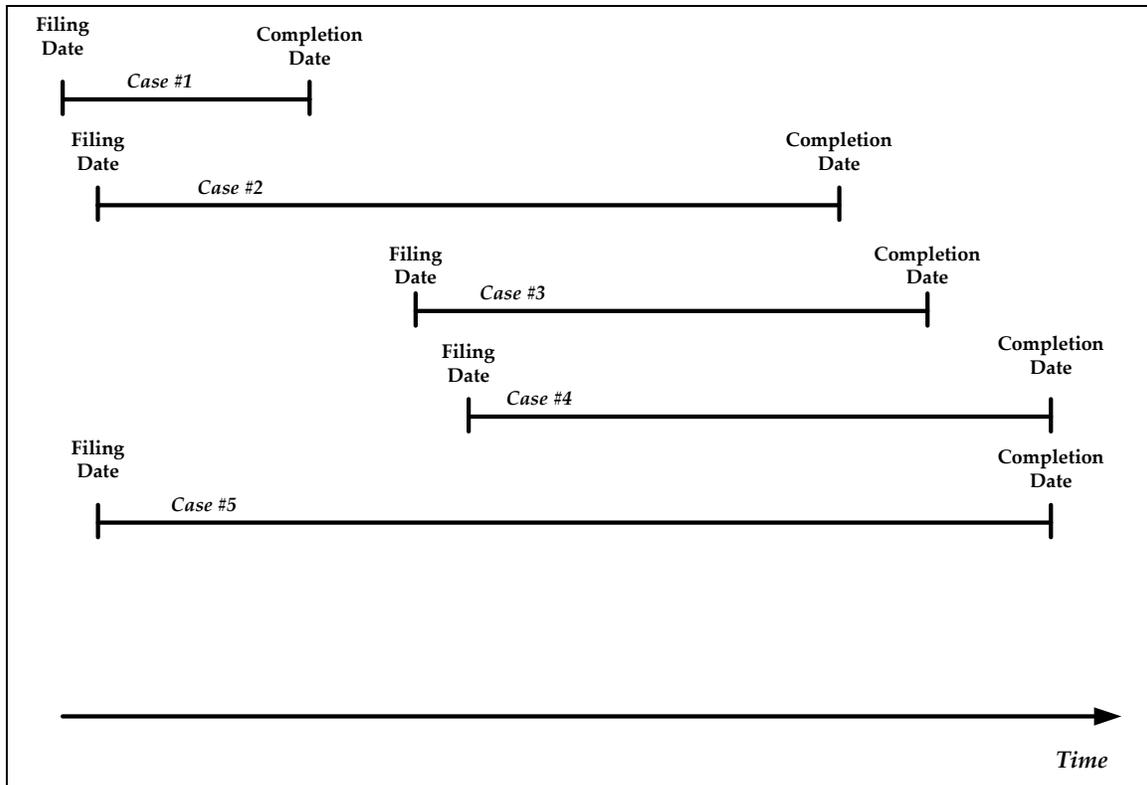
Marrying the chosen research designs with our potential data sources to create meaningful measures provided some challenges. The sample selection process differed at all three sites which has implications for the interpretation of some of the measures. Before going into the details, we begin with a general framework.

#### **a. Unit of Analysis**

Ideally the unit of analysis for a UFC program is the family. Each family is going to have one or more cases associated with that family. Each case has its own 'life', with certain key milestones being reached at different times, and with certain events occurring at various points and with differing frequency. Figure 3-1 depicts some hypothetical cases shown on a time continuum. Two common

milestones are when the case is filed and when it is completed<sup>1</sup>. Events can occur at any point beyond the filing date. In all measures drawn from the JIS case management system, we are either counting certain events (which may be further subdivided by their relation to a key milestone - e.g., post-completion proceedings) or calculating the elapsed time (duration) between key milestones.

Figure 3-1: Key Case Milestones



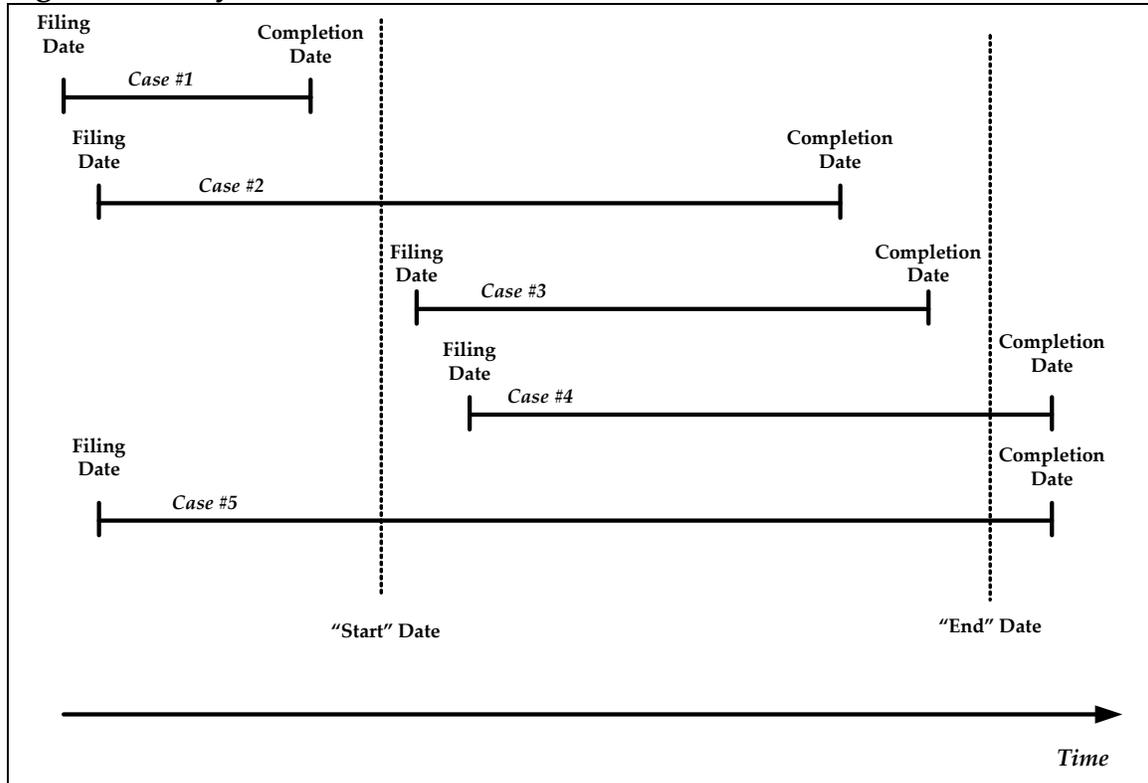
Note that whereas the milestones are fixed in time, event occurrence is essentially open-ended since theoretically there is no limit to when post-completion events will cease. In short, the 'life' of a case has no knowable end date.

In order to implement an evaluation, one must determine both a start and end date for purposes of data collection and estimation. This introduces two new fixed reference points that will have implications for both the events to be

<sup>1</sup> The actual event triggering case completion will differ by case type. For most case types, the event in layman's terms will be "when the judge bangs the gavel"; i.e., when final judgment has been rendered in that case.

counted and duration calculations. These two fixed points are depicted in Figure 3-2 below. The end date is often purely arbitrary and in program evaluations is often simply a function of the fact that the evaluation has time constraints. In our case, June 30, 2004 is the end date. The start date, however, may in fact be a true case milestone or it may be defined by the point at which the program under investigation can be said to have been fully implemented.

**Figure 3-2: Key Case Milestones & Evaluation Timeframe**



In the Snohomish UFC study design, the starting date is a true milestone - specifically it is the date in which the family is accepted into the UFC. This date is known for all families since we have a true experimental design where a control group family is screened by the UFC facilitator and 'accepted' into UFC even though the family in fact never receives any UFC 'treatment'. In this instance, the start date replaces the case file date as our key beginning milestone. Note too that this date is specific to each family.

For King and Thurston, we do not have control group families which went through the screening process, and thus we have no equivalent UFC acceptance date for any potential control group we might consider. The family-specific start

date is known for the UFC families but is unknowable for non-UFC families. This leaves three options: (1) for both groups use some other known milestone for the start date, (2) attempt to find a universal proxy milestone or event that coincides (closely) with the UFC acceptance date, or (3) using data from the treatment (UFC) group, identify an acceptable method to impute a start date for the control group families.

With the Thurston UFC model, where every case heard in Family and Juvenile Court is a UFC case, the case filing milestone coincides exactly with the beginning of treatment. They are one and the same so option (1) is the appropriate solution. Since no contemporaneous control group exists in Thurston County, we must pull a similar set of cases from our 'control' county, but can use the case filing date as the beginning milestone for both groups. Note, however, that with this design the unit of analysis can no longer be at the family level but is instead necessarily at the case level.

The remaining issue for the Thurston study design is the sampling time frame. For Thurston we chose the beginning date of July 1, 2000 by which time the UFC was fully implemented. Therefore all cases filed on or after this date qualified for inclusion into our treatment group; the same with Kitsap County for inclusion into our control group.

The King County study design presented the most challenges. Unlike Thurston, UFC treatment does not necessarily begin (and in our sample usually does not) with the filing of the case but like Snohomish can begin at any point in the life of the case. Therefore, returning to our options above, any measures based upon a design under option (1) will capture only a partial treatment effect. Options (2) or (3) will capture the full treatment effect for treatment families but the control group's condition is an estimate that will be contingent upon the accuracy of the actual method implemented under the option.

We examined whether a suitable proxy (option 2) could be found by examining the dockets of our sample treatment families to see if there was any coincident event with or reliably near the Order into to UFC which defines the treatment begin date. Nothing emerged as a potential candidate for a reliable proxy. Instead, we opted for option (3). After exploring numerous methods we settled a method to impute a starting date based upon the average gap - by cause of action - between the case filing date and the Order to UFC for our treatment families. This method then required a further set of rules for families with multiple

actions.<sup>2</sup> While we believe that this method was the best available, our level of confidence in the accuracy of the imputed start date was not high<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, we chose a two-part approach to King. Erring on the conservative side, we chose to implement a design similar to that chosen for Thurston (option 1) where the start date is the case filing date. As mentioned earlier, this will capture only a partial treatment effect, yet it is also the most conservative approach. Additionally we chose to publish some results from our alternative approach where we imputed a start date on the control group. These figures should be treated with caution yet are perhaps informative on a couple of levels as we will explain when discussing those results.

Before moving on to the results for each site, one last issue remains. Each of the sites has a different UFC model which, all else equal, makes across-site comparisons of our quantitative measures problematic. The differing study designs as briefly described above have implications for the sample characteristics and size in each site that renders such comparisons invalid. Refer to Figure 3-2 for the following discussion. Two issues arise with the various study designs.

First, note that even if one assumes away all differences between the two sites, any duration measures between a design such as Snohomish and one such as Thurston are not comparable. In Snohomish we can calculate the duration from the UFC start date until case completion for cases that complete prior to our study end date (e.g., Case #2 in Figure 3-2). For most families, the UFC start date is far along in the life of the case so the treatment condition duration is less than the filing-to-completion duration. In Thurston however, the treatment condition duration is the same as the filing-to-completion duration (e.g., Case #3 in Figure 3-2). All else equal, treatment condition durations would be longer in Thurston versus Snohomish due strictly to the differing nature of the study designs.

Second, note that the cases for inclusion in the sample on any given measure are contingent upon the measure definition and algorithm. For example, consider the Snohomish design with respect to post-completion activity. Referring to Figure 3-2, the start date, which is specific to the family, will define the date at

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<sup>2</sup> A complete description of the method is described in Appendix I.

<sup>3</sup> This is based upon a test of our method by which we used the method to impute the start date back onto our treatment families and compared it to the actual start date. The actual treatment duration can be expressed as a ratio of the 'imputed' treatment duration to obtain some estimate of accuracy of the method.

which we measure events forward. In a case such as 'Case #1' we would not be measuring all post-completion events but only those that occur beyond the start date, whereas for a case such as 'Case #2', all post-completion events are captured. In a design such as Thurston, only post-completion events captured on a case such as 'Case #3' will be counted. Although post-completion events can be occurring on a 'Case #1' or a 'Case #2' they are excluded since these cases were filed prior to full UFC implementation and thus are excluded from our sample.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, in a design such as Thurston, the sample is defined at the case level and we follow a fixed group of cases - not families - all the way through the various measures. In a design such as Snohomish on the other hand, the sample is defined at the family level, and we follow the same families all the way through the analysis. Depending upon the criteria of the particular measure, some of the cases associated with a family may be excluded from the calculation of that measure if the criteria are not met (e.g., completion date is prior to UFC acceptance date). Because of these unavoidable differences in design, direct comparability of measures between these two sites is not valid based on this alone.

## **b. Site-specific Sampling Criteria & Process**

### ***Snohomish***

In Snohomish, our sample consists of fifty-one families each in both the treatment and control groups. The cases associated with each family were those that were used by the UFC facilitator for purposes of screening for UFC eligibility; i.e., sample selection is via the facilitator. The treatment starting date is specific to each family and is the date that the UFC facilitator formally accepted the family into the UFC.<sup>5</sup> Sample selection began on July 1, 2000 with the objective of obtaining fifty families in each of the treatment and control groups. Once a family had been referred to the UFC, screening had taken place and the family was accepted into the UFC, random selection determined whether they were placed into the treatment or control group. This assignment process

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<sup>4</sup> Although we could have pulled post-completion activity from cases filed prior to July 1, 2000 and activity after this date, we preferred to keep the sample cohort the same throughout the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> The actual UFC treatment will begin approximately four to five weeks later at the UFC planning conference when the cases are actually *assigned* to UFC. We do not have a corresponding UFC assignment date for control group families since no planning conference occurred for those families. We considered imputing an assignment date but felt more comfortable using the acceptance date even though true UFC 'treatment' begins a few weeks later.

continued until December 9, 2002 when over 102 families had been screened and placed into one of the two groups. We continued to track information on families in both groups until June 30, 2004.

**Table 3-1: Snohomish Pilot Site Sample Characteristics**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)		Control (Non-UFC)	
	(1) All Accepted Cases	(2) Completion Date After Acceptance Date	(3) All Accepted Cases	(4) Completion Date After Acceptance Date
- Custody	8	5	3	3
- Dependency	80	80	110	101
- Dissolution with Children	20	10	16	7
- Domestic Violence Protection	8	2	9	2
- Modification	3	3	0	0
- Paternity	39	13	36	7
- Termination	0	0	1	0
TOTAL Number of Cases	158	113	175	120
<i>Total Number of Families</i>	51		51	

**Sample Selection Criteria:**  
All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC.

The case composition displayed in Table 3-1 is consistent with our earlier description of the Snohomish UFC. As would be expected from our description of the model, dependencies actions dominate and a large number of the associated family law and paternity actions are already completed by the time the family is accepted into the UFC.

**King**

In King, our sample consists of fifty-four families each in both the treatment and control groups. The process for sample selection was similar to that in Snohomish for the treatment families only. For the treatment group, families were referred to UFC for intensive UFC case management, the UFC case manager screened those families for acceptance (i.e., to undergo intensive UFC case management). As families were accepted, they were added to our treatment group. The acceptance date (or start date in Figure 3-2) is the date in which the case is ordered into UFC as documented in the electronic docket in JIS. Sample selection began on July 1, 2000 and continued until April 19,2002 with fifty-four families. All of these families' cases were heard at the Regional Justice Center in

Kent.

Since our control group was to be drawn from families in Seattle, a two-part protocol was required since the juvenile and adult facilities are not co-located in Seattle. In January 2002, Family Court Services in Seattle provided us with a list of 108 potential control families with 160 associated cases. The criterion for selection was 20-25 hours of Family Court Services time spent on a case. These cases were roughly contemporaneous with our treatment families but did not include dependencies, as those are heard off-site in the Juvenile Department. For families with dependencies, we identified - via queries against the JIS database - approximately two hundred (200) families with at least one dependency filed in Seattle no earlier than January 1998. We then ran further queries against the JIS database to find all other cases associated with litigants in those two hundred families. We then randomly chose fifty of these two hundred families and passed all of their case numbers to the UFC case manager in Seattle who screened each against the UFC criteria. This process mimicked the true UFC referral process which entails gathering together all of the relevant case files and reviewing them. From this process the UFC case manager identified thirty families that met the criteria, twelve that did not, and eight that were on the borderline.

From the 108 non-dependency families and the 30 dependency families we randomly selected 37 and 17 respectively for our control group for a total of 54 families.<sup>6</sup> Thus approximately 31% of our control group families have at least one dependency action which is roughly equivalent to the percentage in the treatment group. Some additional details on our control group selection process are available in Appendix I.

Differences between families in Kent versus Seattle may be due to demographic differences that exist between the two populations; however, we did not try to control for these since we lacked the relevant data.<sup>7</sup> One other potential control factor would be self-represented litigants versus those with attorneys.<sup>8</sup> While codes exist in JIS to identify the mode of representation, this potential co-variate is unavailable for King County as they do not use these codes. We continued to

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<sup>6</sup> Since we couldn't guarantee that some of our control families would subsequently be placed into the UFC in Seattle, we also tracked some additional families from each group as potential alternates in the event this occurred.

<sup>7</sup> Relevant variables would include: family income, age, education, race/ethnicity.

<sup>8</sup> Note that this would not be a factor in Snohomish where all of the litigants have dependency actions and thus some attorney representation.

track information on families in both groups until June 30, 2004.

**Table 3-2: King Pilot Site Sample Characteristics**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)		Control (Non-UFC)	
	(1) All Accepted Cases	(2) Cases Filed After Jan. 1, 1998	(3) All Accepted Cases	(4) Cases Filed After Jan. 1, 1998
- Custody	12	12	3	3
- Dependency	31	31	57	46
- Dissolution with Children	28	18	30	26
- Domestic Violence Protection	9	7	18	16
- Modification	6	6	4	2
- Paternity	19	13	24	20
- Termination	3	3	19	19
TOTAL Number of Cases	108	90	155	132
<i>Total Number of Families</i>	54	45	54	51

**Sample Selection Criteria:**  
 Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC.  
  
 Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals.

The sample in King is based upon a quasi-experimental design and one can see from Table 3-2 that this process can lead to more differences in case composition when compared to a true experimental design such as in Snohomish. Columns (1) and (3) are all of the cases associated with our two groups of families. Since we are implementing a study design similar to that in Thurston, we must choose a date for the full implementation of the UFC in Kent which will define the sample selection criteria. In order to maintain as large of a sample as possible we chose January 1, 1998. Thus even though we selected families based upon a screening process, in order to implement a study design similar to that in Thurston, we are only going to be including cases filed on or later than January 1, 1998. From columns (2) and (4) we see that this eliminates a few families. More families are eliminated on the treatment side; however, this will help ensure a similar study timeframe for the two groups.<sup>9</sup> One note for King: domestic

<sup>9</sup> This also creates an unbalanced design for analysis at the family level; however, techniques are available to deal with this type of design and on a practical level this situation exists in most of

violence protection orders are often filed within a dissolution case if applicable as opposed to a separate filing. This will not impact the between-group comparisons; however, it does explain the relatively small number of filings for both groups.

Another issue when comparing the two study groups is a procedural change that occurred during our timeframe with respect to the filing of termination cases. Beginning around July 1, 2000 King County started to file separate termination cases in lieu of the (then) existing practice where an order to termination parental rights was filed within the existing dependency case.<sup>10</sup> This change in practice may be reflected in the larger number of termination filings for the control group.<sup>11</sup> Finally note that most of our analysis will be using a study design utilizing the sample described in columns (2) & (4) where the UFC treatment is considered as beginning at the moment of filing. In the alternative analysis - where we impute a UFC start date onto the control group - the sample will be the expanded one that as described in columns (1) & (3).

### ***Thurston***

As described above, the design in Thurston leads to a sample selection process that is case-based and does not draw data based on any family connection. Since the referral and screening process is non-existent in the general Thurston UFC model, and a case filed in family or juvenile court is sufficient for establishing UFC treatment our sample selection process is greatly simplified and can be automated. As a result, our sample can be vastly larger. Our sample consists of all filings between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002 for certain causes of action in Thurston and Kitsap Counties. We continued to track case information in JIS for both groups until June 30, 2004. Similar to King, this design is a 'natural' experiment where demographic differences will exist between the two counties; however, with this design the only way to control for demographic factors would be at an aggregate level.<sup>12</sup> All of the available and relevant aggregate numbers

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our analyses since the unit of analysis is the cause of action.

<sup>10</sup> This change is very evident in the annual caseload statistics where termination filings in King County are 0 in 1998 and 1999, increase to 120 in year 2000 before stabilizing around 250 in all subsequent years for which data are available (2001-2003). Clearly year 2000 is the transition year for this change in practice.

<sup>11</sup> While we tried to keep the treatment and control groups contemporaneous, our greatest priority in designing a protocol to create a control group was to establish a sound method based upon the UFC screening criteria rather than trying to exactly match the treatment families by cause of action and/or filing dates.

<sup>12</sup> I.e., census data at the county level, for example, median family income.

are quite close in the two counties and did not prove significant in any of the analysis. As in King, the choice of representation (self versus an attorney) is a likely control factor, however, the use of the codes in JIS that pertain to this choice differs between the two counties.

**Table 3-3: Thurston Pilot Site Sample Characteristics**

Cause of Action	Treatment (Thurston)	Control (Kitsap)
	(1) All Cases	(2) All Cases
- Custody	310	105
- Dependency	209	385
- Dissolution with Children	1,188	1,271
- Domestic Violence Protection	1,252	1,473
- Modification	120	60
- Paternity	714	652
- Termination	86	247
TOTAL Number of Cases	3,879	4,193
<i>Total Number of Families</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases filed, by cause of action, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002.

The greatest divergence in numbers between the two counties occurs in custody and termination and to a lesser degree modifications and dependencies. Any differences in practices between the two counties will be discussed below in instances where it is germane to the measures under consideration.

**B. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES & MEASURES**

**1. Objective #1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

Our quantitative data sources are not well suited to address this objective. Derivation of non-subjective measures that adequately captured this objective would be extremely difficult and data sources would be poor to non-existent. For these reasons, we rely on the qualitative data sources in Chapter 2 to address this objective.

Of course none of the program objectives are purely independent and in that sense informed judicial decision-making will be indirectly reflected in many of the quantitative measures (to the extent that there are interactions). For example, one could assume that better informed judicial decision-making and oversight might result in faster case resolution and/or fewer post-completion proceedings. It would be ideal to be able to disentangle all interaction effects; however, data limitations render this infeasible.

## **2. Objective #2: Improved Efficiency and Timeliness of Case Processing**

This objective is addressed with several measures derived from the JIS case management system. As described above, the JIS measures fall into one of two broad categories: (1) a count of certain events (often further conditioned on criteria relative to a key case milestone - e.g., pre-completion continuances) or, (2) the duration between two key case milestones. For most measures, it is straightforward to a priori specify what a positive impact of the treatment condition would be (e.g., fewer continuances on average for the UFC group would be an unambiguously positive treatment effect); however, for other measures it is not.

For example, the UFC model is predicated on the assumption that long-term reductions in litigation and better family outcomes often require fairly intensive and lengthy "front-end" work dealing with a family's many issues. This by itself, if true, could very well lead to more court proceedings. On the other hand, by coordinating cases, UFC should also lead to a reduction in court proceedings as otherwise redundant proceedings are eliminated. This by itself, if true, would lead to *less* court proceedings. These two potential UFC treatment impacts have opposite empirical implications. Taken together, it is not possible on a purely theoretical level to determine which one would a priori be expected to dominate since no framework exists to address the relative magnitudes. The bottom line is that universal agreement over how the UFC would impact this measure is unlikely.

Under this objective we have calculated the average filing-to-completion duration or the average duration from UFC acceptance to case completion. Our hypothesis is that a positive UFC treatment effect would reduce these durations. A counterargument might be that this may be an erroneous assumption given that greater effort and care are put into UFC cases, and that a goal of a higher-quality outcome may not lead to a more expeditious resolution. While this may be true, it is unlikely that a more intense concentration of resources should on average lead to a longer time to completion - especially in family law actions.

Furthermore, given the apparent success (from key informant interviews) of our UFC pilot sites in eliminating procedural difficulties it would seem that at worst the UFC cases should take no longer on average. Dependency actions may be an exception since different options exist that may impact time to completion. For example, a decision to terminate parental rights early in the dependency action would likely lead to a faster completion of that case compared to a decision to work towards reunification. If that decision is impacted by whether or not the case is in a UFC (it very likely could be) and we cannot control for it explicitly (we cannot with the available data) then our duration measure will be a reflection of the choice over permanency options as well as the case processing effects. In family law actions it will reflect only the latter.<sup>13</sup>

Lastly, we calculate duplicate orders from our case file review database to compare treatment and control families with respect to incidence of duplicate orders. A full description of our method to calculate this measure is provided in Appendix G. It is hypothesized that the UFC treatment condition will lead to a smaller "duplication rate" when compared to the control condition.

### **3. Objective #3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

As far as quantitative measures, this objective is addressed primarily with our DSHS data sources; specifically from the Mental Health Division and the Alcohol, & Substance Abuse Division. We compare treatment/activity modes and durations between the UFC and control groups in King and Snohomish to see if any differences are evident. No particular hypotheses are proposed with these data; rather we wanted to document any between-group differences with respect to access.

Note that these analyses have two limitations because of incomplete or missing data. First, we had to match our study individuals with the DSHS databases by drawing on personal identifiers in our JIS system (name, address, birthdate, Social Security number). These identification variables in JIS are incomplete for many individuals reducing the quality of the match. Second, although the typical individual in our study population is most likely to receive treatment through DSHS, it is possible that some will fund it through private means. The treatment data for these individuals will be missing as it does not exist in the

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<sup>13</sup> One could rightly argue that the choice over permanency options is a legitimate treatment effect of UFC; however, the point is that this fairly simple measure should be interpreted differently in a dependency action versus a family law action.

DSHS databases.<sup>14</sup>

From our case file review database we calculate the number of services ordered per family and compliance with those services. It is hypothesized that the UFC treatment will lead to a higher compliance rate.

#### **4. Objective #4: Increased Emphasis on Providing ADR**

Docketing codes exist in JIS to indicate when a case is assigned to mediation or some other form of ADR, thus allowing us to compare incidence of ADR between treatment and control groups. An extraction of this data for our two groups in all three sites revealed little usage of these codes and thus the samples were too small to be of any value in addressing this objective. From more informal inquiries it is our view that this is mainly the result of minimal actual usage of ADR as opposed to data entry practices.

#### **5. Objective #5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

This objective, along with #6 below, represents the long-term *raison d'être* for the UFC model and is one in which the effectiveness of the model should clearly be reflected in the data - in the long-term. Our measures here will be post-completion court appearances and continuances, with our hypothesis of a positive UFC treatment effect obvious from the statement of the objective.

There are two issues to consider in evaluating results of court appearances - the first being quite crucial. First, this long-term objective cannot be adequately addressed within our study timeframe. As mentioned above, the UFC model is predicated on the assumption that long-term reductions in litigation often require fairly intensive and lengthy front-end work dealing with a family's many issues. This assumption cannot be addressed by our study since our study time frame is weighted heavily towards the front end.<sup>15</sup> In fact, many of the cases coordinated under UFC will have already had a case resolution<sup>16</sup> prior to UFC acceptance, and thus post-resolution counts are merely capturing the actual UFC treatment as opposed to the true long-term objective of reducing future litigation. Second, a mere event count does not capture differences in the content of the

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix H for more details on DSHS data.

<sup>15</sup> We can continue to track these families and may be able to address this in a future follow-up study.

<sup>16</sup> Case resolution as defined here is a milestone determined by technical criteria that have a basis in court procedures. In layman's terms it is when the judge 'bangs the gavel'. The specific issue before the court has reached a resolution; however, that does not mean that a family's underlying conflicts have been solved.

events. For example, a modification filed in a former UFC case will have a qualitatively different information set associated with it than a comparable non-UFC case, a difference that could result in a more expeditious resolution of the issue.

## **6. Objective #6: Better Family Outcomes**

This is also much more of a long-term objective which cannot be adequately addressed within the timeframe of our study. The case management data in JIS can address only case processing questions - which while not unrelated to better family outcomes, are nevertheless covered elsewhere. If a faster case resolution is a better family outcome (which it undoubtedly is in specific instances) then objective #6 and #2 will coincide. Better compliance with services ordered can also be considered a better family outcome - again covered in another objective.

The only data source targeted directly to this objective comes from the DSHS, Childrens Administration database. Specifically we look at in-home placements between the UFC and control groups to see if UFC leads to a greater success rate in keeping families together. We have the same issue with incomplete data due to the errors in our matching process; however, we should not have the missing data problem since there are no alternative providers for child protection services.

One final note on data issues to consider. For several of our measures we have an issue with incomplete spells. Because our study timeframe necessitated a date at which we would stop tracking data (June 30, 2004), some outcomes were unknown as of that date (e.g., some cases not completed). It is most often true that the cases with incomplete spells will differ from those with completed spells in a non-random way.<sup>17</sup> This is a common problem in studies such as these yet it should not influence the between-group differences we find (since it affects both groups) as long as the sample sizes are sufficiently large.

## **C. RESULTS FROM JIS DATA SOURCES**

### **1. King County Pilot Site**

As noted earlier, even though we were able to construct a control group for King County out of cases heard in Seattle, the lack of any firm 'UFC starting date' prevented us from capturing the full UFC treatment effect in any between group

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<sup>17</sup> More complex or 'messier' cases take longer and are likely to be overrepresented in the group with incomplete spells.

comparisons. With one exception, the results in the tables below (tables 3-4 through 3-18) are calculated using cases associated with the study group families that are only filed on or after January 1, 1998. With respect to any positive finding for UFC impact, this design is a more conservative approach as it is capturing only a partial treatment effect. The opposite would be true for any negative finding.

The court appearances table (Tables 3-4 to 3-7) calculates the number of days in court on average for the two groups, by cause of action. The calculations are based on JIS proceedings held docket codes.<sup>18</sup> Any appearances on the same day for the same family and the same cause of action will only be counted once.<sup>19</sup> Only for dissolution cases at 18 months from filing and beyond are there any significant differences. UFC families, on average, have more appearances. This would include the UFC planning conference which is unique to UFC.

Counts of continuances (Table 3-8 to 3-11) are derived from the series of docket codes in JIS that pertain to continued and stricken proceedings.<sup>20</sup> Results in these tables are presented by cause of action. Prior to 18 months from filing, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups, most likely due to the small sample sizes. Longer time periods out (18 months and beyond) the UFC does appear to have an overall positive impact on continuances. Note too that as we move farther out from the filing date that we are capturing more of the true UFC treatment effect, and so Tables 3-10 and 3-11 have 'less of an issue' with the partial treatment effect.

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix F for a complete listing.

<sup>19</sup> For example, many families have multiple dependencies that were filed at the same time and are reviewed together. In this example only one appearance is recorded for calculation purposes.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix F for a complete listing.

**Table 3-4: Number of Court Appearances within 6 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.8	9	(1.3)	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Dependency	3.5	16	(1.5)	3.6	20	(1.7)
- Dissolution with Children	2.5	13	(1.3)	1.9	18	(1.3)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.0	3	(0.0)	1.4	11	(0.5)
- Modification	3.2	5	(1.5)	2.0	2	(1.4)
- Paternity	1.9	10	(1.3)	1.6	15	(0.8)
- Termination	1.0	1	--	1.7	9	(0.9)
COMBINED	2.5	57	(1.5)	2.2	77	(1.4)

\*N = Number of appearances within 6 months of filing date

**Table 3-5: Number of Court Appearances within 12 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	2.6	10	(2.0)	1.7	3	(1.2)
- Dependency	4.9	16	(2.1)	5.4	20	(2.6)
- Dissolution with Children	3.8	18	(2.1)	2.9	25	(1.7)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.0	3	(0.0)	1.6	11	(1.0)
- Modification	5.2	5	(2.3)	3.0	2	(2.8)
- Paternity	2.8	12	(1.6)	2.4	18	(1.7)
- Termination	4.0	1	--	2.0	9	(1.1)
COMBINED	3.7	65	(2.2)	3.1	88	(2.2)

\*\*N = Number of appearances within 12 months of filing date

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.
2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

**Table 3-6: Number of Court Appearances within 18 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	3.0	10	(1.9)	2.0	3	(1.7)
- Dependency	5.9	16	(2.6)	6.2	20	(3.2)
<b>- Dissolution with Children <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>(3.1)</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>(1.7)</b>
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.3	3	(0.6)	1.7	11	(1.1)
- Modification	5.6	5	(2.6)	3.0	2	(2.8)
- Paternity	3.7	12	(2.2)	2.7	18	(2.3)
- Termination	5.0	1	--	2.1	9	(1.3)
<b>COMBINED <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>(2.7)</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>(2.7)</b>

\*N = Number of appearances within 18 months of filing date

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.27

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.42

**Table 3-7: Number of Court Appearances within 24 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	3.4	10	(2.1)	3.0	3	(3.5)
- Dependency	7.2	16	(3.1)	6.9	20	(3.6)
<b>- Dissolution with Children <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>(3.7)</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>(1.9)</b>
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.3	3	(0.6)	1.7	11	(1.1)
- Modification	6.4	5	(3.8)	3.0	2	(2.8)
- Paternity	4.3	12	(2.4)	2.9	18	(2.3)
- Termination	5.0	1	--	2.1	9	(1.3)
<b>COMBINED <sup>4</sup></b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>(3.3)</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>(3.0)</b>

\*\*N = Number of appearances within 24 months of filing date

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.55

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=7.83

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.
2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

**Table 3-8: Number of Continuances within 6 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.0	3	(0.0)	1.0	1	--
- Dependency	1.4	8	(1.1)	1.4	9	(0.5)
- Dissolution with Children	1.0	3	(0.0)	1.6	9	(0.5)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.5	2	(0.7)	1.6	5	(0.9)
- Modification	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Paternity	1.0	1	--	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Termination	2.0	1	--	1.6	5	(0.9)
COMBINED	1.2	20	(0.7)	1.5	33	(0.6)

\*N = Number of continuances within 6 months of filing date

**Table 3-9: Number of Continuances within 12 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.0	3	(0.0)	1.0	1	--
- Dependency	1.4	8	(1.1)	1.7	9	(0.9)
- Dissolution with Children	1.6	5	(1.3)	1.6	15	(0.5)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.3	3	(0.6)	1.8	5	(0.8)
- Modification	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Paternity	1.3	3	(0.6)	1.5	4	(1.0)
- Termination	2.0	1	--	2.2	5	(1.1)
COMBINED	1.4	25	(0.9)	1.7	41	(0.8)

\*\*N = Number of continuances within 12 months of filing date

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

**Table 3-10: Number of Continuances within 18 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.0	5	(0.0)	1.0	1	--
- Dependency	1.4	8	(1.1)	1.8	9	(1.1)
- Dissolution with Children	1.4	7	(1.1)	1.7	17	(0.6)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.3	3	(0.6)	2.2	5	(0.8)
- Modification	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Paternity	1.2	4	(0.5)	1.7	4	(1.0)
- Termination	2.0	1	--	2.2	5	(1.1)
<b>COMBINED<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>(0.8)</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>(0.8)</b>

\*N = Number of continuances within 18 months of filing date

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=7.08

**Table 3-11: Number of Continuances within 24 Months of Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.0	5	(0.0)	1.0	1	--
- Dependency	1.5	8	(1.1)	1.9	9	(1.2)
- Dissolution with Children	1.9	7	(1.5)	2.1	17	(1.2)
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.3	3	(0.6)	2.2	5	(0.8)
- Modification	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.5	2	(0.7)
- Paternity	1.5	4	(0.6)	2.2	4	(1.0)
- Termination	2.0	1	--	2.2	5	(1.1)
<b>COMBINED<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>(0.9)</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>(1.1)</b>

\*\*N = Number of continuances within 24 months of filing date

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.22

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

Table 3-12 depicts the filing to completion duration for UFC cases versus control cases at the cause of action level. The only significant result is the much longer duration for dependency cases. Note, however, that as mentioned earlier, dependencies present a somewhat different situation than the family law cases in that the decision regarding permanency really drives the case and there are various options over this choice. The shorter time for control cases could be a reflection of a greater tendency in the non-UFC setting to terminate parental rights which in turn could shorten the life of the case. The considerably larger number of termination cases in the control group would support this view.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 3-12: Filing-to-Completion Duration, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	288	12	(257)	382	3	(354)
<b>- Dependency *</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(300)</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>(511)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	471	18	(244)	441	26	(119)
- Modification	344	6	(177)	258	2	(286)
- Paternity	337	13	(252)	268	20	(180)
- Termination	495	3	(381)	519	19	(394)

*N* = Number of cases

\* Statistically significant at 0.05, *F*-value=8.00

In order to shed some further light on the dependency duration, Table 3-13 depicts the duration of cases from the UFC acceptance date to case completion. For the UFC families we used the actual date in which they were ordered into UFC. For the control families we imputed a UFC acceptance date.<sup>22</sup> This method

<sup>21</sup> Recall that there was a change in business practice during our study timeframe in which termination filings increased dramatically. Given our lack of a true control group in an experimental design, we cannot determine if the larger number of terminations is a difference in UFC versus non-UFC or if we are capturing a larger policy change effect in one group versus another. As mentioned earlier, our process on choosing a control group was focused on a sound referral recreation method as opposed to trying to match families by case composition.

<sup>22</sup> Our method for imputation relied on a two-step procedure. First, we estimated the average time from filing to the date in which the case was ordered into UFC by cause code, using our sample of UFC cases. We did not do this for paternity cases as many tend to be very old. In the second step, we used the estimate from the first step to impute a UFC starting date on the control group cases, by cause code. This has the effect of creating different UFC starting dates for families with multiple cases of different causes. For paternity cases, we looked at each family and used the earliest imputed starting date of any other case associated with that family.

is strictly an estimate for purposes of comparison; however, it does allow us to see the true UFC treatment duration. The results are presented in Table 3-13.

**Table 3-13: UFC Acceptance-to-Completion Duration, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	291	6	(252)	391	2	(436)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>337</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(241)</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>(292)</b>
- <b>Dissolution with Children</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>194</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>(128)</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(203)</b>
- Modification	195	6	(133)	63	4	(64)
- Paternity	142	8	(150)	212	17	(155)
- Termination	365	3	(336)	510	19	(392)

N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=6.52

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.38

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC; filed after Jan 1, 1998 and completed by June 30, 2004.
2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals; filed after Jan 1, 1998 and completed by June 30, 2004.

**Table 3-14: Differences between Tables 3-12 and 3-13, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	3	(6)	n/a	9	(1)	n/a
- Dependency	(408)	0	n/a	96	(10)	n/a
- Dissolution with Children	(277)	(3)	n/a	(125)	1	n/a
- Modification	(149)	0	n/a	(195)	2	n/a
- Paternity	(195)	(5)	n/a	(56)	(3)	n/a
- Termination	(130)	0	n/a	(9)	0	n/a

N = Number of cases

Table 3-14 displays the difference between the two methods. By imputing a UFC

starting date, we see that the dependency duration falls for UFC and rises for the control group. In effect, the second alternative method removes the relatively short duration non-UFC dependency cases from the calculation. Those dropped include several cases in which a decision is made early on to terminate parental rights. This direction will significantly shorten the life of a dependency case versus a permanency plan that is geared towards reunification. Therefore, Table 3-13 is an indirect attempt - in dependency cases - to compare UFC and non-UFC cases in which the permanency plan is not moving towards termination of parental rights. Clearly the UFC setting versus a non-UFC setting will likely have some impact on the whether termination is eventually sought, and the duration figures in Table 3-12 could be reflecting that choice. If true, then a straight comparison of filing-to-completion times may be problematic.

Tables 3-15 through 3-18 also support the above findings. These tables depict completion rates at various points out from the filing date. Once again, only dependency actions are significant, yet also only early on. In fact from Table 3-15 we see that over 40% of the control group dependencies are completed within six months of the filing date. As we move further out this percentage doesn't increase significantly, and by 24 months the two groups are converging. Many of these 'early completers' are cases in which termination of parental rights is sought early in the process.

Overall the case management measures drawn from JIS do not provide much insight into the effect of UFC in King County. There does appear to be an eventual positive effect on continuances. There are more appearances in dissolution cases under UFC. And finally it appears that a subset of non-UFC dependencies are completing relatively quickly.

**Table 3-15: Percentage of Cases Completed 6 Months after Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	50.0%	12	(52.2%)	33.3%	3	(57.7%)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>(18.0%)</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>(50.1%)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	0.0%	18	(0.0%)	0.0%	26	(0.0%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	7	(0.0%)	87.5%	16	(34.2%)
- Modification	16.7%	6	(40.8%)	50.0%	2	(70.7%)
- Paternity	23.1%	13	(43.9%)	40.0%	20	(50.3%)
- Termination	23.1%	3	(0.0%)	40.0%	19	(31.5%)
<b>COMBINED</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>(40.2%)</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>(47.8%)</b>
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=18.34

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.85

**Table 3-16: Percentage of Cases Completed 12 Months after Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	75.0%	12	(45.2%)	33.3%	3	(57.7%)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>(18.0%)</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>(50.1%)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	38.9%	18	(50.2%)	23.1%	26	(43.0%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	7	(0.0%)	100.0%	16	(0.0%)
- Modification	83.3%	6	(40.8%)	50.0%	2	(70.7%)
- Paternity	61.5%	13	(50.6%)	70.0%	20	(47.0%)
- Termination	66.7%	3	(57.7%)	47.4%	19	(51.3%)
<b>COMBINED</b>	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>(49.8%)</b>	<b>50.8%</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>(50.2%)</b>
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=18.34

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

**Table 3-17: Percentage of Cases Completed 18 Months after Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	83.3%	12	(38.9%)	66.7%	3	(57.7%)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>4</sup>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>(42.5%)</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>(50.6%)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	72.2%	18	(46.1%)	84.6%	26	(36.8%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	7	(0.0%)	100.0%	16	(0.0%)
- Modification	83.3%	6	(40.8%)	100.0%	2	(0.0%)
- Paternity	84.6%	13	(37.6%)	90.0%	20	(30.8%)
- Termination	66.7%	3	(57.7%)	68.4%	19	(47.8%)
COMBINED	61.1%	90	(49.0%)	72.7%	132	(44.7%)
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=6.17

**Table 3-18: Percentage of Cases Completed 24 Months after Filing Date, King County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	91.7%	12	(28.9%)	100.0%	3	(0.0%)
- Dependency	41.9%	31	(50.2%)	54.3%	46	(50.4%)
- Dissolution with Children	94.4%	18	(23.6%)	96.2%	26	(19.6%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	7	(0.0%)	100.0%	16	(0.0%)
- Modification	100.0%	6	(0.0%)	100.0%	2	(0.0%)
- Paternity	92.3%	13	(27.1%)	100.0%	20	(0.0%)
- Termination	66.7%	3	(57.7%)	78.9%	19	(41.9%)
COMBINED	75.6%	90	(43.2%)	80.3%	132	(39.9%)
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\*N = Number of cases

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

1. Treatment - All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.
2. Control - See full description in Appendix I. Random sample of families with all cases filed in Seattle and with similar case composition to UFC families in Kent; screened by UFC case manager based upon eligibility criteria (see Appendix K) and accepted as likely successful UFC referrals. Limited to cases filed after Jan. 1, 1998.

## 2. Snohomish County Pilot Site

Tables 3-19 and 3-20 contain court appearance counts for Snohomish. Similar to King, dissolution cases have more pre-completion appearances under UFC versus the non-UFC setting. The magnitude is quite large, however, the number of observations in each group is very small (single digits). Post-completion appearances show no significant differences.

**Table 3-19: Number of Court Appearances (Pre-Completion), Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	4.2	5	(4.0)	1.0	2	(0.0)
- Dependency	7.5	74	(4.5)	6.5	81	(4.0)
- <b>Dissolution with Children</b> <sup>1</sup>	4.3	9	(2.1)	1.7	7	(1.1)
- Domestic Violence Protection	2.0	2	(0.0)	3.0	2	(1.4)
- Modification	4.0	3	(4.4)	-	0	--
- Paternity	2.7	10	(1.8)	1.0	3	(0.0)
COMBINED	6.4	103	(4.4)	5.8	95	(4.1)

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=9.13

**Table 3-20: Number of Court Appearances (Post-Completion), Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	1.0	2	(0.0)	--	0	--
- Dependency	1.8	5	(0.4)	3.0	2	(2.8)
- Dissolution with Children	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.0	2	(0.0)
- Modification	3.0	1	--	-	0	(0.0)
- Paternity	3.3	4	(2.1)	-	0	(0.0)
COMBINED	2.1	14	(1.4)	2.0	4	(2.0)

\*N = Number of cases

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC and assigned to UFC prior to completion; completed by June 30, 2004.

From Tables 3-12 and 3-22, it appears that UFC has no significant effect on continuances. This is not unexpected since all Snohomish UFC cases include a dependency action and many players are required to be present. In other words, it's a significant scheduling problem irrespective of UFC.

**Table 3-21: Number of Continuances (Pre-Completion), Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	4.2	5	(4.0)	1.0	2	(0.0)
- Dependency	7.5	74	(4.5)	6.5	81	(4.0)
- Dissolution with Children	4.3	9	(2.1)	1.7	7	(1.1)
- Domestic Violence Protection	2.0	2	(0.0)	3.0	2	(1.4)
- Modification	4.0	3	(4.4)	-	0	--
- Paternity	2.7	10	(1.8)	1.0	3	(0.0)
COMBINED	6.4	103	(4.4)	5.8	95	(4.1)

\*N = Number of cases

**Table 3-22: Number of Continuances (Post-Completion), Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Dependency	1.8	5	(0.4)	3.0	2	(2.8)
- Dissolution with Children	1.0	2	(0.0)	1.0	2	(0.0)
- Modification	3.0	1	--	-	0	(0.0)
- Paternity	3.3	4	(2.1)	-	0	(0.0)
COMBINED	2.1	14	(1.4)	2.0	4	(2.0)

\*N = Number of cases

**Sample Selection Criteria:**  
 All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC and assigned to UFC prior to completion; completed by June 30, 2004.

Tables 3-23 and 3-24 contain UFC acceptance to completion duration and completion rates respectively. Both tables indicate empirical support for dependency cases completing faster under the UFC setting. The number of observations for the other causes of action is too small to yield significant results, though again this is consistent with the Snohomish model in which most of the associated family law cases are already completed by the time of entry into UFC.

**Table 3-23: UFC Acceptance-to-Completion Duration, Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	218	5	(170)	194	2	(100)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>322</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>(246)</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>(315)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	330	9	(263)	314	7	(201)
- Domestic Violence Protection	42	2	(0)	45	2	(24)
- Modification	270	3	(163)	0	0	--
- Paternity	127	10	(82)	264	5	(229)

N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=18.31

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC; completed by June 30, 2004.

**Table 3-24: Case Completion Rates, Snohomish County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	100.0%	5	(0.0%)	66.7%	3	(57.7%)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>93.8%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>(24.4%)</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(40.0%)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	90.0%	10	(31.6%)	100.0%	7	(0.0%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	2	(0.0%)	100.0%	2	(0.0%)
- Modification	100.0%	3	(0.0%)	-	0	--
- Paternity	76.9%	13	(43.8%)	71.4%	7	(48.8%)
<b>COMBINED</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>(27.2%)</b>	<b>80.8%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>(39.5%)</b>
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=7.08

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=6.28

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases associated with a family, as identified by the UFC case manager for purposes of screening for acceptance into UFC and assigned to UFC prior to completion.

### 3. Thurston County Pilot Site

Given the much larger sample sizes for the Thurston study, many more results are statistically significant compared to the other sites.

**Table 3-25: Number of Court Appearances (Pre-Completion), Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	2.8	269	(2.5)	2.4	55	(3.0)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>(17.9)</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>(6.4)</b>
- <b>Dissolution with Children</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1113</b>	<b>(2.5)</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>1163</b>	<b>(2.6)</b>
- Domestic Violence Protection	1.9	1235	(0.9)	1.4	1417	(0.8)
- Modification	3.4	98	(3.1)	2.8	36	(2.4)
- <b>Paternity</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>(2.5)</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>(1.5)</b>
- <b>Termination</b> <sup>4</sup>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>(1.4)</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>(3.0)</b>
COMBINED	2.8	3419	(4.8)	2.9	3684	(3.8)

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=8.81

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=238.60

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=19.08

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=64.30

**Table 3-26: Number of Court Appearances (Post-Completion), Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	*N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	2.8	45	(5.0)	2.3	11	(2.6)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>(3.4)</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(1.3)</b>
- <b>Dissolution with Children</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>(6.1)</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>(3.1)</b>
- Domestic Violence Protection	2.0	399	(2.4)	1.6	162	(1.1)
- Modification	2.9	29	(2.6)	2.7	7	(1.9)
- Paternity	2.8	134	(3.7)	2.7	130	(3.5)
- Termination	1.0	8	(0.0)	1.6	29	(1.4)
COMBINED <sup>3</sup>	2.8	867	(4.2)	2.4	556	(2.7)

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=29.58

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.94

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.55

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases filed, by cause of action, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002; completed by June 30, 2004.

No clear trend emerges for pre-completion court appearances. For example, (refer to Table 3-25), compared to Kitsap, Thurston has fewer pre-completion appearances in dissolutions and terminations, however it has more for dependencies and paternities. With respect to post-completion appearances (Table 3-26), Thurston has a greater number on average than does Kitsap in both dependencies and dissolutions. Both of these results could be a reflection of the two special family treatment court programs in Thurston - one for dependencies and the other for family law cases. These programs have weekly group hearings in which a large number of individuals will be present, and thus a large number of cases get docketed.

We did not produce any statistics for continuances. After examining some sample docket entries for each county, we concluded that the business practices with respect to continuances were too different between the two and any comparison would be erroneous.

**Table 3-27: Filing-to-Completion Duration, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean Duration (days)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody <sup>1</sup>	208	287	(164)	168	99	(202)
- Dependency <sup>2</sup>	533	141	(277)	621	237	(374)
- Dissolution with Children <sup>3</sup>	222	1163	(164)	276	1251	(202)
- Domestic Violence Protection <sup>4</sup>	13	1252	(35)	18	1473	(43)
- Modification	236	110	(227)	293	58	(233)
- Paternity <sup>5</sup>	227	587	(162)	258	617	(223)
- Termination <sup>6</sup>	160	75	(80)	306	220	(153)

N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.01

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.91

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=51.94

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=10.51

<sup>5</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=7.42

<sup>6</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=61.84

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases filed, by cause of action, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002; completed by June 30, 2004.

Filing-to completion durations (Table 3-27) are generally shorter in Thurston versus Kitsap, the exception being third party custody actions. This is supported

by Tables 3-28 to 3-31 which contain case completion rates by cause of action. Again, the overall consistent trend is towards a speedier completion in Thurston County versus Kitsap County. Note that we are unable to control for any demographic differences between the two counties which might be factor in these results.

**Table 3-28: Percentage of Cases Completed 6 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody <sup>1</sup>	43.9%	310	(49.7%)	61.9%	105	(48.8%)
- Dependency	10.5%	209	(30.8%)	12.7%	385	(33.4%)
- Dissolution with Children <sup>2</sup>	49.3%	1188	(50.0%)	43.5%	1271	(49.6%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	99.2%	1252	(8.9%)	98.7%	1473	(11.3%)
- Modification	45.8%	120	(50.0%)	41.7%	60	(49.7%)
- Paternity <sup>3</sup>	38.9%	714	(48.8%)	44.8%	652	(49.8%)
- Termination <sup>4</sup>	59.3%	86	(49.4%)	11.7%	247	(32.3%)
<b>COMBINED<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>61.1%</b>	<b>3879</b>	<b>(48.8%)</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>4193</b>	<b>(49.2%)</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=10.42

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=8.38

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.81

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=103.05

<sup>5</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=4.29

**Table 3-29: Percentage of Cases Completed 12 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	75.2%	310	(43.3%)	72.4%	105	(44.9%)
- Dependency	20.1%	209	(40.2%)	17.1%	385	(37.7%)
- Dissolution with Children <sup>1</sup>	82.3%	1188	(38.2%)	69.3%	1271	(46.1%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	99.4%	1252	(7.5%)	99.5%	1473	(6.9%)
- Modification <sup>2</sup>	72.5%	120	(44.8%)	55.0%	60	(50.2%)
- Paternity <sup>3</sup>	68.3%	714	(46.5%)	77.0%	652	(42.1%)
- Termination <sup>4</sup>	86.0%	86	(34.9%)	62.8%	247	(48.4%)
<b>COMBINED<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>81.1%</b>	<b>3879</b>	<b>(39.1%)</b>	<b>75.8%</b>	<b>4193</b>	<b>(42.8%)</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=57.60

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.62

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=12.87

<sup>4</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=16.83

<sup>5</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=33.68

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases filed, by cause of action, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002.

**Table 3-30: Percentage of Cases Completed 18 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	89.4%	310	(30.9%)	88.6%	105	(32.0%)
- Dependency	32.1%	209	(46.8%)	24.7%	385	(43.2%)
- <b>Dissolution with Children</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>92.8%</b>	<b>1188</b>	<b>(25.8%)</b>	<b>86.9%</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>(33.7%)</b>
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	1252	(0.0%)	99.9%	1473	(2.6%)
- Modification	85.8%	120	(35.0%)	80.0%	60	(40.3%)
- <b>Paternity</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>78.7%</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>(41.0%)</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>(37.6%)</b>
- Termination	87.2%	86	(33.6%)	80.2%	247	(40.0%)
<b>COMBINED</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>88.6%</b>	<b>3879</b>	<b>(31.7%)</b>	<b>84.7%</b>	<b>4193</b>	<b>(36.0%)</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=23.57

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=3.99

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=27.11

**Table 3-31: Percentage of Cases Completed 24 Months after Filing Date, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)	% Completed	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Custody	91.6%	310	(27.8%)	94.3%	105	(23.3%)
- <b>Dependency</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>49.8%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>(50.1%)</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>(47.3%)</b>
- Dissolution with Children	96.2%	1188	(19.1%)	95.2%	1271	(21.4%)
- Domestic Violence Protection	100.0%	1252	(0.0%)	99.9%	1473	(2.6%)
- Modification	86.7%	120	(34.1%)	95.0%	60	(22.0%)
- <b>Paternity</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>80.7%</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>(39.5%)</b>	<b>88.5%</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>(31.9%)</b>
- Termination	87.2%	86	(33.6%)	87.9%	247	(32.7%)
<b>COMBINED</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>3879</b>	<b>(28.3%)</b>	<b>89.7%</b>	<b>4193</b>	<b>(30.4%)</b>

\*N = Number of cases

<sup>1</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=15.35

<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=16.02

<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05, F-value=5.32

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

All cases filed, by cause of action, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002.

## D. RESULTS FROM THE CASE FILE REVIEW DATABASE

### 1. King County Pilot Site

Results from our case file review database suggest a consistent positive impact of UFC in King County. With respect to services ordered, there are consistently fewer services ordered in the UFC setting versus non-UFC setting (Table 3-32). Within sub-groups, only supervised and unsupervised visitation services were statistically significant. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that UFC reduces duplicate and unnecessary orders for services. We employed a method to explicitly capture duplicate orders, represented in Table 3-34. Due to the computational difficulties involved, we took a conservative approach in our methodology. We only capture only similar orders on different cases for the same individual.<sup>23</sup> Compliance with services ordered (Table 3-33) shows a consistently positive impact of UFC. Assessment compliance in particular was noticeably different between settings. All of these results contained gender as a co-variate.

Some caveats are in order with respect to these results. First, recall that our use of the filing date for the UFC starting date results in a measurement of only a partial treatment effect. This is a conservative approach with respect to a positive impact of UFC and so would suggest that the differences in Table 3-33 are conservative estimates. Second, recall that we have no true comparison group in King. While we believe our method for creating a control group is sound, it nevertheless is not as solid as a true experimental design. While families with a dependency make up only about 30% of the families in either sample, the number of review hearings associated with dependency actions in Table 3-33 are the significant majority (around 80%). In other words, dependency families are overrepresented in the compliance data compared to the JIS data.

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<sup>23</sup> Excluding dependencies which are often bundled together.

**Table 3-32: Number of Services Ordered per Family, King County**

Service Type <i>(Analysis Timeframe: 1/1/98-6/30/04)</i>	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Class	6.4	34	(6.2)	8.7	36	(11.7)
- Urinary Analysis	5.9	20	(4.5)	9.2	25	(9.7)
- <b>Supervised Visit</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>(3.0)</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>
- <b>Unsupervised Visit</b> <sup>2</sup>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(0.9)</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>(2.9)</b>
- Assessment	3.9	29	(3.3)	5.1	42	(3.5)
- Treatment	9.5	41	(7.4)	12.1	43	(13.2)
- DNA Testing	3.5	11	(2.4)	5.8	13	(5.9)
- Family Preservation	5.0	4	2.4	4.7	6	(4.7)
- Medical Management	--	--	--	1.6	8	(1.1)
- GAL/CASA	2.1	38	(1.3)	2.6	26	(2.1)
- Other	3.1	16	(2.2)	4.9	24	(7.7)
<b>- All Combined</b> <sup>3</sup>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>(5.0)</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>(8.8)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=4.61

<sup>2</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=12.37

<sup>3</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=10.83

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

**Table 3-33: Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, King County**

Service Type <i>(Analysis Timeframe: 1/1/98-6/30/04)</i>	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- <b>Class</b> <sup>1</sup>	50.6%	154	(50.2%)	29.5%	237	(45.7%)
- Urinary Analysis	40.8%	71	(49.5%)	31.4%	140	(46.6%)
- Supervised Visit	63.3%	30	(49.0%)	44.9%	89	(50.0%)
- Unsupervised Visit	100.0%	2	(0.0%)	93.3%	30	(25.4%)
- <b>Assessment</b> <sup>2</sup>	62.5%	64	(49.0%)	27.2%	81	(45.0%)
- <b>Treatment</b> <sup>3</sup>	61.8%	152	(48.6%)	47.6%	286	(49.6%)
- <b>DNA Testing</b> <sup>4</sup>	86.4%	22	(35.1%)	31.0%	29	(47.1%)
- Family Preservation	81.8%	11	(40.5%)	72.7%	11	(47.0%)
- Medical Management	-	0	(0.0%)	28.6%	7	(48.8%)
- Other	0.0%	6	(0.0%)	60.7%	28	(49.7%)
- <b>All Combined</b> <sup>5</sup>	56.6%	512	(49.6%)	40.1%	938	(49.0%)

\*\*N is the number of review hearings

<sup>1</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=19.81

<sup>2</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=20.51

<sup>3</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=9.53

<sup>4</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=19.69

<sup>5</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=39.2

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

**Table 3-34: Incidence of Duplicate Orders, King County**

Service Type Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Number of Services Ordered	Number of Duplicate Orders	Duplication %	Number of Services Ordered	Number of Duplicate Orders	Duplication %
- Class	83	3	3.6%	101	6	5.9%
- Random UA	37	1	2.7%	49	4	8.2%
- Supervised Visitation	73	1	1.4%	68	4	5.9%
- Unsupervised Visitation	34	0	0.0%	31	1	3.2%
- Assessment	79	2	2.5%	131	8	6.1%
- Treatment	109	3	2.8%	129	2	1.6%
- Other	190	6	3.2%	238	7	2.9%
<b>- All Combined</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4.3%</b>

*Analysis timeframe: 1/1/1998 to 6/30/2004*

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Services ordered on the same date for a same service type is assumed to be one service ordered. Occurs when the order is entered for each of associated cases on the same date.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

## **2. Snohomish County Pilot Site**

The compliance results for Snohomish are similar to those of King, with some exceptions on compliance in particular service type categories. Like King, the overall average number of services ordered per family is less in the UFC setting versus the non-UFC setting. The compliance rate is also better in the UFC setting versus non-UFC setting, including the sub-groups of assessment and classes. On the other hand the compliance rate is worse for urinary analysis and DNA testing.

The UFC was consistently better in reducing duplicate orders (Table 3-37). The differences between treatment and controls in the service type sub-groups of assessment and treatment were especially strong.

**Table 3-35: Number of Services Ordered per Family, Snohomish County**

Service Type	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- <b>Class</b> <sup>1</sup>	4.2	46	(3.0)	6.2	38	(4.5)
- Urinary Analysis	3.4	32	(2.5)	4.8	31	(3.9)
- Supervised Visit	2.5	43	(1.4)	3.1	33	(2.1)
- Unsupervised Visit	1.6	26	(0.9)	1.7	31	(1.4)
- Assessment	2.5	32	(1.7)	3.4	35	(3.2)
- Treatment	4.9	47	(3.7)	6.5	48	(6.9)
- DNA Testing	2.5	11	(1.8)	2.6	13	(1.8)
- Family Preservation	1.7	18	(1.2)	1.5	11	(0.9)
- Medical Management	1.3	10	(0.5)	1.8	16	(1.0)
- GAL/CASA	2.3	28	(2.0)	2.7	26	(1.9)
- Other	3.1	25	(2.4)	2.5	25	(2.7)
- <b>All Combined</b> <sup>2</sup>	3.1	318	(2.6)	3.9	307	(4.2)

<sup>1</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=5.60

<sup>2</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=8.34

Analysis timeframe: UFC entry date (case specific) to 6/30/2004

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

**Table 3-36: Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, Snohomish County**

Service Type	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Class <sup>1</sup>	41.3%	300	(49.3%)	35.7%	558	(47.9%)
- Urinary Analysis <sup>2</sup>	45.9%	61	(49.5%)	56.8%	148	(49.7%)
- Supervised Visit	52.9%	140	(50.0%)	60.0%	200	(49.1%)
- Unsupervised Visit <sup>3</sup>	83.3%	42	(37.7%)	60.4%	48	(49.4%)
- Assessment*	42.7%	151	(50.0%)	30.4%	250	(46.0%)
- Treatment	50.0%	350	(50.0%)	44.3%	632	(50.0%)
- DNA Testing*	8.7%	23	(28.8%)	18.2%	22	(39.5%)
- Family Preservation	63.9%	36	(48.7%)	77.8%	27	(42.4%)
- Medical Management	85.7%	14	(36.3%)	86.7%	45	(34.4%)
- Other <sup>4</sup>	57.7%	111	(49.6%)	69.0%	58	(46.7%)
- All Combined <sup>5</sup>	48.9%	1228	(50.0%)	44.9%	1988	(49.7%)

<sup>1</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=3.88

<sup>2</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=5.33

<sup>3</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=5.82

<sup>4</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=6.99

<sup>5</sup> Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=6.24

\*\*N is the number of review hearings

Analysis timeframe: UFC entry date (case specific) to 6/30/2004

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

**Table 3-37: Incidence of Duplicate Orders, Snohomish County**

Service Type Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Number of Services Ordered	Number of Duplicate Orders	Duplication %	Number of Services Ordered	Number of Duplicate Orders	Duplication %
- Class	165	13	7.9%	182	31	17.0%
- Random UA	51	3	5.9%	68	17	25.0%
- Supervised Visitation	104	7	6.7%	100	16	16.0%
- Unsupervised Visitation	41	1	2.4%	53	2	3.8%
- Assessment	96	3	3.1%	122	16	13.1%
- Treatment	154	12	7.8%	217	47	21.7%
- Other	353	24	6.8%	408	30	7.4%
<b>- All Combined</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>13.8%</b>

*Analysis timeframe: UFC entry date (case specific) to 6/30/2004*

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Services ordered on the same date for a same service type is assumed to be one service ordered. Occurs when the order is entered for each of associated cases on the same date.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

### 3. Thurston County Pilot Site

The sample used for the compliance measures in Thurston consists of 102 families identified early on as potential study group families. They fall into one of two groups: (1) concurrent cases families, in which a dependency is concurrent with a family law matter, or (2) managed cases which receive more intensive case management and follow-up with services ordered. The breakdown of these families by cause of action is presented in Table 3-38 below.

**Table 3-38: Sample Description for Compliance Database, Thurston County**

Cause of Action	Treatment (Thurston)
	(1) All Cases
- Custody	28
- Dependency	41
- Dissolution with Children	22
- Domestic Violence Protection	6
- Modification	4
- Paternity	36
TOTAL Number of Cases	137
<b>Total Number of Families</b>	<b>102</b>

**Sample Selection Criteria:**

Concurrent and Managed Cases, as identified by UFC case manager from 4/27/2000 to 11/13/2003.

The results on services ordered per family and compliance rates are presented in Tables 3-39 and 3-40. No comparison group exists for these cases. Overall, the compliance rate in Thurston is the highest of the three sites at 67%. Rates for compliance with treatment and classes were particularly high.

**Table 3-39: Number of Services Ordered per Family, Thurston County**

Service Type <i>(Analysis Timeframe: 7/1/00-6/30/04)</i>	Treatment (UFC)		
	Mean (x)	N	Std. Dev (s)
- Class	3.9	42	(2.9)
- Urinary Analysis	6.1	58	(12.9)
- Supervised Visit	3.4	58	(3.1)
- Unsupervised Visit	1.7	38	(1.0)
- Assessment	4.0	41	(4.2)
- Treatment	4.3	63	(4.1)
- DNA Testing	3.0	12	(2.0)
- Family Preservation	2.0	3	(1.7)
- Medical Management	2.0	2	(0.0)
- GAL/CASA	1.5	70	(0.8)
- Other	1.5	13	(0.5)
- All Combined	3.5	400	(5.8)

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

**Table 3-40: Rates of Compliance with Services Ordered, Thurston County**

Service Type <i>(Analysis Timeframe: 7/1/00-6/30/04)</i>	Treatment (UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Class	76.1%	218	(42.7%)
- Urinary Analysis	61.6%	320	(48.7%)
- Supervised Visit	43.9%	57	(50.1%)
- Unsupervised Visit	57.1%	7	(53.5%)
- Assessment	49.7%	149	(50.2%)
- Treatment	78.4%	408	(41.2%)
- DNA Testing	36.8%	19	(49.6%)
- Family Preservation	40.0%	10	(51.6%)
- Medical Management	0.0%	1	-
- Other	100.0%	2	(0.0%)
- All Combined	67.1%	1191	(47.0%)

*\*\*N is the number of review hearings*

**Computation Notes:**

(1) Review hearings appearing on the same date for the same service and individual are assumed to be one occurrence.

**Explanatory Notes for Service Type:**

**Class** includes Parenting Class, Anger Management Class, Participation in AA or NA, Domestic Violence Class for Batterer or Victim and Dependency Process Class.

**Urinary Analysis** includes UA at Courthouse on Day of Hearing and Random UA.

**Treatment** includes Substance Abuse, Individual Treatment, Domestic Violence Treatment, Family Treatment, Sex Offender/Deviancy Evaluation and Treatment, Non-Offender Sexual/Deviancy Counseling, and Sexually Aggressive Youth Evaluation and Treatment.

**Assessment** includes Substance Abuse, Parenting Assessment, Anger Management Assessment, Mental Health, Psychological and Psychiatric Evaluation and Domestic Violence Assessment.

**Medical Management** includes Physical Examination.

**Other** includes Public Health Nurse, Home Study, In-Home Support Services, Physical Exam and Medication Management, and Other Services.

## E. RESULTS FROM DSHS DATA SOURCES

Only the King and Snohomish pilot sites are presented below. Our larger sample from Thurston was at the case level as opposed to the individual participant level and the smaller sample had no comparison group. Since DSHS data must be matched at the individual level, obtaining data for Thurston was not possible.

### 1. King County Pilot Site

Beginning with the Alcohol and substance abuse data, we were only able to successfully match 34.4% of our families. A complete, or perfect, match would not be expected to be 100% since not all of the individuals in the study have substance abuse problems. We don't have a good estimate of what a perfect match would be, although we are nearly certain that we are missing data due to imperfections in the data matching process.

Table 3-41 contains services received by modality for our treatment and control groups in King County. Significant differences were found for long-term residential/ recovery/transitional housing and overall.

**Table 3-41: DSHS-DASA Services Received, King County**

Type of Service (Modality)	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Inpatient	1.4	10	(0.7)	1.1	7	(0.4)
- Outpatient/Methadone	1.9	24	(1.3)	2.5	29	(1.5)
- Long-term Residential/ Recovery/ Transitional Housing *	<b>1.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>(0.9)</b>
- Other	1.0	3	(0.0)	2.0	1	--
- Combined <sup>†</sup>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>(1.1)</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>(1.4)</b>

\*\*N is the number of individuals receiving the service

\* Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=4.71

<sup>†</sup> Statistically significant at 0.05 level, F-value=4.64

**Analysis Timeframe:**

Based on individuals with cases in court during the overall study timeframe of 1/1/1998 to 6/30/2004.

Treatment completion rates (Table 3-42) were much better in the UFC group, although again the individuals associated with dependency actions is where this difference really resides.

**Table 3-42: DSHS-DASA Treatment Completion Rates, King County**

Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (%)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (%)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Families w/ Dependency Action *	44.0%	25 (7)	(50.5%)	16.9%	77 (26)	(37.7%)
- Families w/ no Dependency Action	54.8%	31 (10)	(50.7%)	58.3%	12 (5)	(51.5%)
- All Families †	50.0%	56 (17)	(50.5%)	22.5%	89 (31)	(42.0%)

\*\*N = the number of treatment episodes ( number of individuals receiving treatment )

\* Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=5.84

† Statistically significant at 0.05 level, F-value=8.28

**Analysis Timeframe:**

Based on individuals with cases in court during the overall study timeframe of 1/1/1998 to 6/30/2004.

**Computation Notes:**

(1) ANOVA procedure included gender, educational attainment, marital status, and age as co-variates.

(2) Completion rate is defined as follows:

Complete=1 when discharge type='Complete Treatment'  
=0 otherwise

**Table 3-43: DSHS-Mental Health Div. Services Received, King County**

Treatment Option	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Inpatient Days	31.6	5	(47.8)	19.4	5	(17.0)
- Outpatient Hours	43.6	44	(70.7)	86.2	27	(151.1)

\*\*N is the number of individuals receiving treatment

**Notes:**

(1) Inpatient =Sum(Community Hospital, Evaluation & Treatment, State Hospital Non-Forensic).

(2) Outpatient=Outpatient Services Hours

(3) Timeframe: 1/1/1998-6/30/2004

Mental health services data are presented in Table 3-43. Due to the small sample sizes, no significant differences are observed.

**Table 3-44: DSHS-Children's Admin. CPS Referrals and Placement Episodes per Family, King County**

Variable	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	N families	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	N families	Std. Dev (s)
- CPS Referrals per Family	4.9	48	(3.2)	4.9	34	(3.9)
- Placement Episodes per Family	1.3	14	(0.42)	1.4	21	(0.65)

**Table 3-45: DSHS-Children's Admin. Placement Outcomes, King County**

Placement Outcome Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	**N	Mean Duration (x)	Std. Dev (s)	**N	Mean Duration (x)	Std. Dev (s)
- Returned Home	13	406	(318)	18	422	(503)
- Legally Free	5	774	(342)	18	744	(349)
- Other	0	--	--	5	731	(534)
- <b>Open (as of 6/30/04) *</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1027</b>	<b>(350)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1561</b>	<b>(228)</b>
- All Combined	20	560	(382)	52	804	(578)

\* Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=8.25

\*\*N is the number of placement episodes

**Explanatory Notes for Placement Outcome Categories:**  
**Other** includes Juvenile Court Guardianship and Reached Age of Majority.

Our match rate with Children's Administration data was around 68%. Placement episodes per family (Table 3-44) did not reveal any significant differences, with small sample sizes again a likely factor. With respect to placement outcomes (Table 3-45)<sup>24</sup>, the only significant difference was observed on those still open at the end of our study timeframe. However, here as well we are dealing with a very small number of observations.

<sup>24</sup> Age, race and gender were used as covariates in placement outcomes. We attempted to use the risk factor (high or low) as a covariate but there is no one-to-one match between the risk factor and a placement episode. For age, we used age cohorts of under 5, 5-9, 10-14, and over 14. Age was determined as age at first placement. Race was white and other. The final spell in an episode (BA/BN) where the child is returned home was excluded as it represents mandatory home monitoring after the child is returned home. These spells often have no ending date (e.g., unless the child is returned to CPS).

## 2. Snohomish County Pilot Site

No significant differences existed between UFC and non-UFC families with any of the measures derived from DASH and Mental Health divisions. Once again, small sample sizes are likely a factor.

**Table 3-46: DSHS-DASH Services Received, Snohomish County**

Type of Service (Modality)	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Inpatient	1.0	6	(0.0)	1.0	3	(0.0)
- Outpatient/Methadone	1.8	17	(0.9)	1.6	24	(0.9)
- Long-term Residential/ Recovery/ Transitional Housing	2.0	2	(1.4)	1.0	3	(0.0)
- Combined	1.6	25	(0.9)	1.5	30	(0.9)

*\*\*N is the number of individuals receiving the service*

*Note: None of the above are statistically significant*

**Analysis Timeframe:**

Based on individuals date of acceptance into UFC to 6/30/2004.

**Table 3-47: DSHS-DASH Treatment Completion Rates, Snohomish County**

Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (%)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (%)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- All Families	47.1%	34 (16)	(50.7%)	30.8%	39 (22)	(46.8%)

*\*\*N = the number of treatment episodes ( number of individuals receiving treatment )*

**Analysis Timeframe:**

Based on individuals date of acceptance into UFC to 6/30/2004.

**Computation Notes:**

(1) ANOVA procedure included gender, educational attainment, marital status, and age as co-variates.

(2) Completion rate is defined as follows:

Complete=1 when discharge type='Complete Treatment'  
=0 otherwise

**Table 3-48: DSHS-Mental Health Div. Services Received, Snohomish County**

Treatment Option	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	**N	Std. Dev (s)
- Inpatient Days	21.0	3	(14.0)	17.3	4	(14.4)
- Outpatient Hours	32.6	34	(43.4)	27.8	29	(50.2)

*\*\*N is the number of individuals receiving treatment*

**Notes:**

- (1) Inpatient =Sum(Community Hospital, Evaluation & Treatment, State Hospital Non-Forensic).
- (2) Outpatient=Outpatient Services Hours
- (3) Timeframe: 7/1/2000-6/30/2004

The only significant difference in the Children's Administration data in Snohomish was in placement outcomes where the child was eventually legally free (Table 3-50). Under the UFC condition, the placement duration was significantly longer. One possible interpretation of this result would be that the UFC makes a greater effort in striving for reunification - even in situations where the hurdles are considerable.

**Table 3-49: DSHS-Children's Admin. CPS Referrals and Placement Episodes per Family, Snohomish County**

Variable	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	Mean (x)	N families	Std. Dev (s)	Mean (x)	N families	Std. Dev (s)
- CPS Referrals per Family	2.6	29	(1.8)	2.2	27	(1.7)
- Placement Episodes per Family	1.2	20	(0.69)	1.2	19	(0.37)

**Table 3-50: DSHS-Children's Admin. Placement Outcomes, Snohomish County**

Placement Outcome Category	Treatment (UFC)			Control (Non-UFC)		
	**N	Mean Duration (x)	Std. Dev (s)	**N	Mean Duration (x)	Std. Dev (s)
- Returned Home	18	253	(268)	10	397	(480)
- <b>Legally Free *</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>(167)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>(181)</b>
- Other	3	739	(78)	3	696	(435)
- Open (as of 6/30/04)	4	1101	(318)	6	666	(401)
- All Combined	33	560	(381)	25	804	(412)

\* Statistically Significant at 0.05 level, F-value=17.15

\*\*N is the number of placement episodes

**Explanatory Notes for Placement Outcome Categories:**

**Other** includes Juvenile Court Guardianship and Reached Age of Majority.

**F. SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

Strong and unambiguous empirical results derived from quantitative measures are very revealing when they materialize. As is often the case in studies such as this, where the sample sizes are small and the complexities of what is being measured are large, obtaining solid quantitative results is difficult. With fifty tables of data in this chapter it is obvious that an attempt was made to explore many possible avenues where quantitative measures might provide empirical support for some of the UFC program objectives. The a priori expectation was that strong results would not emerge and this has been shown to be true. Nevertheless, some interesting empirical findings did emerge:

- Compliance with services ordered was consistently better in the UFC setting.
- UFC reduces duplicate orders
- The UFC in King County appears to lead to a reduction in continuances later in the life of a case.
- There tend to be more pre-completion court appearances in dissolution cases for UFC families.

- In the dependency-driven model of Snohomish, one key objective is to work towards eliminating procedural hurdles in the family law case in order to complete the dependency. Empirical results of the significantly shorter completion durations of dependency cases in Snohomish are consistent with UFC success in this area.

## **CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS**

### **A. SUMMARY**

#### **1. Significance of this Project**

The Unified Family Court Pilot in Washington State was established to address the needs of families involved with multiple cases in the juvenile and family court systems. By ultimately decreasing the contact between these families and the justice system, and increasing the linkage to social services and treatment, the modifications to the UFC suggested by the evaluation team based on findings from this study will benefit the children, parents, the community, as well as UFC staff and stakeholders.

The Unified Family Court model is designed to address the needs of families with multiple legal cases and to ultimately improve their outcomes and decrease future contact with the legal system. By empirically assessing variables such as time in foster care and substance abuse and other treatment services received, the needs of the families will be addressed and future court interventions modified accordingly.

#### **2. UFC Development**

This evaluation focused on a pilot project consisting of three UFC models that varied in significant ways. Any statewide recommendations or proposals pertaining to UFC need to take these differences into consideration, as well as the variability among jurisdictions across the state. Any general policy development pertaining to UFC would need to balance any goals towards establishing some uniformity against allowing for flexibility in developing UFC models that fit a jurisdiction size, culture, and resource availability. Model rules have been presented by the UFC workgroup and should be tailored as suggested, keeping in mind that certain aspects will require more flexibility than others. As per Kuhn (1998), there is a full menu of UFC components that may be drawn upon to formulate an individualized model. Considerations in developing a new UFC include:

- (1) size of jurisdiction
- (2) resources available
- (3) ability to co-locate different case types
- (4) information systems and screening ability
- (5) judicial leadership and commitment
- (6) judicial rotations and impact
- (7) clerk involvement and level of commitment

(8) staff requirements

### 3. Litigant Feedback

Focus groups combine elements of in-depth interviews and observation and add the unique element of group dynamics. Focus groups can be invaluable tools in identifying strengths and weaknesses in project implementation, and can be important in interpreting quantitative findings (NSF, 1997). The attempt to conduct focus groups came following requests from the UFC workgroup for litigant feedback. As part of a formative/process evaluation, this feedback is important in providing information about the program (Krueger & Casey, 2000), but **should not be interpreted as having scientific validity**, thus generalizing any statements to the UFC population as a whole is questionable. This is an issue in using focus groups for any research (Fern, 2001). Additionally, there are many difficulties involved with accessing litigants for this type of court research. They may not be pleased with the outcome of their court cases, and those who are the least pleased tend to respond more (Fern, 2001), resulting in a negatively skewed sampling bias. In order for these focus groups results to be generalized to the greater population of UFC participants, a random sample of litigants in multiple focus groups would be necessary. Such an approach would need to be implemented at the onset of a program to capture this transient population. Alternatively, a survey approach that gathers data at multiple time points, beginning with the first contact with UFC or comparison court, could be implemented. Even with this approach, it is likely that many study participants would be lost to attrition following the first measure.

The focus groups do allow us to place some findings in perspective. It is apparent from statements made in the groups that litigants are generally unaware of the meaning of their involvement with UFC. It was apparent from both the groups in Thurston and interviews in King that many of the frustrations of being involved with family law or dependency cases continue to exist in UFC. Litigants do not seem to be even remotely aware of their participation in a “problem-solving” court environment, although they may be aware that there is a case manager or central contact person.

### 4. Case Management

Surveyed practitioners and interviewees found case management helpful. In fact, less than 10% of practitioners surveyed found it not helpful. Similarly, they agree that the UFC setting is a more efficient and effective approach to handling families with multiple cases and complex legal and social issues.

## **5. Decision Making**

Surveyed practitioners indicated that the “one judicial team model” seemed to clearly result in fewer judicial officers per case, more consistency in orders, and better informed decision making. The consistency of orders was one of the strongest findings in the survey, with 75% of surveyed practitioners reporting fewer consistencies or conflicting orders in UFC. The responses to the NCSC question set reflect respondents’ positive attitudes pertaining to quality of court decisions in UFC and case processing timeliness. The lack of agreement on categories such as hardship and cost and litigant satisfaction point to a lack of clarity for these topics.

## **6. Timeliness**

There was agreement among parties within the sites regarding time required for case resolution and permanency, with the model in Snohomish County clearly associated with shorter time to both resolution and permanence in dependency cases.

## **7. Access to and Coordination of Services**

Case file review measures indicated significant positive effects of UFC treatment on compliance with services ordered. There is consistent support for this finding among the key informants interviewed - in fact, interviewees felt increasing the number of review hearings enhanced compliance via accountability. Empirical support emerged that the UFC reduces duplicate orders, which likewise received support from the qualitative data sources.

Efficient case management practices were cited by UFC stakeholders as critical for enhancing coordination within the court (e.g. scheduling) and between the court and social service agencies involved with the case. The theory is that, with proper case management, cases are screened, monitored, and directed to the appropriate track, utilizing ADR wherever appropriate. Cases in the family law realm do not typically receive this level of attention.

Another problem families with multiple cases often face is lack of resources and treatment services that may result in escalating problem behaviors and accompanying difficulties in parenting. Along these lines, utilization of mental health services has been cited as one of the strongest program effects for divorced parent education programs. In fact, in their evaluation of a court-mandated prevention program for divorced parents, Kramer & Washo (1993) noted that increased utilization of mental health services was one of the strongest program effects. Access to such services may also be an important family

outcome for UFC, as it has been noted anecdotally that many of the UFC parent participants present with substance use problems and some with co-occurring mental illness. Given that access to services is also listed as a UFC objective, it was determined that such access should be tracked as part of the evaluation. Results from the social services data analyses could have shed some light on access; however, the results were inconclusive due to small sample sizes.

### *Summary of Key Findings*

- Empirical verification that UFC leads to a reduction of redundant and/or conflicting judicial orders
- Empirical verification that UFC treatment has a positive effect on compliance with court-ordered services
- Consensus support that UFC improves continuity of judicial oversight
- Consensus support that UFC cases require more time and resources at the 'front-end' - with an anticipated future payoff
- Consensus support of UFC case management benefits to children, clients, and the family
- Consensus support for the importance of case management practices that gather and organize critical information, are proactive in identifying issues, and maintain a higher level of monitoring.
- No empirical validation for UFC reducing either continuances or court appearances
- No evidence of an increased reliance on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods under UFC
- Consensus support for the importance of judicial leadership in establishing effective procedures and maintaining commitment
- Lack of resources to support the model is a continuing concern
- Consensus view that collaboration among all parties is necessary for resolving complex issues and establishing accountability
- Lack of legal assistance in family law matters negatively impacts any efficiency gains of UFC
- Judicial decision-making significantly benefits from specialized training and longer rotations

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Policy Recommendations**

- For each implementation, a clear definition of UFC should be developed and communicated to all involved parties. Program objectives and expectations need to be clearly articulated at the beginning and reinforced throughout the process.
- A strategy should be developed to promote greater litigant awareness and buy-in, and to effectively communicate to them that they are participating in a problem-solving court.
- All judicial officers should receive cross-training in juvenile and family law.
- Attorney should receive training that is specific to UFC, focusing on their roles and relevant court procedures and rules.
- A state court rule should be established setting long-term rotations for UFC judicial officers in jurisdictions of significant size.
- Legislation regarding specific information sharing and use would eliminate guesswork for all parties. It could be mandated that judges be given information on all open cases for a family when children are involved, in addition to information and history on all dependency cases.
- Development of information systems that address the UFC model and provide users the ability to screen for and review cases in detail.
- State funding for staff to help adequately support the model.

#### **1. Awareness via Education and Public Relations.**

A theme among sites was the delayed buy-in from both attorneys and judicial officers, much of which seems to stem from basic lack of awareness. Attorneys seem to be particularly lacking in basic understanding of the UFC model, concepts, and procedures. Attorney training should be specific to UFC, their roles, relevant court rules, and procedures of their jurisdiction's UFC. Hands on training for procedures such as referrals and planning conferences could include sample forms and court orders for enhanced familiarity.

A unified definition of UFC should be developed, operationalized, and communicated to the court community and all parties of UFC. For attorneys, judicial officers, and social services, this could be a major component of training, educational programming, and public relations. All parties in UFC cases should be aware of their involvement in UFC, the definition of UFC in that jurisdiction,

and how this model differs from the “usual” family and juvenile court process. A pamphlet and continuous reminders of the model and how it works should be readily available for consumers.

## **2. Enhanced Training for Judicial Officers.**

Judicial officers have a defined “leadership curriculum,” but need more training on working with multiple case types, including cross-training in juvenile and family law.

## **3. Site Specific Recommendations**

### **a. King**

- Regularly scheduled UFC review hearings. At this point, UFC reviews are typically set if compliance of parties is in question. It was noted by several interviewees that reviews at regular intervals with clearly outlined expectations would enhance accountability and therefore compliance. Ideally, these reviews would be combined with those required for certain case types (e.g. dependency) so that increased time in court is minimized.

### **b. Thurston**

- It is recommended that the regularly scheduled UFC meetings be implemented again for the purposes of planning, policy, and enhanced communication.
- It is recommended that the Clerk’s office provide staff to attend these regular, monthly UFC meetings.
- UFC-oriented trainings or seminars should be implemented for all staff.
- Part of the difficulty in evaluating the UFC model in Thurston is the lack of a concise definition of the program to be evaluated. UFC is defined as an entity that houses multiple programs such as Family Drug Court, Dependency Drug Court, concurrent cases, case management, and most recently a family court facilitator orientation program. A comprehensive evaluation of UFC would therefore entail intense evaluation of each individual program identified as a UFC component. Such intensive work is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but is recommended as a next step for UFC in Thurston. This is similar to the difficulties with evaluating fidelity and outcomes for wraparound programs in the juvenile justice system (Rast & Burns, 2003). Policymakers may be hesitant to add such programs to best practice lists without strong evidence for the effectiveness of each component to the model. Recommendations that the Thurston UFC model in its current form be replicated by other jurisdictions therefore cannot be made without thorough investigation of

- the efficacy of each of its defined components.
- Give unique names to the two Family Treatment Courts that identifies their nature, case types, and goals. Although those working in the juvenile and family courthouse are quite familiar with the models (e.g. “Commissioner X’s Family Drug Court”), this may not be the case for pro se litigants, attorneys or newer social service representatives.

### **C. FINAL REMARKS**

Previous studies of unified family court programs have not rendered any ultimate conclusions regarding success or failure, but guided recommendations in improving operations to benefit families. This study found some strong empirical evidence for UFC effectiveness; however, our limited timeframe did not allow for a truly full study which would include the long-term benefits. In practice, it is difficult to quantify the desired outcomes for a Unified Family Court. In the criminal justice system, variables such as recidivism or jail days commonly define success or failure of a program, and associated costs and tangible benefits are available. It is quite a different task to quantify concepts such as better informed judicial decision-making or better family outcomes, that may involve the experiences of and outcomes for children several years from now. A truly comprehensive outcome evaluation of the Unified Family Court model would therefore involve a longitudinal study of multiple realms of functioning for both children and parents, and would capture the costs and benefits of their experiences in multiple systems of judicial and social services intervention.



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## **APPENDIX A: RCW CITATIONS & LOCAL COURT RULES**

### **RCW 26.12.800**

#### **Family court pilot program -- Legislative recognition.**

The legislature recognizes the increasing incidence of concurrent involvement of family members in multiple areas of the justice system. Analysis shows significant case overlap in the case types of juvenile offender, juvenile dependency, at-risk youth, child in need of services, truancy, domestic violence, and domestic relations. Also recognized is the increased complexity of the problems facing family members and the increased complexity of the laws affecting families. It is believed that in such situations, an efficient and effective response is through the creation of a unified court system centered around the family that: Provides a dedicated, trained, and informed judiciary; incorporates case management practices based on a family's judicial system needs; enables multiple case type resolution by one judicial officer or judicial team; provides coordinated legal and social services; and considers and evaluates the needs of the family as a whole.

### **RCW 26.12.802**

#### **Family court pilot program -- Created.**

The administrator for the courts shall conduct a unified family court pilot program.

(1) Pilot program sites shall be selected through a request for proposal process, and shall be established in no more than three superior court judicial districts.

(2) To be eligible for consideration as a pilot project site, judicial districts must have a statutorily authorized judicial complement of at least five judges.

(3) The administrator for the courts shall develop criteria for the unified family court pilot program. The pilot program shall include:

(a) All case types under Title 13 RCW, chapters 26.09, 26.10, 26.12, 26.18, 26.19, 26.20, 26.26, 26.50, 26.27, and 28A.225 RCW;

(b) Unified family court judicial officers, who volunteer for the program, and meet training requirements established by local court rule;

(c) Case management practices that provide a flexible response to the diverse court-related needs of families involved in multiple areas of the justice system. Case management practices should result in a reduction in process redundancies and an efficient use of time and resources, and create a system enabling multiple case type resolution by one judicial officer or judicial team;

(d) A court facilitator to provide assistance to parties with matters before the unified family court; and

(e) An emphasis on providing nonadversarial methods of dispute resolution such as a settlement conference, evaluative mediation by attorney mediators, and facilitative mediation by nonattorney mediators.

(4) The office of the administrator for the courts shall publish and disseminate a state-

approved listing of definitions of nonadversarial methods of dispute resolution so that court officials, practitioners, and users can choose the most appropriate process for the matter at hand.

(5) The office of the administrator for the courts shall provide to the judicial districts selected for the pilot program the computer resources needed by each judicial district to implement the unified family court pilot program.

(6) The office of the administrator for the courts shall conduct a study of the pilot program measuring improvements in the judicial system's response to family involvement in the judicial system. The administrator for the courts shall report preliminary findings and final results of the study to the governor, the chief justice of the supreme court, and the legislature on a biennial basis. The initial report is due by July 1, 2000, and the final report is due by December 1, 2004.

#### **RCW 26.12.804**

##### **Family court pilot program -- Rules.**

The judges of the superior court judicial districts with unified family court pilot programs shall adopt local court rules directing the program. The local court rules shall comply with the criteria established by the administrator for the courts and shall include:

- (1) A requirement that all judicial officers hearing cases in unified family court:
  - (a) Complete an initial training program including the topic areas of childhood development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness; and
  - (b) Subsequent to the training in (a) of this subsection, annually attend a minimum of eight hours of continuing education of pertinence to the unified family court;
- (2) Case management that is based on the practice of one judge or judicial team handling all matters relating to a family;
- (3) An emphasis on coordinating or consolidating, to the extent possible, all cases before the unified family court relating to a family; and
- (4) Programs that provide for record confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of court records in accordance with the law. However law enforcement agencies shall have access to the records to the extent permissible under the law.

#### **RCW 13.34.115**

##### **Hearings -- Public excluded when in the best interests of the child--Notes and records -- Video recordings.**

- (1) All hearings shall be public, and conducted at any time or place within the limits of the county, except if the judge finds that excluding the public is in the best interests of the child.
- (2) Either parent, or the child's attorney or guardian ad litem, may move to close a hearing at any time. If the judge finds that it is in the best interests of the child the court

shall exclude the public.

(3) If the public is excluded from the hearing, the following people may attend the closed hearing unless the judge finds it is not in the best interests of the child:

- (a) The child's relatives;
- (b) The child's foster parents if the child resides in foster care; and
- (c) Any person requested by the parent.

(4) Stenographic notes or any device which accurately records the proceedings may be required as provided in other civil cases pursuant to RCW 2.32.200.

(5) Any video recording of the proceedings may be released pursuant to RCW 13.50.100, however, the video recording may not be televised, broadcast, or further disseminated to the public.

### *King Local Court Rules*

#### **LR 0.18 PILOT PROJECTS**

Pilot projects in King County Superior Court shall operate through published procedures approved by the Presiding Judge and the Executive Committee.

[Adopted effective September 1, 2000.]

Official Comment:

This rule is currently necessary to comply with RCW 26.12.082, Family Court Pilot Program. The rule will also provide guidance for future pilot projects, so that pilot projects may fully evolve prior to entry of local rules regarding the project.

#### **LFLR 7. UNIFIED FAMILY COURT**

**(a) Purpose of Unified Family Court.** The purpose of the Unified Family Court (UFC) is to promote effective judicial management of cases involving the health and welfare of children, and to facilitate the prompt resolution of these cases.

**(b) UFC Case Manager.** The role of the UFC case manager is to provide coordination and monitoring of case progress and compliance with court-ordered services. The UFC case manager may summarize the contents of the various court files for use by the commissioners and judges. All information summaries provided to the court will also be provided to all parties either orally or in writing.[KP1]

**(c) Referral to UFC.** Referrals for UFC case management may be made by any judicial officer, the parties or attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Family Court Services, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), domestic violence advocates, juvenile probation officers, family law facilitators, or other persons involved with a family. If a case is accepted for UFC case management, all pending juvenile and family law cases concerning the family and the children, except for juvenile offender matters, will be transferred to UFC and managed together as a case group.

**(d) UFC Case Area Designations (UFS or UFK).** Each case accepted for UFC case management will have its original case area designation (SEA or KNT) changed upon acceptance to UFC; SEA will be changed to UFS and KNT will be changed to UFK. The

*Appendix A, Local Court Rules*

Order on Acceptance to Unified Family Court will include an order changing the designation for all associated cause numbers to UFS or UFK. All parties shall use the new case area designation (UFS or UFK) on all pleadings or orders filed after the date of acceptance for UFC case management.

**(e) Planning Conference.** If the UFC case manager believes a planning conference would assist the court in managing the case, a planning conference will be set. At the planning conference, the court will address administrative issues that affect case management, including but not limited to issues such as consolidation of various pending matters, coordination of case schedules, use of alternative dispute resolution; evaluations needed for trial or hearings, compliance with evaluations or services previously ordered, and discovery.

**(f) Motions.** Motions in a UFC case shall be scheduled and heard in conformance with the Order on Acceptance to Unified Family Court[KP2].

**(g) Termination of UFC case management.** A case will no longer receive court supervision or case management upon the signing of an order terminating UFC case management. The case area designation of UFS or UFK will not be changed upon termination of UFC case management services. Any motions filed after the entry of an order terminating UFC case management shall be scheduled and heard in accordance with these rules in general, including LFLR 5.

*Snohomish Local Court Rules*

**RULE 0.04 PILOT PROJECTS**

Pilot projects in Snohomish County Superior Court shall operate through published procedures approved by the court.

[adopted effective September 1, 2000]

*Thurston Local Court Rules*

**LSPR 94.01 CONCURRENT JURISDICTION OVER FAMILY COURT  
AND JUVENILE COURT ACTIONS**

**(a) Contemporaneous Actions.** Contemporaneous actions are actions filed in Family and Juvenile Court involving the same family or child and having court action within the previous twelve (12) months.

**(b) Concurrent Jurisdiction by Rule.** The Family and Juvenile Court shall have concurrent jurisdiction over any contemporaneous action under chapters 13.32A or 13.34 RCW or title 26 RCW, except chapter 26.33 RCW, unless a party shows good cause why the Court should not exercise concurrent jurisdiction, or, unless on its own motion, the Court determines that concurrent jurisdiction should not be exercised.

**(c) Concurrent Actions by Court Order.** Actions filed under chapter 26.33 RCW, chapter 28A.225 RCW, title 13 RCW, and any other action assigned to Family and Juvenile Court may be subject to concurrent jurisdiction upon a showing of good cause. An order shall

be entered 26 identifying any case subject to concurrent jurisdiction that is not identified in subsection (b).

**(d) Case Information Cover Sheet.** To assist in the identification of concurrent actions, a Case Information Cover Sheet shall be completed upon filing of any action in the Family and Juvenile Court. The Case Information Cover Sheet may be found in the Forms Appendix.

[Amended effective February 9, 1999.]

#### **LSPR 94.02 MANAGEMENT OF CONCURRENT CASES**

**(a) Assignment of Cases.** To the extent practical, and taking into account the use of court commissioners and schedules for judges' rotations, the same judicial officer will be assigned the concurrent actions of a family as identified in LSPR 94.01. The judicial officer first hearing the family's case will be assigned all subsequent concurrent actions, unless there is good cause for a different assignment. Generally, court commissioners will hear pre-trial matters, except motions for revision and settlement conferences.

**(b) Scope of Concurrent Jurisdiction.**

(1) *Access to Court Files.* The Court, after notice, hearing, and entry of an appropriate protective order, may authorize to parties and their attorneys in a concurrent case access to concurrent case court records and files and any files or records maintained by the Guardians ad Litem unless prohibited by law.

(2) *Party Status.* A finding of concurrent jurisdiction shall not automatically confer party status in one action on any party in another action.

(3) *Guardians ad Litem.* The Guardian ad Litem in one proceeding may be appointed Guardian ad Litem in any concurrent action.

(4) *Parenting Plans.* Entry of a parenting plan in any concurrent case shall be conditioned upon the filing of a proper motion in a Title 26 RCW action.

(5) *Applicability of Other Rules.* In concurrent jurisdiction actions, the Superior Court Civil Rules, Juvenile Court Rules, and the Local Rules will be applicable to each action.

[Amended effective February 9, 1999.]

#### **LSPR 94.08 JUDICIAL OFFICER TRAINING**

**(a) Initial Training.** All judicial officers assigned to Family and Juvenile Court for six months or more in a calendar year shall complete training including the subject areas of childhood development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency and mental illness. The training requirement may be satisfied by training programs attended within twelve months prior to the assignment or within six months after beginning the assignment.

**(b) Continuing Training.** Subsequent to initial training, judicial officers assigned to Family and Juvenile Court under paragraph (a) above shall annually attend a minimum of eight hours of continuing education on subjects relevant to families and children in the court.

**(c) Pro Tem Court Commissioner Training.** To serve as a court commissioner at Family

*Appendix A, Local Court Rules*

and Juvenile Court on a regular or substitute assignment, an attorney shall have completed the Guardian ad Litem training curriculum or its equivalent except for good cause.

[Effective September 1, 2000.]

## **APPENDIX B: UFC FORMS**

### **1. King UFC Forms**

#### **a. UFC Referral Form**

### **KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT UNIFIED FAMILY COURT REFERRAL FORM**

The purpose of the Unified Family Court (UFC) is to promote effective judicial management of cases involving the health and welfare of children, and to facilitate prompt resolution of these cases. Please review the information below prior to completing this form. Return referral form to:

<b><u>Kent</u></b>	<b><u>Seattle</u></b>
UFC Case Manager King County Regional Justice Center 401 Fourth Avenue North, MS RJC-SC-0203 Kent, WA 98032 206-205-2674 (Telephone) 206-205-2525 (Fax)	UFC Case Manager King County Courthouse 516 Third Avenue, MS KCC-SC-0203 Seattle, WA 98104 206-296-9324 (Telephone) 206-296-9420 (Fax)

#### **Referral Criteria**

Cases involving children may be referred to the UFC for case management if the cases involve at least one type of action listed below and one or more of the referral criteria. The UFC does not provide case management services for adult or juvenile criminal proceedings. While the UFC may be aware of criminal matters for purposes of coordinating services, the cases are not within the jurisdiction of the UFC for case management.

#### **Types of Actions**

Title 13: Juvenile dependency, truancy, CHINS (child in need of services), and ARY (at-risk youth).

Title 26: Dissolution of marriage, parentage, third party custody actions, actions to modify parenting plans, and domestic violence protection order cases.

#### **Referral Criteria**

Referral criteria for UFC case management are listed below. Many of the cases accepted for case management meet more than one of the listed criteria.

- 1) Allegations of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of children;
- 2) Allegations of chronic mental health problems;
- 3) Previous termination of parental rights;
- 4) Failure to address court-ordered evaluations or treatment;
- 5) Early or multiple filings for modification of parenting plans or other custody or visitation orders;
- 6) Multiple pending cases involving the family;
- 7) Multiple current or past actions involving domestic violence or sexual assault;
- 8) A case involving pro se parties and case issues that would benefit or be expedited by additional case monitoring or tracking; or
- 9) Other similar basis as recognized by a judge or commissioner referring the case for UFC consideration.

**UFC REFERRAL INFORMATION**

**Person making referral and date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Referring person's relationship to case (i.e. attorney, GAL, party, etc.):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name(s) of children involved in the action(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Known Case Numbers of all actions involving family members, both open and closed:**

Case Number	County Where Filed	Case Number	County Where Filed

**Known family members (please list additional members on the back of this page and indicate if an address of a party is confidential).**

Name	Relationship to Child	Address with City, State, Zip Code	Telephone Number	Attorney(s)

**Briefly describe family circumstances and reasons the case would benefit from UFC case management:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please call (206) 205-2674 for Kent UFC Case Manager, or (206) 296-9324 for Seattle Case Manager, with any questions.**

**b. Family Update Form**

**FAMILY UPDATE - UNIFIED FAMILY COURT**

**Family:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Assigned Judge:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cause #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Trial date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Next Hearing date and type:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UFC Planning Conference held:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Services & Evaluations Ordered:**

- Drug & Alcohol Eval / Treatment for: **mother/father/child(ren)/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- Psych Eval / Treatment for: **mother/father/child(ren)/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- Parenting Evaluation for: **mother/father/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- DV Assessment for: **mother/father/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- Sexual Deviancy Evaluation for: **mother/father/child(ren)/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- Parenting Classes for: **mother/father/other** \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachments provided to the Court:**

- Drug / Alcohol records
- Mental health records
- Psychiatric report
- CPS records
- School report
- FCS report
- CASA report
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Compliance Status:**

- Mother completed: \_\_\_\_\_ has not: \_\_\_\_\_
- Father completed: \_\_\_\_\_ has not: \_\_\_\_\_
- Child/ren completed: \_\_\_\_\_ has not: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**c. UFC Information Sheet**

**KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
UNIFIED FAMILY COURT  
INFORMATION SHEET**

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**I. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the Unified Family Court (UFC) is to promote effective judicial management of cases involving the health and welfare of children, and to facilitate prompt resolution of these cases. UFC began as a pilot project at the Kent Regional Justice Center in July 1997. The pilot project included installation of the Family Law Information Center and the Drop-in Child Care Center at the RJC. In 2001, King County Superior Court judges voted to remove the pilot status and expand the project to Seattle. This sheet provides information regarding referral of cases for UFC case management and an overview of the case management process.

**II. REFERRAL FOR UFC CASE MANAGEMENT**

**Process for Referral to UFC**

Referrals for UFC case management may be made by Superior Court judges or commissioners, case parties or attorneys, CASAs, Family Court Services, DSHS, domestic violence advocates, juvenile probation officers, family law facilitators, or other persons involved with a family.

**Referral Criteria**

Cases involving children may be referred to the UFC for case management if the cases involve at least one type of action listed below and one or more of the referral criteria. The UFC does not provide case management services for adult or juvenile criminal proceedings. While the UFC may be aware of criminal matters for purposes of coordinating services, the cases are not within the jurisdiction of the UFC for case management.

**A. Types of Actions**

Title 13: Juvenile dependency, truancy, CHINS (child in need of services), and ARY (at-risk youth).

Title 26: Dissolution of marriage, parentage, third party custody actions, actions to modify parenting plans, and domestic violence protection order cases.

**B. Referral Criteria**

Referral criteria for UFC case management are listed below. Many of the cases accepted for case management meet more than one of the listed criteria.

- 1) Allegations of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of children;
- 2) Allegations of chronic mental health problems;
- 3) Previous termination of parental rights;
- 4) Failure to address court-ordered evaluations or treatment;
- 5) Early or multiple filings for modification of parenting plans or other custody or visitation orders;
- 6) Multiple pending cases involving the family;
- 7) Multiple current or past actions involving domestic violence or sexual assault;
- 8) A case involving pro se parties and case issues that would benefit or be expedited by additional case monitoring or tracking; or
- 9) Other similar basis as recognized by a judge or commissioner referring the case for UFC consideration.

### III. CASE SCREENING AND ACCEPTANCE

One of the UFC case managers will screen each referral to determine its qualifications for UFC case management. Screening will include review of active and inactive cases involving the family, as well as existing orders, reports, apparent compliance with services, pending hearing dates and trial schedules. If the case is accepted for UFC case management, the case manager will provide a copy of the court's Order on Acceptance to the parties, attorneys and evaluators, if applicable.

### IV. CASE MANAGEMENT

Once a case is accepted for UFC case management and an Order on Acceptance is issued, the assigned UFC case manager will monitor the progress of the case to insure that the events ordered by the court take place on schedule. If there are delays in adhering to court orders, the case manager will coordinate setting a planning conference or review hearing so that the court may address the delays.

Many cases are set for a UFC Planning Conference immediately upon acceptance for UFC case management. The planning conference provides an opportunity for the court to address issues such as reassignment of case area designation, linkage or consolidation of cases, alternative dispute resolution, coordination of services, procedural issues, case schedules, access to files, discovery, appointment of a GAL or CASA and the need and timeline for any evaluations. An Order on UFC Planning Conference that includes deadlines for services, evaluations and other actions by case parties will be entered and distributed to parties on the day of the conference. This order will assign each of the legal matters to a specific judicial officer and commissioner calendar (i.e. family law, dependency, Becca), and thereafter all matters will be heard by the designated judicial officers. Pro tem judicial officers may not hear UFC designated cases.

Throughout the duration of UFC case management, the assigned case manager will monitor case progress and provide referral information to parties seeking resources for ordered services.

#### FOR REFERRALS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT CASES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Kent

UFC Case Manager  
King County Regional Justice Center  
401 Fourth Avenue North, MS RJC-SC-0203  
Kent, WA 98032  
206-205-2674 (Telephone)  
206-205-2525 (Fax)

Seattle

UFC Case Manager  
King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue, MS KCC-SC-0203  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-296-9324 (Telephone)  
206-296-9420 (Fax)

UFC Program Manager  
King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue, MS KCC-SC-0203  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-296-9416 (Telephone)  
206-296-9420 (Fax)

**d. Data Entry Sheet**

**UFC Screening/Data Entry Sheet**

Referral Date \_\_\_\_\_ UFC # \_\_\_\_\_

Referral Source:

_____	Administrative Referral	_____	Internal Personal Referral
_____	Commissioner Order	_____	Judge Order
_____	Commissioner Referral	_____	Judge Referral
_____	External Personal Referral		

Screening Date \_\_\_\_\_ Screened by \_\_\_\_\_

Accept Date \_\_\_\_\_ Family Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned to CM \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria met:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Allegations of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of children;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Allegations of chronic mental health problems;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Previous termination of parental rights;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Failure to address court-ordered evaluations or treatment;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Early or multiple filings for modification of parenting plans or other custody or visitation orders;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Multiple pending cases involving the family;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Multiple current or past actions involving domestic violence or sexual assault;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A case involving pro se parties and case issues that would benefit or be expedited by additional case monitoring or tracking; or
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Other similar basis as recognized by a judge or commissioner referring the case for UFC consideration.

Reason for non-acceptance:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Case does not meet referral criteria
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Case on track procedurally
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Parents on track with ordered services/evaluations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Trial date imminent – lack of benefit of case management
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Case currently assessed at lower relative risk and not accepted due to caseload
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Case retained by another judge who does not wish to relinquish case
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Control Group
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Close Date \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative Time 1.5 Hours Total Time \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. King County UFC Web site

URL: (<http://www.metrokc.gov/kcsc/famlaw/ufc.htm>)

### **Unified Family Court Program**

The purpose of the Unified Family Court (UFC) is to promote effective judicial management of cases involving the health and welfare of children, and to facilitate prompt resolution of these cases.

#### **Program Objectives**

- One Judge-One Family, all related family law and juvenile actions are assigned to one UFC judge
- Coordination of multiple cases involving the same family by linking or consolidation of cases
- Minimize potential for inconsistent, duplicative or conflicting orders
- Coordination of current and future investigative and evaluative efforts
- Early referral to appropriate services and evaluations
- Early identification and resolution of procedural difficulties
- Focus on Alternative Dispute Resolution

#### **Ongoing Case Management**

The UFC combines court actions and hearings for matters involving the same family and allows for coordination of evaluations and social services. This approach establishes consistent expectations for the family, enables the Court to monitor progress, and makes efficient use of resources.

#### **Differential case management**

- Assist litigants in getting linked with services or resources
- Monitor compliance with court-ordered services and evaluations
- Set review hearings when necessary

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### **Unified Family Court**

[Program Locations & Contact Information](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Referral for UFC Case Management](#)

[UFC Instructions \(Word attachment\)](#)

### **Unified Family Court FAQ**

- [What types of actions are accepted into UFC for case management?](#)
- [How does my case become UFC managed?](#)

- [How do I know if my case is UFC managed?](#)
- [Once my case is referred to the UFC program, how do I set a motion hearing and/or file documents?](#)
- [What is the applicable court rule for Unified Family Court?](#)
- [Which judicial officers hear UFC cases?](#)
- [What does it mean for my case to be designated UFC?](#)
- [What is the UFC Case Manager's role in my case\(s\)?](#)
- [Does the case schedule change once it is accepted into UFC?](#)
- [What's the purpose of a UFC Planning Conference?](#)

**What types of actions are accepted into UFC for case management?**

Cases which meet the criteria for UFC case management (see [referral form](#)), and are:

Title 26 actions: Dissolution of marriage, parentage, third party custody actions, actions to modify parenting plans, and domestic violence protection order cases, and/or

Title 13 actions: Juvenile dependency, truancy, CHINS (child in need of services), and ARY (at-risk youth).

**How does my case become UFC managed?**

A case must first be referred to the Unified Family Court program for screening. There are no restrictions on who may refer a case for UFC screening. If the case meets the screening criteria for acceptance (listed on the referral form), an *Order on Acceptance Into Unified Family Court* is entered and copied to all parties and counsel along with further instruction.

**How do I know if my case is UFC managed?**

You will receive an *Order on Acceptance Into Unified Family Court*, specifying which related actions will be managed in UFC. Additionally, the case area designation will be changed from "KNT" to "UFK" for Kent actions, and from "SEA" to "UFS" for Seattle actions.

**Once my case is referred to the UFC program, how do I set a motion hearing and/or file documents?**

After the referral is made, and before an *Order on Acceptance Into UFC* is entered, parties must continue to set motions and file documents as set forth in the Local Rules. Upon acceptance into UFC, all parties will be provided with an instruction sheet on how to appropriately set motions and file documents.

**What is the applicable court rule for Unified Family Court?**

LFLR 7

**Which judicial officers hear UFC cases?**

Your case(s) will be assigned to one UFC judge and one commissioner calendar. Only a regularly sitting UFC judicial officer may hear UFC matters. UFC cases may never go before a pro tem commissioner or on the Ex Parte calendar.

**What does it mean for my case to be designated UFC?**

It means that your case has been assigned to one judge and one commissioner calendar. Only those two judicial officers will hear matters related to your case(s). Additionally, your case will be assigned a UFC case manager.

**What is the UFC Case Manager's role in my case(s)?**

- Monitor compliance with ordered services and evaluations;
- Assist litigants in connecting with providers to comply with ordered services;
- Identify any procedural issue with a case which might prevent the action(s) from moving toward completion.

**Does the case schedule change once it is accepted into UFC?**

No, acceptance into the UFC program does not change your case schedule.

**What's the purpose of a UFC Planning Conference?**

The planning conference is an official court hearing presided over by the assigned UFC Judge. A variety of issues are addressed at the Planning Conference in order to better manage family law and juvenile matters; for example: Consolidation of cases, hearings or trials; whether the case/s is on track procedurally; whether alternative dispute resolution is appropriate; what services are currently ordered; whether parties are in compliance with ordered services; whether additional services or evaluations need to be ordered.

**3. *Thurston County UFC Web Site***

**URL: (<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/fjc/index.htm>)**

**A Unified Family Court Project to Better Serve Families and Children**

Thurston County is the first county in Washington to co-locate all family and juvenile operations in a single facility, separate from other superior court operations. Four judicial officers are assigned to the Family and Juvenile Court: two court commissioners, one from juvenile court and one from family court; and two superior court judges, one for two years, and each of the others for two month rotations.

**History:** Planning for a new juvenile detention facility began in 1993. In the fall of 1995, the voters approved a 1/10th of one percent sales tax increase that assured planning efforts for a new building. At the same time the Superior Court was grappling with issues of overcrowding. There were more judges than courtrooms and yet another judge was needed. In the spring of 1996, a court and citizen advisory committee began planning for a Unified Family Court system that would house family and juvenile courts at the new juvenile detention location. Over 50 people participated regularly in planning to combine operations into one court program. The costs of relocating the family court

operations are not part of the voter-approved sales tax, but will solve space problems at the main courthouse for now. Groundbreaking for the new facility was September 1996. The building opened in September 1998.

**Mission: The Unified Family Court Advisory Committee's mission is to:**

- **Recommend ways to create a courthouse environment that is safe and sensitive to issues of families and children;**
- **Identify procedures and problem-solving methods appropriate to juvenile and family court cases;**
- **Recommend ways to coordinate court functions to assure consistent judicial treatment of families and children involved in multiple proceedings;**
- **Collaborate with community professionals to improve court referral and user access to services and resources;**
- **Plan training for those working with families and children in the legal system;**
- **Propose statutory and rule changes supporting a unified family court program; and**
- **Develop a tool to evaluate whether the program meets its goals.**

**Location:** 2801 32nd Avenue SW, Tumwater, Washington

**Mail Address:** 2000 Lakeridge Dr SW, Olympia, WA 98502

**Telephone Numbers:**

**Court Administration:** (360)709-3201

**Clerk's Office at Family and Juvenile Court:** (360)709-3260

**Juvenile Department:** (360)709-3131

**Prosecutor's Office at Family and Juvenile Court:** (360)709-3230

## **APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANT & STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

### **1. Consent Form**



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Mary Campbell McQueen  
Administrator

#### Unified Family Court Evaluation Consent Form

Investigators: Andrew Glenn, Ph.D., Research Manager  
Barbara Lucenko, Ph.D., Research Specialist  
Judicial Services Division  
1206 Quince Street SE  
Olympia, WA 98504-1170  
(360) 705-5324

#### **INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT**

The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be interviewed as a part of the Unified Family Court Evaluation. Please read the form carefully.

#### PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

We would like to evaluate the Unified Family Court pilot in Washington State. If you decide to take part in the evaluation, we would like you to provide your impressions of how the Unified Family Court (UFC) has been implemented. We hope the results of the study will help improve the UFC in the future. You may not directly benefit from being in the evaluation.

#### PURPOSE

If you choose to participate in the evaluation, we would like to ask you a series of questions. The interview will take between one and three hours, including breaks. We will ask you to identify your perceptions of how the UFC has been implemented. For example, we will ask you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the UFC's structure and implementation. We will also ask you to rate the extent to which the UFC could operate more effectively and efficiency. It is possible that you may not have enough information or knowledge to answer some of the questions. You do not have to answer every question.

We would like your responses to be completely and accurately understood and written down by the interviewer. We would like to audio tape your interview to ensure that our notes accurately reflect your responses. Audio taped interviews will only be replayed so that the interviewer and/or another member of the evaluation team can check the accuracy of the notes taken during the interview. Audiotapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Olympia, Washington. Audiotapes will be destroyed following the report completion. Please indicate below whether you give your permission to be audio taped.

- I give my permission for my UFC Pilot Evaluation Interview to be audio taped.
- I do NOT give my permission for my UFC Pilot Evaluation Interview to be audio taped.

### RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

You may feel uncomfortable talking about how the UFC program works, and you might be concerned that people you work with would find out what you said during the interview. You might feel uncomfortable being audio taped. We will keep all study information confidential, and try to help you feel comfortable talking about the UFC program.

### OTHER INFORMATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information you provide for the UFC Evaluation will be kept confidential. We will use code numbers instead of names on our notes. The link between your name and the code will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Only staff working on the evaluation will have access to study files. The list of code numbers and names and all other identifiers will be destroyed by August 30, 2005. If we use direct quotes in our reports, we will not reveal who made the comment. We will not tell any of your court co-workers, supervisory personnel, or anyone else what you said during the interview.

### Subject's Statement

*The study has been explained to me, and I voluntarily consent to participate. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. If I have questions about the research at any time, I can call one of the investigators listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call the Center for Court Research at (360) 705-5324.*

---

Signature of Participant

Date

Copies to: (1) Participant  
(2) Researcher

## 2. Interview Questions

### Unified Family Court Semi-structured Interview

Interviewee Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pilot Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Start time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Process Related Comments:

### UFC Questions

(All)

#### **General:**

G1) What is your definition of a “Unified Family Court?” Has this definition changed over time?

G2) What are the UFC’s primary goals?

G3) Please rate to what extent the court is accomplishing these goals?

- a. (Low accomplishment)
- b. (Low to substantial accomplishment)
- c. (Substantial to high accomplishment)
- d. (High accomplishment in all goal areas)
- e. (Do not know/not sure)

G4) How would you recommend changing or modifying the UFC’s primary goals?

G5) What are the strengths of the UFC?

G6) What are the weaknesses of the UFC?

G7) What suggestions do you have to improve the effectiveness of UFC?

G8) What kind of training or preparation took place prior to the commencement of UFC?

G9) What characteristics [of this jurisdiction] have been helpful in making UFC work?

G10) What are some obstacles to implementing an ideal UFC?

G11) What issues or concerns, if any, has UFC generated regarding confidentiality and/or due process?

**Policy/Administration:** (UFC admin and staff)

P1) How was the UFC startup initiated?

P2) Who was involved with the initiation of UFC? Would it have been helpful to have others involved? If so, whom?

P3) What kind of strategic planning was involved with the formation of UFC?

P4) Were the recommendations from the 2001 report implemented by UFC? What is the process for implementing change?

P5) How do judges rotate through UFC?

P6) What would be the pros/cons of developing a set of procedures specific to UFC?  
How does this apply to local rules?

P7) What, if any, local rules have been established in support of UFC?

P8) How did this process take place?

P9) How would you modify the organizational and/or contractual structure of UFC to improve its effectiveness and/or efficiency?

**Resources, Facilities, Equipment, & Information Systems:** (UFC judicial officers/staff)

R1) How have the local treatment or community resources impacted the efficiency of UFC?

R2) What resources are most lacking in your jurisdiction?

R3) What resources have you found to be the most/least valuable in the functioning of UFC?

R4) Have there been any changes in the efficient utilization of community and treatment resources? Please be specific.

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

R5) How is childcare generally addressed in your facility? Are there other options that would facilitate increased compliance?

R6) How does the physical location of the UFC impact its functioning?

R7) Please note any issues of security that are unique to UFC and how these have been addressed.

R8) What information gathering challenges has the UFC faced? What would be helpful in this regard?

R9) What databases are typically accessed to prepare for a UFC planning conference? Review hearing? Other proceeding?

**UFC Staff: (all)**

S1) Please describe the primary roles and responsibilities of the following positions as they pertain to UFC, with an emphasis on how the roles and responsibilities differ from those in other courts dealing with similar family matters.

a) Judge

b) Commissioner

c) Case Manager

d) Facilitator

e) Clerk's Office

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

- f) Assistant Attorney General
- g) Social Worker (specify DCFS or FCS)
- h) County Prosecutor
- i) CASA or VGAL
- j) Guardian ad litem (GAL)
- k) Private Attorneys (hired or appointed)

S2) How would you recommend modifying these primary roles and responsibilities or the configuration of staff to improve the effectiveness and/or efficiency of UFC?

S3) What were the most rewarding aspects of working in UFC?

S4) What were the most negative aspects of working in UFC?

S5) What professional and/or personal sacrifices were related to your involvement with UFC?

S6) What were the reactions of peers and colleagues to the UFC model? Did this change as time went on?

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

S7) Describe relations and the level of communication between the Clerk's office and UFC.

S8) What could be done to strengthen the partnership between the Clerk's office and UFC?

**Training** (UFC judicial officers, staff, admin)

T1) Who attends and presents at the training oversight committee (TOC) trainings?

T2) What training has UFC provided for staff?

T3) What additional training is needed for staff?

T4) What specialized training have judicial officers received as a result of participation in UFC?

T5) How has this training affected judicial officers' ability to make decisions?

T6) What additional training is needed for judicial officers?

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

**Referral/Population** (UFC judicial officers, admin, staff)

RP1) How is a “UFC case” defined in your jurisdiction?

RP2) In your opinion, are the criteria for *referral* to the UFC well-defined and generally understood? Please explain (e.g. too narrow, too vague).

RP3) Does anyone “opt-out” (decline) UFC? If so, is there any record kept of this?

RP4) Please describe the general referral process for each primary referral source.

RP5) Please identify any barriers to the referral process, either current or past. How have such barriers been addressed?

RP6) How are UFC cases/families screened? What are the criteria?

**Objective 1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-making** (All)

J1) How many judges/commissioners in this county are seeing UFC cases?

J2) How many judges/commissioners are typically involved with one family’s multiple cases? Exceptions? Examples?

J3) (Judges/Commissioners) How did you become a judicial officer in UFC?

J4) How has the availability (or lack thereof) of records that pertain to prior court involvement of family members impacted the judicial decision making process in UFC?

J5) How has the presence of UFC impacted the consistency of various court orders?

J6) Has there been any change in judicial awareness of the variety and types of services available and appropriate for UFC participants? If so, how did such change come about?

**Objective 2: Improved Expedition and Timeliness of case processing. (All)**

C1) Describe a typical UFC case (caseflow), as processed from referral through completion.

C2) (Judicial Officers, Case mgrs) How does UFC impact your workload?

C3) What happens when a UFC family member gets arrested? Please give an example.

C4) In what way(s) are dependency cases consolidated, blocked, or otherwise “bundled” with other juvenile and family cases in UFC?

C5) List the typical conferences and/or proceedings, that UFC families are required to attend.

C6) What are the objectives of the UFC’s planning conferences?

C7) What are the objectives of the UFC's review hearings?

C8) How would you recommend changing the review hearing process and/or procedures?

C9) How has case management impacted the expedition and timeliness of case processing (e.g. is there a noticeable change in time to completion?)?

C10) How do case management procedures impact the processing of cases from a UFC litigant's perspective (specify basis for this belief)?

**Objective 3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

(case managers and others as applicable)

A1) How has UFC impacted participating families access to community services?

A2) Please list the services ordered (e.g. substance abuse, mental health, anger management, parenting, etc.) for UFC participants.

A3) Do case workers/case managers attend (what percentage of?) court proceedings? Why or why not?

A4) Do treatment providers attend (what percentage of?) court proceedings? Why or why not?

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

A5) At what points in the court process do service needs arise (e.g. triage, hearing, planning conference)? (NCSC, 2001)

A6) Who (e.g. attorney, judge, staff, etc.) identifies a need for services at these various points? (NCSC, 2001)

A7) Are there policies or practices the court or other involved party could change to make the needs-identification process work better? (NCSC, 2001).

A8) Are there any standardized protocols used to identify service needs? If so, what are they?

A9) **(ALL)** Please describe and rate the availability and perceived intensity of treatment and case management services provided for UFC participants.

- a. (Insufficient for all cases)
- b. (Sufficient for the minority of cases)
- c. (Sufficient for the majority of cases)
- d. (Sufficient for all cases)
- e. (Do not know/not sure)

A10) **(ALL)** Please describe and rate the collaboration that takes place between the court staff and treatment providers, social workers, and attorneys.

- a. (Insufficient for all cases)
- b. (Sufficient for the minority of cases)
- c. (Sufficient for the majority of cases)
- d. (Sufficient for all cases)
- e. (Do not know/not sure)

**Objective 4: Emphasis on Providing ADR (ALL)**

ADR1) At what point is ADR utilized in UFC? How is that different from the “typical” family court process?

ADR2) What are the major obstacles in using ADR (mediation, arbitration)?

ADR3) What can be done via changes in policy, court rules, or otherwise that would help to increase the use of ADR in the Unified Family Court setting?

**Objective 5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation (ALL)**

L1) How has the presence of UFC impacted post-resolution litigation, including modifications?

L2) What could be done to further decrease the likelihood of post-completion proceedings?

L3) What impact has UFC had on the compliance of participants with court orders? Has this impact been more noticeable with some orders (e.g. services ordered, protection orders) than others?

L4) Describe how UFC monitors compliance with services ordered following referral/enrollment?

**Objective 6: Better Family Outcomes (ALL)**

F1) What are the main desired FAMILY outcomes for UFC participants?

F2) How does UFC currently benefit the consumers (i.e. the families served)?

F3) What could be changed in order for UFC to better serve the families and address these goals?

F4) How are the safety needs of children addressed in dependency cases? Immediately following proceedings? Follow up?

F5) Are there certain behavior changes (e.g. of parents) you would like to see evaluated?

(ALL) Regarding your experience with the Unified Family Court, to what degree do you agree with the following<sup>1</sup>? Please use the following scale to respond and provide comments as needed:

5 = Definitely Agree

4 = Agree Somewhat

3 = Not Sure

2 = Disagree Somewhat

1 = Definitely Disagree

N1) Court decision making is of the highest professional quality.

N2) Courts and human service agencies collaborate to tailor services to the strengths and needs of families and other participants.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: these 5 questions are taken directly from NCSC (Flango, Flango, and Rubin, 1999), *How are Court Coordinating Family Cases?*

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

N3) Disputes are resolved without undue hardship and cost.

N4) Cases are resolved in a timely manner.

N5) Litigants are satisfied with the process, regardless of the outcome.

**Key Stakeholder Questions**

KS1) How has the Unified Family Court been brought to your attention since its inception?

KS2) Has the existence of the Unified Family Court impacted the way you think about the family and juvenile court systems? If so, how?

KS3) Do you believe the UFC program in its present form represents a wise use of public resources? Why or why not?

KS4) What have been the strengths of the Unified Family Court?

KS5) In what areas, if any, would you recommend the Unified Family Court improve?

KS6) How would you suggest the Unified Family Court improve its support among key stakeholders and the public?

KS7) What legislative or policy changes, if any, would you recommend in order to improve the efficacy of the Unified Family Court?

### **3. Key Stakeholder Interviewees**

Justice Bridge, Bobbe J  
415 12th Ave. SW  
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

Hon. Eric Watness (currently Ex-Parte and formerly Dependency Commissioner, also chair of the Training Oversight Committee, has been involved with UFC from beginning)

King County Superior Court  
401 – 4th Ave North  
MS RJC-SC-0203  
Kent, WA 98032-4429

Caroline Davis (Former Family Law CASA Program Attorney at RJC, also current King County Bar Assn. President)

1200 5th Ave., #1925  
Seattle, WA 98101

Noella Rawlings, Division Chief  
Attorney Generals Office  
900 Fourth Avenue, Suite 2000  
Seattle, WA 98164

Craig Daly  
Snohomish County Juvenile Court Services  
Denney Juvenile Justice Center  
2801 – 10th Street  
Everett, WA 98201

Richard Carlson  
Administrator  
Snohomish County Juvenile Court Services  
Denney Juvenile Justice Center  
2801 – 10th Street  
Everett, WA 98201

Mr. Doug Becker  
Attorney at Law  
701 5th Ave Ste 4550

*Appendix C, Key Informant & Stakeholder Interviews*

Seattle, WA 98104-7028

Ms. Mary Wechsler  
Attorney at Law  
Columbia Center  
701 5th Ave Ste 4550  
Seattle, WA 98104-7088

Honorable Kim Eaton, Clerk  
Yakima County  
128 N 2nd St Rm 323  
Yakima, WA 98901-2639

Honorable Betty Gould, Clerk  
Thurston County  
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW Bldg 2  
Olympia, WA 98502-6001

Judge Karlynn Haberly  
Kitsap County Superior Court  
614 Division St  
Port Orchard, WA 98366-4683

Commissioner Kimberly Prochnau  
King County Superior Court  
516 3rd Ave Rm C-203  
Seattle, WA 98104-2381

Marie Jamieson, Executive Director  
Families for Kids Partnership  
3300 NE 65th St.  
Seattle, WA 98115-0190

**APPENDIX D: PRACTITIONER SURVEY**

**1. Survey Responses**

**SURVEY OF JUDICIAL SYSTEM PRACTITIONERS**

**Responses**

Of the 356 practitioners surveyed, 208 (58.4%) responded. Respondents were asked:

*Please estimate the number of Unified Family Court (UFC) cases and other family court cases you have been involved with during the past 12 months: (Please enter numbers.)*

<u>Court</u>	<u>Other Family Court Cases</u>
King County	
Snohomish County	
Thurston County	

Involvement in any given county and court type (UFC, other) ranged from zero cases to “hundreds.” Respondents’ **primary** involvement emerged as follows:

	Snohomish	Total
UFC	17	86
Non-UFC	0	13
Both	20	105
<b>Total Respondents*</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>204</b>

\* 4 respondents did not identify the court or county in which they have practiced.

\*\* All Thurston County family court cases are handled in Thurston County’s UFC, which began operations in September, 1998. However, only some UFC cases are identified for intensive management. The 21 respondents who indicated practice in Thurston County

The respondents represent the following types of practitioners:

	Snohomish	Total
Attorney General	7	14
Prosecuting Attorney	3	9
BECCA Representative		1
Guardian Ad Litem	4	35
Dependency CASA / VGAL Volunteer	3	28
Family Law CASA		19
Social Worker	14	43
Private Attorney	9	87
Public Defender	3	19
Juvenile Probation Counselor		1
Family Court Services		5
Dependency CASA / VGAL Staff	2	12
Family Law CASA Staff		3
Other (mediator, pro tem commissioner, legal aid attorney, mental health case manager, r	2	13
<b>Total Roles/Functions*</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>289*</b>

\*Respondents reported multiple roles, when applicable.

2. Copy of Questionnaire



Washington State Supreme Court

Study of the Family & Juvenile Courts

The answers you provide for this survey are confidential. No information about your identity, or your responses, will be shared with any court, organization, or individual. The results of this study will only be presented in ways that protect your identity. If you have any questions about the survey, or concerns about confidentiality, please call toll free 1-866-892-7437.

1. In what way are you involved with the family courts? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attorney General               | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Attorney             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prosecuting Attorney           | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Defender              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BECCA Representative           | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Probation Counselor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian Ad Litem              | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Court Services        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependency CASA/VGAL Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependency CASA/VGAL Staff   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Law CASA                | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Law CASA Staff        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                 |

2. Please estimate the number of Unified Family Court (UFC) cases and other family court cases you have been involved with during the past 12 months: (Please enter numbers.)

<u>Court</u>	<u>UFC Cases</u>	<u>Other Family Court Cases</u>
King County	_____	_____
Snohomish County	_____	_____
Thurston County	_____	_____

In the Unified Family Court, Title 13 and Title 26 cases involving children are assigned to a restricted subset of judges who handle only these types of cases. The following questions ask your opinion on how helpful this type of case management is on various participants in this process.

3. On a scale of one to four, with one being not helpful and four being very helpful, please indicate whether UFC case management is, overall, more or less helpful to: (Circle the appropriate response.)

	<u>Not Helpful</u>	<u>Somewhat Helpful</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Very Helpful</u>
<b>Your job</b> .....	1	2	3	4
<b>Your client</b> .....	1	2	3	4
<b>The child(ren)</b> .....	1	2	3	4
<b>The family</b> .....	1	2	3	4

Appendix D, Practitioner Survey

Questions 4 through 6 ask you to compare your experiences with Unified Family Court case management practices to your experiences in the absence of these practices.

**4. Would you say that the Unified Family Court setting is better, no different, or worse than a non-UFC setting for the following:** (Circle the appropriate response.)

	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Different</u>	<u>Worse</u>
Continuity of judicial oversight. ....	1	2	3
Resolution of procedural difficulties. ....	1	2	3
Court-sponsored services that assist family participation in the judicial system. ....	1	2	3
Judicial understanding of the complexities of family-case issues. ....	1	2	3
Handling of families with multiple active cases. ....	1	2	3
Ability of parties to complete case-related forms. ....	1	2	3
The court ordering appropriate services for the parties. ....	1	2	3
Compliance of the parties with court-ordered services. ....	1	2	3
Cooperation with other involved agencies. ....	1	2	3
Scheduling of events for case disposition. ....	1	2	3
Use of alternative dispute resolution. ....	1	2	3
Certainty of the trial date. ....	1	2	3
Post-resolution child support compliance. ....	1	2	3
Post-resolution compliance with parenting plan (residential and visitation schedule). ....	1	2	3
Imparting family dispute resolution skills that reduce future court actions. ....	1	2	3

**5. Would you say that the Unified Family Court requires less time, about the same amount of time, or more time for the following:** (Circle the appropriate response.)

	<u>Less Time</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>More Time</u>
Case resolution. ....	1	2	3
Permanency in dependency cases. ....	1	2	3
Your involvement with a family case. ....	1	2	3

**6. Would you say that the Unified Family Court has fewer, about the same, or more of the following per case:** (Circle the appropriate response.)

	<u>Fewer</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>More</u>
Judicial officers. ....	1	2	3
Continuances. ....	1	2	3
Inconsistent or conflicting orders. ....	1	2	3
Hearings to enjoin compliance with court-ordered services. ....	1	2	3
Appearances in court. ....	1	2	3
Post-resolution domestic violence occurrences. ....	1	2	3
Post-resolution petitions and appearances. ....	1	2	3

*Appendix D, Practitioner Survey*

In Questions 7 through 9 we would like to give you the opportunity to directly voice your opinion about case management in the Unified Family Court. If the space below is insufficient for what you want to offer, please attach additional pages.

**7. What do you like most about Unified Family Court case management practices?**

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**8. What do you like least about Unified Family Court case management practices?**

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**9. What suggestions do you have for improving the case management practices of the Unified Family Court?**

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The OAC is planning to follow up on several aspects of the Unified Family Court, such as the impact this process has on children, or the effectiveness of the UFC in obtaining compliance with court-ordered services. If you are interested in participating in one of these follow-ups, please enclose your business card with your completed questionnaire when you return it to the OAC.



Now that you have completed the survey, please return it to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts at 1206 Quince Street SE, Olympia, Washington 98504-1170 using the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

*Thank you for your time and effort. Your answers will help us better understand the family and juvenile courts of Washington State.*

### 3. Sample Accompanying Letter

August 31, 2001

Fname Lname  
Address 1  
City, WA Zip

Dear «Sal» «Lname»:

The Office of the Administrator for the Courts, under the auspices of the Supreme Court, is conducting an evaluation of the Unified Family Court (UFC) pilot projects in King, Snohomish, and Thurston County Superior Courts. One aspect of this evaluation is an assessment of whether the case management practices of the UFC make your job easier and whether UFC better serves families' legal needs. Because of your experience in UFC and nonUFC settings, I'm writing to ask for your help with this assessment.

Enclosed is a questionnaire for you to complete. It consists mainly of questions comparing the existing case management practices to those of the UFC. The survey will take about five to ten minutes of your time. When you have completed the survey, please mail it back to Janet McLane at the Office of the Administrator of the Courts, 1206 Quince Street SE, Olympia, Washington 98504-1170. (A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.) You can greatly aid our effort if you would do this within the next seven days.

***Please be assured your responses will be completely confidential.*** Your name will never be associated with your responses, and the results of this survey will only be released in aggregate forms.

If you have any questions about the survey, please call Janet McLane, toll free, at 1-866-892-7437, or send her an e-mail at [janet.mclane@courts.wa.gov](mailto:janet.mclane@courts.wa.gov). Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gerry L. Alexander, Chief Justice  
Washington State Supreme Court



## **APPENDIX E: LITIGANT FOCUS GROUPS**

### **1. Discussion Topics for Focus Groups**

#### UNIFIED FAMILY COURT EVALUATION Topics for Discussion in Confidential Groups

Background Information: In the late 1990s, the Washington State Legislature (RCW 26.12.800) developed the Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Project in response to the significant case overlap and increasing complexity of problems and laws affecting families. While individual UFCs differ in design, common components include:

- a. a “one judge” or “one judicial team” approach;
- b. consolidated or “blocked” case proceedings;
- c. enhanced judicial training in child development and family issues; and
- d. comprehensive and coordinated legal and social services.

You may have experienced this in having one judge or commissioner assigned to different case types (e.g. a dependency case and a divorce with custody issues). You also may have had a case manager assigned to your family by the Court that kept track of treatment, assessment, and scheduling of court proceedings. There may have been things you did not notice, such as the judge’s or commissioner’s rigorous training in child and family issues, which may have helped him or her to make informed decisions on your cases.

The Unified Family Court was established to accomplish six very broad goals:

1. better informed judicial decision-making;
2. improved expedition and timeliness of case processing;
3. better access to and coordination of services;
4. emphasis on providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR);
5. reduction in post-resolution litigation; and
6. better family outcomes.

Our discussion will focus on how well you think the UFC has met those goals. Please keep in mind, though, that your remarks may be about any aspect of the UFC.

Potential Discussion Topics: How familiar do you feel your judicial officer/judicial team was/is with your family’s cases? How satisfied overall would you say you are with your judicial officer’s/judicial team’s knowledge of all legal aspects of your family’s cases? Did/Do you perceive your family’s cases as handled fairly?

How long would you say it took to process your family’s cases? Did/Do you feel that the time you actually spent in court was adequate (enough time to address issues), useful and necessary (or too much time)? If unproductive or “slack” time seemed/seems excessive, then what do you feel you and your judicial officer/judicial team should have been doing?

*Appendix E, Litigant Focus Groups*

Did/Do you feel that your family was/is able to access the services (e.g., treatment, assessment, mediation) suggested or ordered by the Court? Did/Does it seem to you that the court and the services providers worked/work together and in sync on your family's cases?

Did/Does your family receive ADR (mediation, settlement conferences)? Who provided the mediation? Did/Do you feel that it worked for your family?

How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with the same issue that brought you to UFC? How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with a different issue than the one(s) that brought you to UFC?

Regardless of whether or not you feel your family will be back in court, how likely is it that there will be domestic violence, child support, or custodial modification problems in your family in the future? Do you feel that you're better equipped to resolve conflicts within your family as a result of UFC? Do you feel that you're a better parent because of UFC? Was there sufficient focus (by the Court) on the needs of your children? How many times did the children's residences change while under the supervision of the Court? How did this affect them? Are your children presently "secure" in their homes/placements?

## **2. Recruitment Materials for Focus Groups**

### **a. Prior Notification Letter**

May 19, 2003

<NAME>  
<STREET ADDRESS>  
<CITY, WA ZIPCODE>

Dear <NAME>:

As someone who went through the Unified Family Court in <SNOHOMISH or KING or THURSTON> County, you are invited to participate in a discussion about that program.

The purpose of the discussion is to learn about your experiences, to find out how well you think the Unified Family Court served your family's legal needs, and to provide a confidential setting for you to express your opinions. The Social and Economic Sciences Research Center will conduct the discussion groups and report on them, without using names or including any other personally identifying information. The Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts will use results from the discussions in its evaluation of the program and in its report to the Legislature.

This study has been approved by Washington State University's Institutional Review Board, which makes sure that the rights and the privacy of participants are protected.

There will be no more than 12 people, all of whom will be either male or female, in each discussion group. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and anything you say will be kept strictly confidential. Each participant will receive a \$25 gift certificate at the end of the discussion. <The Snohomish County discussions will be held on June 10<sup>th</sup> in Everett. or The King County discussions will be held on June 11<sup>th</sup> in SeaTac. or The Thurston County discussions will be held on June 12<sup>th</sup> in Olympia.>

If you are willing to participate in a discussion group about the Unified Family Court, then please fill-out the enclosed form with the best time and number for us to call you to give you additional information. A stamped, pre-addressed envelope is included for your convenience in returning the completed form.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, then please call us to have your name removed from the list. Our toll-free number is 1-800-833-0867. You also may call this number if you have questions about the discussion groups or wish to speak to me about the study.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in an important discussion group.

Sincerely yours,  
Dretha M. Phillips, Ph.D.

**b. Sample Confirmation Letter & Enclosure**

June 5, 2003

<NAME>  
<STREET ADDRESS>  
<CITY, WA ZIPCODE>

Dear <NAME>:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a discussion group about your experiences with the Unified Family Court in Thurston County.

<The all-male discussion group for Thurston County will be held on **June 12, 2003**, at:

Phoenix Inn  
415 Capitol Way North  
Olympia, WA 98501

The discussion is scheduled to begin at **10:00 a.m.** and to end by **11:00 a.m.**>

<The all-female discussion group for Snohomish County will be held on **June 12, 2003**, at:

Phoenix Inn  
415 Capitol Way North  
Olympia, WA 98501

The discussion is scheduled to begin at **1:00 p.m.** and to end by **2:00 p.m.**>

Enclosed is a list of topics that will be covered during the confidential discussion. I am sending these to you now so that you have some time to think about the issues.

If you want additional information, then you may call our toll-free number 1-800-833-0867. Please ask to speak with either Kent or Tim; both of them are quite familiar with this study. They will get a message to me, if needed, as I will be off-campus with the groups.

Again, thank you for being willing to take part in this important discussion group.

Sincerely yours,

Dretha M. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Associate  
UFCE Project Director

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT EVALUATION  
Topics for Discussion in Confidential Groups

Background Information: In the late 1990s, the Washington State Legislature (RCW 26.12.800) developed the Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Project in response to the significant case overlap and increasing complexity of problems and laws affecting families. While individual UFCs differ in design, common components include:

- a. a “one judge” or “one judicial team” approach;
- b. consolidated or “blocked” case proceedings;
- c. enhanced judicial training in child development and family issues; and
- d. comprehensive and coordinated legal and social services.

You may have experienced this in having one judge or commissioner assigned to different case types (e.g. a dependency case and a divorce with custody issues). You also may have had a case manager assigned to your family by the Court that kept track of treatment, assessment, and scheduling of court proceedings. There may have been things you did not notice, such as the judge’s or commissioner’s rigorous training in child and family issues, which may have helped him or her to make informed decisions on your cases.

The Unified Family Court was established to accomplish six very broad goals:

1. better informed judicial decision-making;
2. improved expedition and timeliness of case processing;
3. better access to and coordination of services;
4. emphasis on providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR);
5. reduction in post-resolution litigation; and
6. better family outcomes.

Our discussion will focus on how well you think the UFC has met those goals. Please keep in mind, though, that your remarks may be about any aspect of the UFC.

Potential Discussion Topics: How familiar do you feel your judicial officer/judicial team was/is with your family's cases? How satisfied overall would you say you are with your judicial officer's/judicial team's knowledge of all legal aspects of your family's cases? Did/Do you perceive your family's cases as handled fairly?

How long would you say it took to process your family's cases? Did/Do you feel that the time you actually spent in court was adequate (enough time to address issues), useful and necessary (or too much time)? If unproductive or "slack" time seemed/seems excessive, then what do you feel you and your judicial officer/judicial team should have been doing?

Did/Do you feel that your family was/is able to access the services (e.g., treatment, assessment, mediation) suggested or ordered by the Court? Did/Does it seem to you that the court and the services providers worked/work together and in sync on your family's cases?

Did/Does your family receive ADR (mediation, settlement conferences)? Who provided the mediation? Did/Do you feel that it worked for your family?

How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with the same issue that brought you to UFC? How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with a different issue than the one(s) that brought you to UFC?

Regardless of whether or not you feel your family will be back in court, how likely is it that there will be domestic violence, child support, or custodial modification problems in your family in the future? Do you feel that you're better equipped to resolve conflicts within your family as a result of UFC? Do you feel that you're a better parent because of UFC? Was there sufficient focus (by the Court) on the needs of your children? How many times did the children's residences change while under the supervision of the Court? How did this affect them? Are your children presently "secure" in their homes/placements?

**c. Recruitment Telephone Script**

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT EVALUATION – UFCE

Q1. Hello, this is < INTERVIEWER'S FIRST NAME >, and I am calling from the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. May I speak with < SAMPLE MEMBER'S NAME > ?

- 1 Yes, speaking
- 2 Not available ----> when would be the best time to call back?
- 3 Wrong number ----> code as WN, then use Directory Assistance
- 4 Refused

Q2. We are calling people who went through the Unified Family Court to invite them to participate in a discussion group about the program. A letter describing the study was mailed to you about two weeks ago. Do you remember receiving it?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No ----> it was just a letter describing the study and telling you that we would be calling

Q3. Just as a reminder, this study has been approved by Washington State University. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and anything you say to me or during the discussion group will be kept strictly confidential. Each participant will receive a \$25 gift certificate at the end of the discussion.

Q4. Because each focus group will be either all-male or all-female, I need to ask: Are you male or female?

- 1 Male ----> GO to either Q5-K or Q5-T or Q5-S
- 2 Female ----> GO to either Q6-K or Q6-T or Q6-S

Q5-K. The all-male discussion group for KING County is tentatively scheduled for June 11<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m., at the West Coast Gateway Hotel in SeaTac.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q5-T. The all-male discussion group for THURSTON County is tentatively scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m., at the Phoenix Inn in Olympia.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q5-S. The all-male discussion group for SNOHOMISH County is tentatively scheduled for June 10<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m., at the Howard Johnson's Plaza Hotel in Everett.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q6-K. The all-female discussion group for KING County is tentatively scheduled for June 11<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m., at the West Coast Gateway Hotel in SeaTac.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q6-T. The all-female discussion group for THURSTON County is tentatively scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m., at the Phoenix Inn in Olympia.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q6-S. The all-female discussion group for SNOHOMISH County is tentatively scheduled for June 10<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m., at the Howard Johnson's Plaza Hotel in Everett.

May I put you down as a participant in that discussion group?

- 1 Yes ----> GO to Q7
- 2 No ----> GO to Q8

Q7. You will be sent a reminder letter with a list of discussion topics a few days before you meet. Please give me your address so we can be sure to send those items to the right place.

Q8. Thank you very much for your time.

### **3. Focus Group Discussion Items**

#### UNIFIED FAMILY COURT EVALUATION Focus Group Discussion Items

Introduction: Good morning/evening, and thank you for being part of this focus group on the Unified Family Court.

I'm Dretha Phillips, from the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. My purpose here is to keep the discussion moving, make sure everyone has an opportunity to express opinions confidentially, and then to make sense of what you've said in terms of the objectives of the Unified Family Court.

In the late 1990's the Washington State Legislature (RCW 26.12.800) developed the Unified Family Court (UFC) Pilot Project in response to the significant case overlap and increasing complexity of problems and laws affecting families. While individual UFCs differ in design, common components include: 1) a "one judge" or "one judicial team" approach; 2) consolidated or "blocked" case proceedings; 3) enhanced judicial training in child development and family issues; and 4) comprehensive and coordinated legal and social services. You may have experienced this in having one judge or commissioner assigned to different case types (e.g. a dependency case and a divorce with custody issues). You may also have had a case manager assigned to your family by the Court that kept track of treatment, assessment, and scheduling of court proceedings. There may also have been things you did not notice, such as the judge or commissioner's rigorous training in child and family issues, which may have helped him or her to make

informed decisions on your cases.

This is Gloria McDougall, from Clearwater Reporting (freelance court reporters) in Lewiston, Idaho. Her purpose is to record exactly what you say so there's no chance that I'll forget or misinterpret important points.

No names or other personally identifying information will be in the transcript and, especially, not in my report. If you happen to slip and mention a particular person – which is really easy to do – then we'll substitute an X or a Y to make sure everything remains confidential and no one can be identified.

Any questions? Let's begin, then. The Unified Family Court was established to accomplish six very broad goals – which we sent to you about a week ago and which you now have in front of you. Our job today/tonight is to learn about your experiences, to find out how well you think the UFC has met those goals. Please remember there are no right or wrong opinions here. And, though I'll make sure we address each of the goals, you're not limited to just those goals. Your remarks may be as free-ranging as you wish, okay?

**Objective 1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-Making**

Issue A: perceived judicial familiarity with entirety of family's legal issues

Question 1.A.a:           How familiar do you feel your judicial officer/judicial team was/is with your family's cases?

*Appendix E, Litigant Focus Groups*

- Question 1.A.b: Was/is your judicial officer/judicial team more familiar with some of your family's legal issues than with others?
- Question 1.A.c: Did your judicial officer's/judicial team's understanding of your family's cases change during the process?
- Question 1.A.d: How satisfied overall would you say you are with your judicial officer's/judicial team's knowledge of all legal aspects of your family's cases?
- Question 1.A.e: Did you perceive your family's cases as handled fairly?

**Objective 2: Improved Expedition and Timeliness of Case Processing**

Issue A: satisfaction with timeliness in case processing

- Question 2.A.a: How long would you say it took to process your family's cases?
- Question 2.A.b: Did/does that seem about the right amount of time, or too long, or too short?

Issue B: perceived productive and unproductive time spent in court (for following questions, have facilitator clarify what case types referring to in litigant response)

- Question 2.B.a: Did/do you feel that the time you actually spent in court was adequate (i.e. enough time to address issues)?  
useful and necessary (too much time)?
- Question 2.B.b: If unproductive or "slack" time seemed/seems

excessive, then what do you feel you and your  
judicial officer/judicial team should have been doing?

Issue C: number of judicial officers/judicial teams involved with (family) cases  
by filing date

Question 2.C.a: How many judicial officers/judicial teams were/are  
involved with your family's cases?

Question 2.C.b: Did the judicial officer(s) seem to be familiar with your  
cases (follow up: if you saw more than one judge or  
commissioner, was there a sense of continuity)?

**Objective 3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services**

Issue A: coordination between court and service providers for UFC families

Question 3.A.a: Did/do you feel that your family was/is able to access the  
services (e.g. treatment, assessment, mediation) suggested  
or ordered by the Court?

Question 3.A.b: Did/does it seem to you that the court and the  
services providers worked/work together and  
in sync on your family's cases?

**Objective 4: Emphasis on Providing ADR [Alternative Dispute Resolution]**

Issue A: perceived effectiveness of ADR

Question 4.A.a: Did/does your family receive ADR (a.k.a. mediation, settlement conferences)?  
  
follow up questions: who provided the mediation? was it successful?

Question 4.A.b: Did/do you feel that it worked for your family?

**Objective 5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation**

Issue A: perceived change in likelihood of coming back to court with DV issues, child support compliance issues, modification of custodian, etc.

Question 5.A.a: How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with the same issue that brought you to UFC?

Question 5.A.b: Do you feel that is a change for the better or for the worse or no change at all because of UFC?

Question 5.A.c: How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with a different issue than the one(s) that brought you to UFC?

Question 5.A.d: Do you feel that is a change for the better or for the worse or no change at all because of UFC?

**Objective 6: Better Family Outcomes**

Issue A: reduction in perceived likelihood of future domestic violence, child support, and modification problems

Question 6.A.a:       Regardless of whether or not you feel your family will be back in court, how likely is it that there will be domestic violence, child support, or custodial modification problems in your family in the future?

Question 6.A.b:       Do you feel that is a change for the better or for the worse or no change at all because of UFC?

Issue B: perceived improvement in conflict resolution and parenting skills

Question 6.B.a:       Do you feel that you're better equipped to resolve conflicts within your family as a result of UFC?

Question 6.B.b:       Do you feel that you're a better parent because of UFC?

Issue C: increased stability for children

Question 6.C.a:       Was there sufficient focus [by the Court] on the needs of your children?

Question 6.C.b:       How many times did the children's residences change while under the supervision of the Court? How did this impact them?

Question 6.C.c:       Are your children presently "secure" in their homes/placements?

#### 4. Telephone Follow-Up Script – 01/2004

##### UNIFIED FAMILY COURT EVALUATION – UFCE

INTR Hello, this is < INTERVIEWER'S FIRST NAME >, and I am calling from the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. May I speak with < SAMPLE MEMBER'S NAME > ?

- 1 Yes, speaking
- 2 Not available when would be the best time to call back?
- 3 Wrong number code as WN, then use Directory Assistance
- 4 Refused

BEGN We are calling some of the people who went through the Unified Family Court in King County. We talked with you about being in a discussion group last June about the program. Even though you weren't able to come to that discussion, we're still interested in hearing about your experiences with and opinions on the Unified Family Court. I have just a few questions, and then I'd like to note any other comments you'd like to make. It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes. Ok?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No is there a better time (or number) to call?

CONF Just as a reminder, this study has been approved by Washington State University. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and anything you say to me will be kept strictly confidential. You will be sent a check for \$15, as a way of thanking you for your time, after this interview. Shall we begin?

Q1 First, is your family still working with the Unified Family Court? Or, have your cases ended with the Unified Family Court?

- 1 still in Unified Family Court
- 2 cases ended

Q2 How familiar do you feel your judicial officer or judicial team <is/was> with your family's cases? Would you say . . . ?

- 1 extremely familiar [e.g., knew history of other current & past cases, restraining orders, etc.]
- 2 very familiar [e.g., knew all issues regarding current cases]
- 3 familiar enough [e.g., read file and knew what was needed legally to complete current case]

*Appendix E, Litigant Focus Groups*

4 not familiar at all [e.g., seemed like first time saw case facts]

Q3 <Is/Was> your judicial officer or judicial team more familiar with some of your family's legal issues than with others?

1 yes which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

2 no

Q4 How satisfied overall would you say you are with your judicial officer's or judicial team's knowledge of all legal aspects of your family's cases?

1 very satisfied

2 satisfied

3 dissatisfied

4 very dissatisfied

Q5 <Do/Did> you feel your family's cases <are/were> handled fairly?

1 yes

2 no

Q6 <If Q1=1, still with UFC> How long would you say it will take to process your family's cases? That is, when did you begin with the Unified Family Court and when do you expect to end?

<If Q1=2, ended UFC> How long would you say it took to process your family's cases? That is, when did you begin with the Unified Family Court and when did you end?

year \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ length of time \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Do you feel that the time you actually <spend/spent> in court <is/was> about right? That is, <is/was> it enough to address the issues without too much down or slack or wasted time?

1 yes

2 no why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Q8 Do you feel that your family <is/was> able to get the services suggested or ordered by the Court? [These services could be things like treatment, assessment, or mediation.]

1 yes

*Appendix E, Litigant Focus Groups*

2 no why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Q9 Does it seem to you that the Court and the services providers  
<work/worked> together and in sync on your family's cases?

1 yes

2 no

Q10 <Does/Did> your family receive ADR (mediation, settlement conferences)?

1 yes

2 no [skip to Q13]

Q11 Who <provides/provided> the mediation? \_\_\_\_\_

Q12 Do you feel that it <is working/worked> for your family?

1 yes

2 no

Q13 How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with the  
same issue that brought you to Unified Family Court?

1 very likely

2 more likely than not

3 not likely

4 very unlikely

Q14 How likely is it that your family will be coming back to court with a  
different issue than the one that brought you to Unified Family Court?

1 very likely

2 more likely than not

3 not likely

4 very unlikely

Q15 Whether or not you feel your family will be back in court, how likely is  
it that there will be domestic violence, child support, or custodial  
modification problems in your family in the future?

1 very likely

2 more likely than not

3 not likely

*Appendix E, Litigant Focus Groups*

4 very unlikely

Q16 Do you feel that you're better equipped to resolve conflicts within your family as a result of Unified Family Court?

1 yes

2 no why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Q17 Do you feel that you're a better parent because of Unified Family Court?

1 yes

2 no why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Q18 Was there enough focus by the Court on the needs of your children?

1 yes

2 no

Q19 How many times did the children's residences change while under the supervision of the Court?

# times children moved \_\_\_\_\_

Q20 Are your children presently "secure" in their homes or placements?

1 yes

2 no why not? \_\_\_\_\_

That was the last question. If you have any other comments you'd like to make about your experiences with the Unified Family Court, I can note them now.

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## APPENDIX F: JIS DATA

### 1. SCOMIS Data Dictionary - Docket Codes

#### a. SCOMIS Proceedings Held Codes for UFC and UFC-eligible Cases

##### Case

<u>Types</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
3,5	STLCON	Trial Settlement Hearing
3,5,7	STAHRG	Status Conference
2,3,5,7	MTHRG	Motion Hearing
3,5	SMJHRG	Summary Judgment Hearing
3,5,7	PTMHRG	Pre-Trial Management Hearing
2,3,5	RESHRG	Uncontested Resolution Hearing
3,5,7	AFTRIAL	Trial By Affidavit
3,5	NJTRIAL	Non-Jury Trial
3,5	MODHRG	Modification Hearing
3,5,7	RVWHRG	Review Hearing
7	DETHRG	Detention Hearing
7	WID	Warrant Identification Hearing
7	SCCHRG	Shelter Care Hearing: Contested
7	SCUHRG	Shelter Care Hearing: Uncontested
7	FFHRG	Fact Finding Only Hearing
7	FFDHRG	Fact Finding and Disposition Hearing
7	DSPHRG	Disposition Hearing
7	DSMHRG	Dismissal Hearing
7	CTPHRG	Contempt Hearing

For the civil case type in SCOMIS, only domestic violence-related proceedings are listed.

#### SCOMIS UFC-Related Proceeding Codes and Definitions<sup>5</sup>

**CONTEMPT HEARING (CTPHRG)** - A hearing to determine whether an existing order has been violated.

**DECLINATION HEARING (DECHRG)** - A hearing before the court to determine whether a juvenile should be transferred by order to adult court for all subsequent proceedings.

**DETENTION HEARING (DETHRG)** - A hearing before the court to determine whether probable cause exists to detain a juvenile.

**DISMISSAL HEARING (DSMHRG)** - A hearing before the court in which the case is dismissed before, during, or after a fact finding has occurred.

**DISPOSITION HEARING (DSPHRG)** - A hearing to determine the disposition of a case pertaining to a child in need of service, dependency, termination, at-risk youth, or appointment of guardian where fact finding has previously occurred.

**FACT FINDING AND DISPOSITION HEARING (FFDHRG)** - A hearing to determine issues pertaining to families in conflict, the dependency of a juvenile, and the appointment of a guardian, where a disposition hearing immediately follows. These include child in need of services, dependency of a juvenile, termination of parental rights, youth at-risk, and truancy causes of action. In addition, use this code to record a hearing held to appoint a guardian in a dependency case (where the child has met all criteria established in RCW 13.34.23) as an alternative to the termination of parental rights if followed immediately by a disposition hearing.

**FACT FINDING ONLY HEARING (FFHRG)** - A hearing to determine issues pertaining to families in conflict, the dependency of a juvenile, and the appointment of a guardian when a disposition hearing does not immediately follow. This includes child in need of services, dependency of a juvenile, termination of parental rights, youth at-risk, and truancy causes of action. In addition, use this code to record a hearing held to appoint a guardian in a dependency case (where the child has met all criteria established in RCW 13.34.23) as an alternative to the termination of parental rights.

**MODIFICATION HEARING (MODHRG)** - A post-resolution hearing seeking a modification to an existing order or decree.

**MOTION HEARING (MTHRG)** - A motion hearing is a proceeding before the court for an order to set forth specific relief as requested.

**NON-JURY TRIAL (NJTRIAL)** - A trial in which the issues of fact and law are to be determined by the judicial officer of a court of competent jurisdiction. Record a non-jury trial when the first witness is sworn, the first piece of evidence is presented, or when opening argument is made, waived, or reserved, whichever comes first. Do not docket any motion hearings through non-jury trial duration.

**PRE-TRIAL MANAGEMENT HEARING (PTMHRG)** - A hearing whereby the court considers compliance with discovery and motion deadlines, attempts to frame issues of fact and law for trial, sets a briefing schedule, and makes further rulings as necessary, including the determination of readiness for trial.

**REVIEW HEARING (RVWHRG)** - A review hearing is a post-resolution proceeding to

monitor compliance with a decree or judgment.

**SHELTER CARE HEARING: CONTESTED (SCCHRG)** - A contested hearing to determine whether a child alleged to be dependent is in need of services such as temporary housing or medical care.

**SHELTER CARE HEARING: UNCONTESTED (SCUHRG)** - An uncontested hearing to determine whether a child alleged to be dependent is in need of services such as temporary housing or medical care.

**STATUS CONFERENCE (STAHRG)** - A status conference is a hearing before the court to determine the condition or state of a case, generally occurring at the midpoint in the life of a case.

**SUMMARY JUDGMENT HEARING (SMJHRG)** - A summary judgment hearing is a proceeding before the court in which a judgment is granted prior to trial on the basis that the case involves no dispute as to factual matters, and that the party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.

**TRIAL BY AFFIDAVIT (AFTRIAL)** - A trial in which the issues of fact and law are to be determined by the judicial officer of a court or competent jurisdiction based on the agreed statement of facts contained in one or more affidavits.

**TRIAL SETTLEMENT HEARING (STLCON)** - A hearing whereby parties or their attorneys prepare and present their issues in an effort to reach pre-trial settlement.

**UNCONTESTED RESOLUTION HEARING (RESHRG)** - A hearing in which all remaining uncontested issues are adjudicated, and the case is resolved.

**WARRANT IDENTIFICATION HEARING (WID)** - A hearing at which a defendant is identified on a bench warrant arrest and at which conditions of release are determined. It should not be confused with the issuing of a warrant. It should also not be confused with the PLMHRG code used for hearings on new arrests or original warrants.

**b. SCOMIS Continuances & Stricken/Cancelled Codes**

<b>Types</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>	
<b>Proceeding Continued</b>	Judicial Conflict	HCNTJC	
		TCNTJC	
	Calendar Conflict	HCNTCC	
		TCNTCC	
	Defense Requested	HCNTDA	
		TCNTDA	
	Plaintiff Requested	HCNTPA	
		TCNTPA	
	Stipulated	HCNTSTP	
		TCNTSTP	
	Unspecified	HCNTU	
		TCNTU	
	<b>Proceedings Stricken/Cancelled</b>	Stricken at Scheduled Time for Non-Appearance	HSTKNA
			TSTKNA
Stricken at Scheduled Time for Other than Non-App		HSTKIC	
		TSTKIC	
Canceled Prior- To at Court's Request		HSTKCC	
		TSTKCC	
Canceled Prior- To at Defense Request		HSTKDA	
		TSTKDA	
Canceled Prior- To at Plaintiff's request		HSTKPA	
		TSTKPA	
Canceled Prior- To By Stipulation		HSTKSTP	
		TSTKSTP	
Canceled Prior- To By Unknown Party		HSTKU	
		TSTKU	

## APPENDIX G: COMPLIANCE DATA

### 1. COMPLIANCE DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

1. Identify families and case numbers to be reviewed for day. Start with Thurston site log, family id TM-1 (managed cases), then later will move to CT-1 (concurrent cases). Print SCOMIS basic screen for each case.

2. Get case files from case manager.

3. Check to make sure cases are for correct family.

4. Look at file dates for case (SCOMIS basic screen). Data will only be pulled from **file date** to present.

5. The following elements should be filled in:

<b>UFC Family ID</b>	from the site log; e.g. TM-1
<b>Site</b>	fill in 1=King, 2=Snohomish, 3=Thurston
<b>Case file reviewed</b>	the case number of the file you are working on, e.g. 00-3-00735-1
<b>Other cases</b>	cases that are listed <b>in file</b> as linked or otherwise mentioned.

6. Go through file in chronological order and focus on court orders and hearings.

7. Look for hearings and any services that may have been ordered or reviewed.

8. For each hearing that addresses a service or compliance with an order (i.e. reviews for compliance), fill in:

<b>Cases</b>	from top of sheet, e.g. <u>1</u> (file you're reviewing), <u>1, 2, 4</u> (if several).
--------------	--

<b>Hearing date</b>	date of hearing
---------------------	-----------------

<b>Family member</b>	Person service ordered for, e.g. Mother, Father, stepfather, grandmother, child. For GAL/CASA, "child" should be listed.
----------------------	--

<b>Service</b>	Type of service ordered, use <b>Attachment A codes</b> . You will need a new line for each service.
----------------	---

<b>O or R</b>	O = service has been ordered. R = service has been reviewed.
---------------	---

<b>Date ordered</b>	This may be a previous hearing or the current hearing date.
---------------------	---

<b>Freq/deadline</b>	How often the service is required (e.g. for DA_Tx, <u>1/week</u> , or duration of <u>30 days</u> , or for an assessment to be completed in <u>60 days</u> ).
----------------------	--

<b>Compliant?</b>	Whether the person has complied with the requirements of the
-------------------	--

order. This will only apply if the service is being reviewed. Circle Y for compliant or N if the person has not complied with the frequency, duration, or deadline of the service. This may also pertain to a U/A in that a positive U/A (drug test) is N for non-compliance.

A new sheet can be started to continue for same family if you run out of room. Separate sheets should be used whenever you begin looking at a new family **or** a new case file.

**2. SAMPLE DATA COLLECTION FORM:**

Date Collected \_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher Initials \_\_\_\_\_  
 Entered into Database \_\_\_\_\_

**UFC COMPLIANCE DATA COLLECTION FORM**

UFC FAMILY ID \_\_\_\_\_ SITE: \_\_\_ 1=KING 2=SNOHOMISH 3=THURSTON CONDITION: \_\_\_ U=UFC C=CONTROL

CASE FILE REVIEWED 1. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ FILE DATE \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_

OTHER CASES LINKED 2. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

CASES	HEARING DATE	FAMILY MEMBER	SERVICE	O/R	DATE ORDERED	FREQ/ DEADLINE	COMPLIANT?
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N
_____	__/__/____	_____	_____	__	__/__/____	_____	Y/N

### **3. DATA ENTRY PROTOCOL**

<b>AccessID</b>	Autonumber, no need to enter anything
<b>UFC Family ID</b>	Important: use lower case letters only! e.g. tm12
<b>Site</b>	Enter 1, 2, or 3 or use pull-down menu
<b>Condition</b>	u for UFC or c for Control group family
<b>Case</b>	Case number must be entered each time (you can copy & paste)
<b>File date</b>	Of case reviewed, using this format mm/dd/yyyy
<b>Family Member</b>	From pull down menu
<b>Service</b>	Chose service type number from pull down menu
<b>Event</b>	o=order r=review
<b>Date ordered</b>	only enter if this was an "o" event
<b>Frequency</b>	if available, may be left blank
<b>Deadline</b>	if available enter in date format mm/dd/yyyy, may be left blank
<b>Compliance</b>	enter if this was a "r" event, otherwise leave blank, y=yes n=n



**APPENDIX H: DSHS DATA**

**I. DASA Treatment Data Classification**

**1. Discharge Code**

- 1='Withdraw against program advice'
- 2='Complete Treatment'
- 3='Client died'
- 4='Transferred to Different Facility'
- 5='Funds Exhausted'
- 6='Inappropriate Admission'
- 7='Other'
- 8='No Contact/Abort'
- 9='Rule Violation/Non-compliance'
- 10='Incarcerated'
- 11='Withdraw with Program Advice'
- 12='Administrative Discharge (inactive 7/1/01)'
- 13='Not Amenable to Treatment/Lacks Engagement'
- 14='Moved'
- 15='Not Collected'

**RE-CODE: Completion Status**  
 If 2 → completion status =1;  
 Else → =0;  
 3,15 are coded as missing.

**2. Education**

- 1='AA Degree(Academic)'
- 2='Undergraduate Degree'
- 3='Vocational Training (certificate)'
- 4='High School Diploma'
- 5='No Degree'
- 6='Vocational Training (no certificate)'
- 7='Post-graduate degree'
- 8='Unknown'
- 9='AA degree(Vocational)'
- 10='Not Collected(inactive 6/1/93)'
- 11='G.E.D.'

**RE-CODE:**  
 1,2,7,9 → 1 at least AA degree  
 3,6 → 2 vocational training  
 4 → 3 High School Diploma

11	→	4	GED
5	→	5	No Degree
8,10	→	.	unknown/not collected

**3. Marital Status**

- 1='Divorced'
- 2='Single'
- 3='Married/Committed Relationship'
- 4='Never Married'
- 5='Separated'
- 6='Unknown'
- 7='Widowed'
- 8='Not Collected'

<b>RE-CODE: Marital</b>			
3	→	1	married
1,5	→	2	divorced/separated
2,4,7	→	3	single/never married/widowed
6,8	→	.	unknown/not collected

**4. Modality ID (Treatment Type)**

- 1='Dual Diagnosis'
- 2='Detoxification'
- 3='Extended Care'
- 4='Group Care Enhancement'
- 5='Intensive Inpatient'
- 6='Intensive Outpatient'
- 7='Long-Term Residential'
- 8='MICA (inactive 11/15/01)'
- 9='MICA Outpatient'
- 10='MICA Residential (inactive 11/15/01)'
- 11='Methadone/Opiate Substitution'
- 12='Not Applicable'
- 13='Outpatient'
- 14='Recovery House'
- 15='Transitional Housing';

<b>RE-CODE: Services (treatment)</b>	
5	"Inpatient"
6,9,11,13	"Outpatient/Methadone"
7,14,15	"LongTerm Residential/Recovery/Transitional Housing"
1,2,3,4	"Other";

## II. DASA Activity Data Classification

### 5. Activity Type

- 1='Individual'
- 2='Group'
- 3='Conjoint (with client)'
- 4='Family (without client)'
- 5='Childcare'
- 6='Case Management'
- 7='Acupuncture'
- 8='Methadone/Opiate Dose Change'
- 9='Urinalysis Sample';

#### RE-CODE Activity

```
IF acttype=1      then act_type='Individual';  
if acttype=2      then act_type='Group';  
if acttype in (3,4) then act_type='Family';  
if acttype=6      then act_type='Case Management';  
if acttype in (5,7,8,9) then act_type='Other';
```

### 6. Activity Attendance

- 1='Yes'
- 2='Excused, by provider'
- 3='No Show, unexcused absence'

#### RE-CODE Attendance

```
1      → attendance status = 1  
2,3    →                    =0
```



## APPENDIX I: STUDY DESIGN

### King Control Group Selection Method

King County Superior Court  
UNIFIED FAMILY COURT  
King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue, Room W-280  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-296-9416

To: Barbara Lucenko, Ph.D., Andrew Glenn, Ph.D., Yun Bauer  
From: Kelly Shanks, UFC Case Manager, King County  
Date: 5/27//03  
Re: King County UFC Screening Process for control group cases involving dependencies.

---

To provide an overview I have attached an Information Sheet describing the general referral and screening process for all UFC case managed cases in King County.

Generally, when screening case groups for acceptance into UFC, the case managers focus on:

- Multiple active cause numbers (including protection orders, dependency, ARY, CHINS, truancy, juvenile offender matters)
- Allegations of child abuse or neglect
- Allegations of chronic mental health problems
- Orders of transfer with cross-allegations of domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, substance abuse, mental health issues
- Multiple or felony domestic violence or assault criminal charges (including sex crimes)
- High filing activity (multiple protection orders filed, multiple modifications filed)

Once the referral is made to UFC, the case manager looks at the case in more detail, including a review of the legal file(s), JIS criminal history information and any commentary submitted by the referent. Cases accepted for case management would meet one or more of the referral criteria contained in the information sheet. In general, reasons for non-acceptance for UFC case management would include those cases where parties are fully engaged in court-ordered services and on track procedurally, those whose imminent trial date would preclude meaningful case management and cases assessed at a lower relative risk and not accepted due to caseload.

In the case of screening these potential control group cases, JIS criminal history information and legal files were reviewed for each case group. Cases which presented the most complexity and risk or which would appear to benefit most from case management were accepted. Less complex cases that were largely on track were designated “back up” cases. These cases may have been accepted or not in a real referral situation, depending on the referent (i.e. if a judicial officer had a specific reason for referring a lower risk case) or the caseload at the time of the referral. Cases that were very low risk, or did not meet criteria were designated as “decline.”

## HOW OVERALL DESIGN WILL ADDRESS OBJECTIVES OF UFC EVALUATION

### Objective 1: Better Informed Judicial Decision-making

- Increased case consolidation (Interviews, Surveys, Observations)
- Judicial officers' better awareness of services (Interviews)
- Judicial officers' enhanced knowledge of issues relating to family and child development (Interviews)
- Number of judicial officers/judicial teams hearing cases related to one family (JIS, UFC, Interviews)
- Perceived judicial familiarity with entirety of family's legal issues (Interviews, Focus Groups)
- Greater confidence among UFC judicial officers about their decisions (Interviews)
- System specialists' perceptions of UFC effectiveness (already completed survey of attorneys, social workers, GALs, CASA's)

### Objective 2: Improved Expedition and Timeliness of case processing. Increased case consolidation (Interviews, Surveys, Observations)

- Reduction in procedural difficulties (Interviews, Observations)
- Satisfaction (litigants and system practitioners) with timeliness in case processing (Focus Groups, Surveys)
- Average days from filing to completion by case type (JIS)
- Number of judicial officers/judicial teams involved with case by filing date (JIS, Interviews, Focus Groups)
- Alternative dispute resolutions for UFC and Pre-UFC families (Survey, UFC)
- Number of continuances for UFC and Pre-UFC cases (JIS)
- Description of caseflow and case processing (Interviews, Observations)
- Description of UFC staff positions, responsibilities, functions (Interviews, Observations)
- Analysis of UFC screening process (Interviews, Observations, surveys)
- List of case types heard and description of consolidation and communication process (JIS, Interviews)
- Reduction in litigants' perceived unproductive time spent in court (Focus Groups)

Objective 3: Better Access to and Coordination of Services

- Coordination between court and service providers for UFC families (Surveys, Interviews, Observations, Focus Groups)
- Number and range of services ordered and received for UFC and non-UFC families (UFC, DSHS)

Objective 4: Emphasis on Providing ADR

- Frequency of use of ADR by type (JIS, UFC)
- Perceived effectiveness of ADR from litigants and system practitioners (Surveys, Focus Groups, Interviews)

Objective 5: Reduction in Post-Resolution Litigation

- Perceived change in likelihood of coming back to court with DV issues, child support compliance issues, modification of custodian etc. for UFC families (Focus Groups, Interviews)

Objective 6: Better Family Outcomes

- Reduction in perceived likelihood of future domestic violence, child support, and modification problems for all families with UFC contact (Focus Groups, Interviews)
- Perceived improvement in conflict resolution and parenting skills for all families with UFC contact (Focus Groups, Interviews)
- Reduction in the number and duration of out-of-home placements (for dependency cases; DSHS)
- Reduction in number of CPS referrals (DSHS)
- Increased stability for children (Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups)



**APPENDIX J: ORIGINAL PILOT SITE PROPOSALS**

**Snohomish County Proposal**



**Snohomish County Juvenile Court Services  
Denney Juvenile Justice Center**

2801 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Everett, Washington 98201-1414  
Phone: (425) 388-7800 Fax: (425) 388-7882

**Court Commissioners**  
Arden J. Bedle  
Lester H. Stewart  
Jacalyn Brudvik

**Judges**

Gerald L. Knight  
Joseph A. Thibodeau  
Richard J. Thorpe  
James H. Allendoerfer  
Larry E. McKeeman  
Ronald L. Castleberry  
Thomas J. Wynne  
David F. Hulbert  
Anita L. Farris  
Linda C. Kreese  
Charles S. French  
George N. Bowden  
Ellen J. Fazz  
Kenneth Cornert

**Juvenile Court Administrator**  
Richard E. Carlson

Received by  
SEP 17 1999

September 17, 1999

OAC

Gloria Hemmen  
Office of the Administrator for the Courts  
1206 S. Quince  
PO Box 41170  
Olympia, WA 98504-1170

Dear Ms. Hemmen:

Attached are three copies of Snohomish County's proposal for a Unified Family Court Pilot Project. We are excited about the opportunity to move in the direction of family court, and the opportunity presented by the grant would be a great help. Please contact myself, or Judge Joseph Thibodeau if you have questions regarding our proposal.

Sincerely,

Dick Carlson  
Juvenile Court Administrator

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

**I. General Needs Statement**

A. This project will coordinate information and services related to families who come in contact with the Snohomish County Superior Court as a result of dissolution of marriage, domestic violence, dependency, CHINS/ARY, truancy, or offender proceedings. Snohomish County has taken steps to better coordinate Dependency and Offender proceedings by having the two judges assigned to juvenile court "share" these calendars. This has allowed for increased awareness of parallel proceedings. Judges have continued to use mediation, arbitration, and settlement conferences as valuable tools in handling marital dissolution cases. However, "Becca" and domestic proceedings still occur in separate courtrooms, and families with multiple proceedings find themselves attending numerous hearings in different locations. The result can sometimes be conflicting court orders, or incomplete information that may impede informed decision-making.

B. The workload for Snohomish County Superior Court in 1998 was : 3,391 Domestic cases filed; 3,208 Dependency cases filed (including truancy, CHINS, and ARY); 2,488 Juvenile Offender cases filed. Although the number of families with proceedings in more than one of these areas is not known, it's reasonable to assume that there are a large number of cases that fall within that category. As an example, almost daily, the dependency calendar includes 1 or more cases where a parenting plan needs to be approved in a domestic proceeding. These, and other matters will be coordinated so as to be heard by the same judge, in the same courtroom.

C. This project will address the issue of families with multiple proceedings by first identifying cases, tracking proceedings, compiling case status and decisions involving various legal actions associated with the family, noting services provided to, and agencies involved with the family, and making this information available to each judge as they handle the case. A Facilitator will assist parties to secure non-adversarial methods of dispute resolution, and coordinate services provided to the same family by different agencies in order to maximize resources.

**II. Goals, Objectives, and Tasks**

A. This project will assure that judicial and service decisions regarding a particular family will take into account orders that have been entered, or matters that are pending in other departments of the Superior Court. This will serve to mitigate process redundancies, and contradictory or inconsistent rulings and recommendations, and make for more efficient use of time and resources. Families will experience less inconvenience through coordination of proceedings, and use non-adversarial dispute resolution techniques will be enhanced.

B. In its first year, the project will identify 100 families who are involved in

proceedings in two or more of the following judicial tracks: domestic, dependency, truancy, CHINS, ARY, and offender. In each case, a summary of that family's pending matters, current orders, and involvement with service providers will be prepared, and made available to the court prior to hearing dates. The summary will be consistently updated, and remain current throughout the handling of these cases.

- C. Necessary tasks include creation of an oversight team that will include a Superior Court judge, and members of the following agencies: Juvenile Court Services, the Office of the Attorney General, the Snohomish County Clerk, the Office of the Snohomish County Prosecutor, Defense Bar, Dept. of Social and Health Services, and Dept. of Human Services. A Case Manager/Facilitator will be hired, and procedures will be drafted and shared with parties to the relevant proceedings. Local court rules, consistent with OAC criteria, will be adopted to guide the project, and participating judicial officers will complete a training project in accord with OAC requirements. The oversight team will appoint one of its members to participate as a part of a unified family court technical advisory team.

### III. Implementation and Methods

- A. Methods to be used will include: record searches of computer data bases such as JUVIS, SCOMIS, and local data sets; review of files and records of Juvenile Court Services, DSHS, and others as provided for by law; compilation of information in a consistent format; electronic dissemination of information to relevant parties; maintenance of a data base to track identified cases; regular meetings of the oversight team to review, and recommend courses of action in targeted cases. Wherever appropriate, families will be encouraged to use alternative dispute resolution techniques, including settlement conferences, evaluative mediation by attorney mediators, and facilitative mediation by non-attorney mediators.
- B. Letters of support are attached from the prosecuting attorney, clerk of the court, attorneys general, DSHS, and defense attorneys.
- C. Staffing will consist of (1) FTE Case Manager. This person will have a BA in a relevant subject area, be familiar with court proceedings, court records, issues of confidentiality, have basic computer skills, including word processing, spreadsheet, e-mail, and others, be able to work effectively with people who possess diverse interests and goals, have good organizational skills, and be an effective communicator. Familiarity with alternative dispute resolution techniques is preferred.
- D. Snohomish County will provide needed computer resources. There may be a need for some technical assistance from OAC with regard to accessing state information systems.

**IV. Budget**

- A. See attached budget (attachment C). Funds include the cost of (1) FTE Project Facilitator, funds for travel related to training and planning, necessary equipment, and training for project participants.
- B. Once established, the intent is to secure on-going funding from Snohomish County. Another possibility is the incorporation of this function within existing operations.

**V. Evaluation**

- A. The Snohomish County Superior Court has worked on a number of projects with OAC where there has been a need to create and maintain a database for evaluation purposes. Those collaborations have been successful, and in at least one case lead to our model being used by other courts. We will continue to work with OAC to assure a meaningful evaluation.
- B. As mentioned above, the Juvenile Division of the Superior Court has successfully implemented a court improvement grant program in conjunction with OAC, and participated in the evaluation of that effort, as well many grants from a variety of sources.

**ATTACHMENT C**  
**PROPOSED BUDGET**

Budget Category	Grant Funds	Local Funds
Personnel ( <u>1</u> positions)	\$ 42,213.36	\$
Fringe Benefits	\$ 11,072.75	\$
Travel	\$ 500.00	\$
Equipment, Capital Outlay, and Other Non-Recurring	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00
Supplies	\$	\$ 300.00
Contractual - Training	\$ 2,500.00	\$
Other Services and Charges - Phone, Internet, etc.	\$	\$ 900.00
Total Costs	\$ 57,786.00	\$ 4,200.00
<b>Total Project Budget</b> (total costs/grant funded)	\$ 61,986	

\*Note: No local match is required. This section does provide an opportunity to show how much the county is willing to expend in support of the proposed project.

**ATTACHMENT D**

**CERTIFICATE OF COURT APPROVAL**

The Honorable Ronald L. Castleberry  
Name of Superior Court Presiding Judge

has reviewed the Unified Family Court Pilot Project application prepared by

Dick Carlson ;  
Name of Applicant

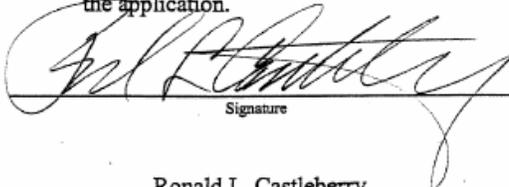
approves its submission to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC); and

agrees to receive, administer, and be accountable for all funds awarded

or

designates Dick Carlson  
Name of Person responsible for Pilot Project Management

to receive, administer, and be accountable for all funds awarded by the OAC pursuant to the application.

  
Signature

16 Sept 99  
Date

Ronald L. Castleberry  
Name

Presiding Judge, Snohomish County Superior Court  
Title

## Thurston County Proposal

### Superior Court of the State of Washington For Thurston County Family and Juvenile Court

Daniel J. Berschauer, Judge  
Department No. 2  
Paula Casey, Judge  
Department No. 2  
Richard A. Strophy, Judge  
Department No. 3  
Wm. Thomas McPhee, Judge  
Department No. 4  
Richard D. Hicks, Judge  
Department No. 5  
Christine A. Fomeroy, Judge  
Department No. 6  
Gary R. Tabor, Judge  
Department No. 7



2801 32nd Avenue SW, Tumwater  
Mailing Address: 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia, WA 98502  
Telephone: (360) 709-3201 Fax: (360) 709-3256

September 17, 1999

Received by  
SEP 17 1999  
OAC

Chris Wickham  
Court Commissioner

Scott C. Neilson  
Court Commissioner

Gilbert Austin  
Judicial Administrative  
Officer

Carolyn Reed  
Family and Juvenile  
Court Supervisor

Ms. Gloria Hemmen  
Office of Administrator for the Courts  
P. O. Box 41170  
Olympia, WA 98504-1170

Dear Ms. Hemmen:

On behalf of Thurston County, I am forwarding a proposal responding to your Unified Family Court pilot project RFP. Thurston County has demonstrated its commitment to the implementation of a unified family court system by its work to date. As you know, in the spring of 1996 the Court convened community and court stakeholders to begin planning for the co-location of family and juvenile court proceedings in a separate courthouse at a newly sited juvenile detention facility. In September 1998, the Family and Juvenile Court opened at the court's new facility. Major system changes were made with the move and in the year since the move. The Process Improvement Study commissioned by your office has recommended additional system changes and additions that we would like to implement. Some of the recommendations of that study are specifically addressed in this grant application.

Thurston County has some early experience with the unified family court model. We are eager to participate on a technical advisory team, developing materials and assisting other counties interested in unified family court efforts.

Please contact Carolyn Reed or me if you need any further information regarding our proposal.

Yours very truly,

Paula Casey, Presiding Judge  
Family and Juvenile Court

PC:bvm



**Thurston County Family and Juvenile Court  
Proposal for Implementation of a  
Unified Family Court Pilot Project**



**To: Office of Administrator for the Courts  
1206 S. Quince, PO Box 41170  
Olympia, WA 98504-1170**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**  
(as required by RFP Attachment A & B)

**I. GENERAL NEEDS STATEMENT**

In order to better serve families and children in the courts, Thurston County began a Unified Family Court in 1998. The attached brochure describes some highlights of the unified family court program. The project involves all case types and program components identified in this grant's guidelines except formal case management. The absence of resources has caused the Thurston County program to begin without a case manager. This program deficit was noted in the Office of the Administrator for the Court's Process Improvement Study of Thurston County's Family and Juvenile Court this summer. The Study found the court's present resources too thin to absorb new case management functions.

A basic premise of unified family court work is to assign a single judge to a family for all hearings and all proceedings in the system. Thurston County presently aims for one-judge/one-family assignment by self-identification by the families and attorneys regarding other cases within the system and by self-selection of the same judicial officer's calendar.

**A case manager is needed to centrally identify, schedule and manage the cases for families with either multiple cases or multiple hearings.**

- Hearings on concurrent cases that cross over between Family Court and Juvenile Court need centralized coordination on a common date with the same judicial officer.
- Other cases with multiple hearings evidencing a heightened level of conflict also need coordination to be moved forward toward less adversarial processes and early resolution.

Additional administrative support is needed for these case management functions in order to identify families with multiple cases and families with multiple hearings, to coordinate hearings before one judicial officer, and to move cases away from conflict and toward early resolution (through parenting seminars, mediation, settlement conferences and early trial dates).

**A case manager is also needed to track compliance with court-ordered services where children are affected.** For children's safety, parents are frequently required to attend parenting classes, counseling, or substance abuse treatment as conditions for more contact with their children. Juvenile probation officers monitor compliance of offenders, schools monitor compliance of truants, DSHS social workers monitor compliance of parents of dependent children, and attorneys can monitor compliance of their clients. With unrepresented parties in dissolution, custody and domestic violence proceedings, there is no contact outside the courtroom to assist with referrals and access to services or to verify enrollment and attendance. Without monitoring, many parents do not comply with court-ordered services, which extends the time of limited contact with their children. .

- A case manager is necessary to contact parties (especially those not represented by attorneys) following hearings to insure access to and compliance with court-ordered services.
- A case manager is needed to insure service referrals are coordinated and not duplicated for families with concurrent cases.
- A case manager is needed to assist parties who are not fluent in English overcome language barriers to services.

A primary function of the case manager would be to track these cases, coordinate service referrals and motivate compliance.

**The case manager would play a central role in coordinating all courthouse services for unrepresented parties in a Family Court Services Unit.** Based on the Process Improvement Study's

recommendation, Family and Juvenile Court will convene a working group this fall to determine how to better coordinate services from the court, the clerk's office, the courthouse facilitator, the partnering information and referral agency, juvenile probation officers and guardian ad litem and CASA workers. The case manager will be in the best position to determine ways to improve efficiencies and services.

Thurston County is in a unique position with respect to this pilot project grant. The framework for a unified family court program is up and running since September 1998. With the added resource of a case manager, Thurston County's Family and Juvenile Court would be in an excellent position to gather data and measure efficiency and effectiveness outcomes of a unified family court system during the grant period. A full-time case manager is needed to gather data as well as to work to improve outcomes and shorten case processing times and court time.

## II. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, TASKS AND TIMELINE

**Goal:** The goal of the Unified Family Court generally, and this grant specifically, is to provide more efficient, effective and coordinated service to families and children in court.

<b>Objective 1: Provide case management for high-conflict and concurrent cases.</b>		Quarterly Time Frame						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Tasks:</b>	Establish, advertise and hire case manager position	X						
	Identify current families with multiple cases	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Consolidate all hearings on one family's cases with one judicial officer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Identify high-conflict cases	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Assign all hearings for a high-conflict case to one judicial officer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Recommend and refer high-conflict cases to systems to reduce conflict: Parenting seminar, ADR, settlement conference, early trial	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Objective 2: Work on system changes to coordinate court services for unrepresented parties.</b>								
<b>Tasks:</b>	Participate in working group to develop Family Court Services Unit as recommended in Process Improvement Report		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Assist families to access court-ordered services, including second language providers		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Monitor compliance with court-ordered services		X	X	X	X	X	X

## III. IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

Project implementation will include hiring a full-time case manager and developing a coordinated Family Court Services Unit among existing courthouse resources. Minimum qualifications for the Case Manager will be three years experience working in court or a legal setting involving families and children and two years of college level courses in public administration, social services or the law. A bachelors degree will be preferred. The Case Manager will be supervised by the Family and Juvenile Court Supervisor. The development of a Family Court Services Unit will be facilitated by the Family

and Juvenile Court Presiding Judge. This staff addition and programmatic change, together with the unified family court system in place, would provide a very complete pilot model of a unified family court system. From this complete model good measures could be made of whether the Unified Family Court more efficiently and effectively serves families and children than the old system.

Some statistical measures will include:

- whether the number of hearings is being reduced for families with multiple cases
- whether the number of hearings is being reduced for families whose litigation has begun in a high-conflict mode
- whether cases are being processed more quickly and within state case processing time standards

Exit interviews or questionnaires will evaluate:

- whether parties are more satisfied with their treatment in the legal system
- whether parties experience any additional injury to their family from the legal process
- whether parties receive positive impact from the system

It is expected that a unified family court system will ultimately provide better outcomes for families and children. Mechanisms for statistically and anecdotally gathering data on the effects of the unified family court concept will be in place for continued tracking beyond the grant period.

Agencies providing letters of support for this grant application are: Thurston County Clerk, Thurston County Bar Association Immediate-Past Chair of the Family Law Section, Family Support Center, Dispute Resolution Center, Child Protective Services and Assistant Attorney General for the Juvenile Litigation Team in Thurston County.

#### **IV. BUDGET**

Our budget request includes salary and benefits for a Unified Family Court Case Manager position totaling \$60,000. We are not asking for other items; Thurston County will supply a computer and office supplies.

The Unified Family Court anticipates seeking other grant opportunities and county funds as a supplement for the next three years. Some potential funding opportunities include U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance and the State Justice Institute.

#### **V. EVALUATION**

The measures identified in Section III and others created by the Office of the Administrator for the Courts will be used to evaluate the Unified Family Court project. Microsoft Word, Access, SCOMIS and COMET are used to process and gather case information. Thurston County is very willing to work with OAC to identify data elements for project evaluation, collect data and assist in the development of recommendations and reports to the Legislature.

Historically Thurston County has worked with the OAC on projects such as Trial Court Performance Standards and Process Improvement. Judge Tom McPhee served on the state Committee to Review Case Processing Standards. Judge Paula Casey has represented Washington at the two Unified Family Court Summits and has presented testimony to the legislature numerous times in support of Unified Family Court projects.

**PROPOSED BUDGET**  
(as required by RFP Attachment C)

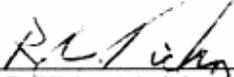
Budget Category	Grant Funds	Local Funds*
Personnel - Unified Family Court Case Manager – Based on Thurston County Range 9/10 – Salary for 18 Mos.	\$47,857	\$
Fringe Benefits FICA (0.065 X Salary) = 3,500 Retirement (0.075) = 2,448 Unemployment Insurance (0.006) = 275 Long-term Disability (0.0048) = 220 L & I = 225 Health Care = 5,475	\$12,143	\$
Travel	\$N/A	\$
Equipment, Capital Outlay, and Other Non-Recurring	\$N/A	\$1,500*
Supplies	\$N/A	\$
Contractual	\$N/A	\$
Other Services and Charges	\$N/A	\$
Total Costs	\$60,000	\$
<b>Total Project Budget</b> (Total costs/grant funded)	\$60,000	

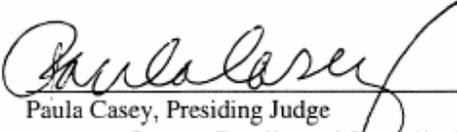
\*Note: No local match is required. This section does provide an opportunity to show how much the county is willing to expend in support of the proposed project. Computer has been provided by Thurston County.

**CERTIFICATE OF COURT APPROVAL**  
**(as required by RFP Attachment D)**

The Honorable Richard D. Hicks, Administrative Judge and The Honorable Paula Casey, Presiding Judge, have reviewed the Unified Family Court Pilot Project application prepared by Carolyn Reed, Court Supervisor; approve its submission to the Office of Administrator for the Courts (OAC); and designate Carolyn Reed to be responsible for pilot project management to receive, administer, and be accountable for all funds awarded by the OAC pursuant to the application.

Dated this 16<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1999.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard D. Hicks, Administrative Judge  
Thurston County Superior Court

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paula Casey, Presiding Judge  
Thurston County Family and Juvenile Court

## King County Proposal

Superior Court of the State of Washington  
for the County of King

Bobbe J. Bridge  
Presiding Judge  
email address: bobbe.bridge@metrokc.gov

Seattle, Washington  
98104-2312

Received by  
SEP 20 1999  
OAC

September 17, 1999

Mary McQueen  
State Court Administrator  
Office of the Administrator for the Courts  
1206 S. Quince Street  
PO Box 41170  
Olympia, WA 98504-1170

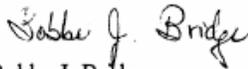
Dear Ms. McQueen:

Enclosed is a proposal from King County Superior Court for the Unified Family Court Pilot Project. We are requesting \$100,000 to enhance the existing UFC project located at the Regional Justice Center in Kent.

A recent evaluation of our UFC project found it has improved the consistency of court decisions, led to more coordinated scheduling of cases, and provided more direct control over litigant's use of the courts. Funding from OAC would allow us to expand staffing to increase families' access to and compliance with court-ordered services, develop better client tracking systems, and improve ways of measuring performance.

We appreciate the opportunity to apply for this grant. Please contact me or Mary Coleman, UFC Case Manager, at (206) 205-2576 if you have questions about the application.

Very truly yours,



Bobbe J. Bridge

King County Superior Court Presiding Judge

**King County Superior Court  
Proposal for Unified Family Court Project  
Project Description**

**I. General Needs Statement**

- A. State the need this project is designed to alleviate.** The King County Bench/Bar Unified Family Court Task Force was established in 1993, in response to widespread concern among the legal community and others over the fragmented and compartmentalized manner in which the legal system served families. The Task Force developed recommendations and implementation plans for a comprehensive Unified Family Court. The project has now been in operation for over two years.

A recently completed evaluation of the project found that it appears to be a well-conceived and well-managed project that seems to "enhance both the efficiency and effectiveness of the court, providing multiple benefits to families and other system actors." The evaluation identified the following areas of need: (i) manage the large and broad workload of the case manager; (ii) establish clear service level guidelines or targets to manage the caseload; (iii) improve client tracking; (iv) identify and implement additional performance measures.

- B. Support the need by statistical information.** A 1995 case overlap study in King County Superior Court found that 27% of cases had direct overlap with a different case type; 55% indicated one or more parties were pro se at some point; and only 12% evidenced referral to special services. In addition, legal case files were found to seldom contain family information, and only 10% of the cases related to the sample cases were evident in the legal file. A survey of court commissioners about high-conflict cases found that 53% of the sample cases had extreme cross-allegations, 53% had multiple motions, 13% returned to court within six months of final orders being entered, 11% involved allegations of sexual abuse, 8% involved two or more petitions for major modification of a parenting plan filed within three years, and 8% involved a mentally impaired parent.

- C. State how the project will address the need.** King County Superior Court's existing UFC project has the following components:

*The Case Management System* handles actions under Title 13, Title 26 (except adoptions), and Title 28A.225. Cases involving a particular family are coordinated to provide the most effective and efficient approach to addressing the family's issues and resolving matters in the best interest of the children. Each family is assigned to a team of a Judge, a Commissioner and a Case Manager. The team provides consistent, coordinated and considered oversight of cases in which families are involved in multiple court proceedings or have difficult issues such as abuse or neglect of children, failure to address court-ordered evaluations or treatment, mental health problems, or where parties are pro se or in circumstances that would benefit from UFC case management.

*The Family Law Information Center* provides procedural information on family law actions, legal forms, sample forms, and attorney and other referrals. Pro se parties can access work space and educational seminars.

*A Courthouse Drop-In Child Care Center* provides drop-in care for the children of litigants.

*A training and continuing education* program for judges, staff, and other professionals on topics such as domestic violence, child development, adolescent mental health, DCFS Risk Assessment Model, Welfare Reform Act, Community Family Support Services in South King County, and suicide prevention.

*A volunteer settlement conference program*, administered through the King County Bar Association, provides experienced family law attorneys who serve as volunteer settlement conference masters in family law matters.

King County Superior Court is requesting OAC grant funding for expansion of its existing UFC project. Participation in this project will assist the Court to comply with the recommendations of the recent UFC evaluation. Funds would be used to hire a Social Service Case Manager, who will assume some of the duties currently assigned to the Case Manager, develop ways to sustain more systematic client tracking, and coordinate and oversee the provision of court-ordered services to litigants. Further, evaluation of the project with OAC would implement the recommendations related to performance measurement.

## II. Goals, Objectives, and Tasks

**A. State the broad overall goal(s) of the project.** The overall goal of the King County Unified Family Court Project is to coordinate and improve the delivery of services to children and families involved in the legal system through additional judicial oversight and case management for families that have difficult issues.

**B. State the objectives the project will achieve within the project timeframe. (Objectives must be quantifiable and time bound.)**

1. Resolve cases on or before trial date and within statutory time frames.
2. Consolidate litigants' substantial issues into one case.
3. Ensure the court has access to information regarding family's involvement in other actions.
4. Reduce the number of conflicting court orders.
5. Ensure that parties receive adequate legal assistance or pro se services.
6. Ensure that family members complete court-ordered services in time for hearings or trials.
7. Ensure that family members receive appropriate services.
8. Establish a network of service agencies for referring and coordinating court-ordered services.
9. Reduce post resolution filings.
10. Complete documents necessary for operations.

**C. State the tasks to be accomplished.**

1. Establish a contact within each of approximately 50 agencies to which UFC families are referred.
2. Create a reference manual of providers and available services for use by judicial officers and others.
3. Develop a network for no-cost or low-cost psychological evaluations for family law litigants.
4. Coordinate and manage the services and evaluations ordered for litigants.
5. Complete a UFC operations manual.
6. Complete a UFC manual/benchbook.
7. Develop local rules.
8. Develop a performance measurement system and identify and collect additional performance measure data.
9. Develop differentiated case management tracks for cases that receive intensive case management services and those that warrant additional judicial oversight and referrals to appropriate service providers, but for which intensive case management will not be offered.

## III. Implementation and Methods

**A. Describe the methods and techniques to be used to meet the objectives.** Cases being managed by the UFC are initially screened by the case manager to develop a legal profile which provides current information regarding the legal history of the family. This legal profile provides information regarding the status of any pending or closed actions (both civil and criminal), the terms of current orders, and the status of any previously ordered evaluations and services.

The UFC cases are assigned to one judge and one commissioner. At an initial hearing called a "Planning Conference", the court addresses such issues as: the need for dispute resolution; appointment of a GAL or CASA; coordination of related services; identification of individuals who should be brought into the action; setting of hearing and trial dates; defining access to the legal files; the exchange of discovery; and coordinating the need for and timelines for necessary evaluations.

In addition, the court issues a schedule of events at the Planning Conference, designed to meet the needs and the deadlines for the pending actions, and to ensure the progress of trial preparation and compliance with the measures ordered at the Planning Conference.

Following the Planning Conference, the Case Managers will monitor the progress of the case to insure that the events ordered by the court take place on schedule, and will verify that deadlines or key events ordered by the court are being met and that alternative dispute resolution is scheduled. In the event there are any delays in adhering to the schedule issued at the Planning Conference, additional conferences are held to address these delays.

**B. Identify agencies from which letters of support have been obtained.** (Agencies may include the prosecuting attorney, county clerk, public defenders, attorneys general, and the Department of Social and Health Services.) Department of Social and Health Services; Department of Judicial Administration; Attorney General; Prosecuting Attorney; Dependency CASA; CASA; Family Court Services; SCRAP

**C. Describe staffing and staff qualifications.** The current UFC Case Manager has a legal background. The Social Service Case Manager will have Master's Degree in Social Work or a related field and three years of professional work experience, or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Excellent written and oral communication skills, strong case management skills, and demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people from culturally diverse background are required. General clinical expertise is highly desirable in family/divorce dynamics, child abuse, domestic violence, counseling, alternative dispute resolution.

**D. Describe the computer resources (including hardware, software, and technical assistance) that will be requested from the Office of the Administrator for the Courts.** Two desktop computers are needed for UFC staff. System requirements are:

TABOR motherboard (or comparable)	Pentium II 350 Mhz processor
64 MB RAM	ATI Rage Pro video card (or comparable)
4.1 GB hard drive	1.44 MB 3.5" floppy drive
17X/40X CD-ROM drive	

#### IV. Budget

**A. Justify budget expenses in all budget categories.** Expenses are for an 18-month period.

Personnel: \$61,950. A social service case manager will be hired at a rate comparable to a social worker with Family Court Services. The projected salary range in 2000 is \$39,359-\$50,043. The budget assumes an entry level salary with the possibility of cost of living and merit increases.

Fringe Benefits: \$18,500. Includes \$10,500 for medical/dental insurance (12 mos. @ \$573/mo. And 6 mos. @ \$600/ mo.); \$4,750 for Social Security/Medicare (7.65% of salary); \$2,850 for PERS retirement (4.6% of salary); and \$400 for industrial insurance.

Travel: \$1,950. Includes \$150 for auto mileage for outreach to social service agencies (460 miles @ \$.325); and \$1,800 for two family law conferences including 2 airfares @ \$500; 2 registrations @ \$200; 2 hotel nights @ \$120; and 4 days per diem @ \$40.

Supplies: \$400. Includes \$100 for a telephone; \$150 for a bookcase; and \$150 for training and reference materials on issues such as domestic violence, mental health, child development.

Other Services and Charges: \$17,200. Includes \$200 for telephone installation charges; \$1,000 for telephone line charges (1<sup>st</sup> line @ \$744; 2<sup>nd</sup> line @ \$216; voice-mail @ \$36); and \$16,000 (20% of salary and benefits) for indirect expenses such as office space and furnishings, supplies, copying, postage, and administrative services.

**B. Describe potential funding sources for the project when grant funds are no longer necessary.** King County currently funds the Case Manager and Family Law Information Center components of the Unified Family Court and this support is expected to continue. The Court is committed to pursuing other grants, fees, or local funds to continue the level of service achieved with the OAC grant. If such efforts are unsuccessful, however, the UFC will return to its former staffing level with the added benefit of a stronger infrastructure created by the OAC grant (e.g., network of providers, systems for client tracking, program performance measures).

#### V. Evaluation

**A. Demonstrate willingness to work with the OAC to identify required data elements for project evaluation.**

The Court has completed an evaluation of its UFC project and the evaluator has suggested additional areas for evaluation. The Court is invested in the success of UFC and will give OAC its full cooperation in the evaluation.

**B. Demonstrate ability to collect data and assist the OAC in the development of recommendations and reports to the Legislature.**

The Court is developing a case management information system for UFC to maintain data and generate reports. The Court currently participates in several grant-funded projects, including a State CASA Pilot Project, which requires data collection, reporting, and program evaluation for the Legislature.

**ATTACHMENT C**  
**PROPOSED BUDGET**

Budget Category	Grant Funds	Local Funds*
Personnel ( 1 positions)	\$ 61,950	\$ 66,876
Fringe Benefits	\$ 18,500	\$ 23,022
Travel	\$ 1,950	\$ 150
Equipment, Capital Outlay, and Other Non-Recurring	\$ 0	\$ 0
Supplies	\$ 400	\$ 3,250
Contractual	\$ 0	\$ 0
Other Services and Charges	\$ 17,200	\$ 8,680 **
Total Costs	\$100,000	\$ 101,978
<b>Total Project Budget</b> (total costs/grant funded)	<b>\$ 201,978 / \$100,000</b>	

\*Note: No local match is required. This section does provide an opportunity to show how much the county is willing to expend in support of the proposed project.

\*\* Does not include overhead, which is not budgeted by program.

## ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION/CLARIFICATION/INSTRUCTIONS

### ***Personnel***

Only the salary costs of personnel directly involved in project activities should be included in the Personnel budget.

The cost of staff who provide some supportive services, but whose positions would be filled whether the project was funded or not, may not be charged as personnel costs. The types of positions often falling into this category include: agency supervisors and administrators, general support staff such as receptionists, maintenance personnel, etc.

### ***Fringe Benefits***

The cost of personnel fringe benefits such as federal withholding, health insurance, state industrial, retirement accounts, etc.

### ***Travel***

All travel costs are included in this category, including personal car mileage, airfares, per diem, etc.

### ***Equipment***

Tangible property (e.g. desks, filing cabinets, etc.) with a useful life of more than one year and an initial cost of more than \$300 is included in this category. This cost should not include any computer resources to be provided by the OAC as described in Attachment B, Section III. D.

### ***Supplies***

The amount expended for all supplies that are consumable. The key word in determining whether an item belongs in the Supplies category is "consumable." If it can be used up, then it is a supply item.

The exception to the "consumable" guideline is training material such as books, films, and videotapes. These are considered consumable because they are obviously not fixed assets and can become worn out or outdated.

### ***Contractual***

Any contract the project awards will be entered in this budget category.

The important distinction to remember is that when an agency contracts with an individual, no matter what service is to be delivered, the cost is reported in Contractual, not in Personnel.

### ***Other Services and Charges***

This category is for services other than Personnel, which are required in the administration of the project. Such services may include: communication, transportation, advertising, and rentals.

Note that the kind of transportation included in this category involves the movement of things. Travel of people, project personnel, consultants, etc., is reported in the Travel category.

ATTACHMENT D

CERTIFICATE OF COURT APPROVAL

The Honorable Bobbe J. Bridge  
Name of Superior Court Presiding Judge

has reviewed the Unified Family Court Pilot Project application prepared by

King County Superior Court  
Name of Applicant

approves its submission to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC); and

agrees to receive, administer, and be accountable for all funds awarded

or

designates Steve Davis  
Name of Person Responsible for Pilot Project Management

to receive, administer, and be accountable for all funds awarded by the OAC pursuant to the application.

Bobbe J. Bridge  
Signature

September 17, 1999  
Date

Bobbe J. Bridge  
Name

Presiding Judge  
Title

## **APPENDIX K: UFC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

### ***King Screening Criteria***

Cases involving children may be referred to the UFC for case management if the cases involve at least one type of action listed below and one or more of the referral criteria. The UFC does not provide case management services for adult or juvenile criminal proceedings. While the UFC may be aware of criminal matters for purposes of coordinating services, the cases are not within the jurisdiction of the UFC for case management.

### **Types of Actions**

**Title 13:** Juvenile dependency, truancy, CHINS (child in need of services), and ARY (at-risk youth).

**Title 26:** Dissolution of marriage, parentage, third party custody actions, actions to modify parenting plans, and domestic violence protection order cases.

### **Referral Criteria**

Referral criteria for UFC case management are listed below. Many of the cases accepted for case management meet more than one of the listed criteria.

- 1) Allegations of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect of children;
- 2) Allegations of chronic mental health problems;
- 3) Previous termination of parental rights;
- 4) Failure to address court-ordered evaluations or treatment;
- 5) Early or multiple filings for modification of parenting plans or other custody or visitation orders;
- 6) Multiple pending cases involving the family;
- 7) Multiple current or past actions involving domestic violence or sexual assault;
- 8) A case involving pro se parties and case issues that would benefit or be expedited by additional case monitoring or tracking; or
- 9) Other similar basis as recognized by a judge or commissioner referring the case for UFC consideration.

### ***Snohomish Screening Criteria***

- There must be an existing dependency action involving the family; and?
- There must be one or more of the following family court actions that already exists or will soon be commenced: dissolution with parenting plan, modifications of parenting plan, domestic violence petition, paternity action with parenting plan, or third party custody action with parenting plan.

*Appendix K, UFC Eligibility Criteria*

- Once UFC is up and running, expand to include families involved with other Title 13 cases that also have related family court matters pending.

*Thurston Screening Criteria*

Intends to include all eligible cases who meet the following criteria:

- The family involved in a particular case has another case pending or active within the last 12 months;
- It is expected that there will be multiple case filings for the particular family;
- A judicial officer has determined that there is an unusually high amount of conflict in the litigation involving the family as evidenced by a number of court appearances, numbers of parties, level of antagonism exhibited.

## **APPENDIX L: LITIGANT SURVEY PRE-TEST ASSESSMENT**



### Unified Family Court Evaluation Litigant Survey Pre-Test

A pre-test of the litigant survey, a component of the Unified Family Court (UFC) evaluation, was conducted by Research Services, Office of the Administrator for the Courts, between February and April, 2001. This report provides a brief review of the findings, and proposes suggestions for improvement.

Any questions regarding this report, the litigant survey, or the Unified Family Court evaluation, should be directed to Bart Salisbury at (360) 705-5264 or [bart.salisbury@courts.wa.gov](mailto:bart.salisbury@courts.wa.gov).

#### **Background**

The litigant survey pre-test is purposive. It is intended only for testing the survey methodology and assessing the questionnaire design. *The results reported for this survey are not to be taken as scientifically valid.*

The pre-test includes litigants from King County only. Litigants were drawn from cases resolved prior to July, 2000. Litigants are classified as UFC or non-UFC, depending on whether their case was accepted into the UFC program. UFC cases were heard at the Regional Justice Facility in Kent; non-UFC cases were heard at the King County Courthouse in Seattle.

#### **Response Rate**

The procedure for mailing the survey consists of: 1) an introductory letter, from Chief Justice Gerry L. Alexander; 2) the survey, with a cover letter, mailed 13 days later; and 3) a follow-up, which included a duplicate survey, sent to nonrespondents, mailed 18 days later.

Eighty-six surveys were mailed during the first round, ten of which were returned as undeliverable. Fifty-two surveys were mailed in the follow-up, of which two were returned as undeliverable. Overall, 35 completed surveys were received. The response rate of the pre-test is 47% (35 completed surveys divided by 74 delivered surveys). The response rates of UFC and non-UFC litigants are comparable to the overall response rate. However, more surveys were undeliverable to UFC litigants (10) than non-UFC litigants (1).

#### **Demographics**

The survey pre-test asked a limited number of demographic questions. The main findings are:

- Language: 91% of respondents said English is the primary language spoken at home.

## *Appendix L, Litigant Survey Pre-Test Assessment*

- Education: 84% of respondents are educated to the high school level or beyond; with 41% having some college, and 28% having a college or professional degree (2-year minimum).
- Race: 75% of respondents are white; 13% African-American; 9% Asian/Pacific Island; and 3% “other.”
- Jobs: 78% of employed respondents did not lose their job in the six months prior to their family case resolution; 90% did not lose their job in the six months following their family case resolution.
- Health: 68% of respondents indicated no visits to a doctor or health care professional in the six months prior to their family case resolution; 74% made no visits in the six months after. (The number of respondents who did make visits is too low to offer a reliable estimate of visits made before or after case resolution.)

### **Questionnaire Design**

There are two versions of the pre-test questionnaire. The first version asks respondents to evaluate the survey in three ways: 1) ease of completion; 2) capturing the family court experience; and 3) time for completion. Twenty-five respondents completed this version. Ninety-six percent said the survey was easy to follow, with most respondents (71%) completing it in 10 minutes or less. However, only 36% said the survey adequately captured their family court experience. Of particular note, 27% of UFC litigants answered “yes” to this question compared with 50% of non-UFC litigants.

The physical length of the pre-test questionnaire is four pages; it contains 55 questions. A review of the response levels of questions all respondents are asked shows completion rates of 90% and above. This suggests the number of questions is not too great (i.e., respondent fall-off is not a concern), nor are there questions respondents are disposed not to answer. (This does not mean, however, that questionnaire length did not play a role in nonresponse.)

### **Pre-Test Assessment**

The response rate of the litigant survey pre-test, 47%, is good, but may be improved. Follow-ups, by mail and telephone, were used in the pre-test. The former increased the number of completed surveys 67%. Salant and Dillman (1994) suggest a process similar to that used in this pre-test, but with the addition of a postcard reminder, mailed before the follow-up survey. Also, the survey will be mailed closer to case resolution. Currency for respondents may help to bolster the response rate.

Respondents do not appear to be having any difficulties with the questionnaire itself. They answered questions throughout at a high level. However, UFC litigant respondents said that the questionnaire did not adequately capture their experience in family court. Follow-up questions were not offered, nor did respondents provide any clues about disconnection in their comments. It may be that a redesign of the

## *Appendix L, Litigant Survey Pre-Test Assessment*

questionnaire may clarify the purpose of the survey enough for respondents to better relate the questions to their court experience. The following suggestions for change are offered:

- Provide the name of a contact person in the introduction, to handle questions about the survey, and a mailing reminder and address in a closing.
- Provide better differentiation of questions. For example, within Section 2 are questions about how the court or judge handled the case (e.g., “The court helped me find the services ordered by the judge.”) and respondent expectations based on the experience or for the outcome (e.g., “I think the court helped me become a better parent.”). For each section provide a brief introduction to set the respondent’s focus.
- Make use of existing JIS data to reduce the scope of the demographic questions. This will reduce the number of questions and space used.
- Use a strict ordinal numbering scheme, to minimize possible confusion, especially during branching.
- Remove the “No Opinion” heading, leaving only a “Not Applicable” response item.
- Lighten the appearance of the questionnaire by using an off-white, cream or buff color.
- Emphasize Supreme Court sponsorship.

### **Survey Results**

*The litigant survey pre-test is not scientifically valid.* However, the answers given by respondents may provide insight to practitioners and investigators that will lead to improvement of the questionnaire. The following is a summary of these findings, with a complete set available for review in Appendix A.

- 10% of respondents rated the court’s handling of their case “excellent,” 19% as “good,” 26% as “fair,” and 45% as “poor.” The breakdown was similar UFC and non-UFC litigants.
- 67% agreed the court staff was helpful and courteous; 34% said that court rules and procedures were easy to understand; and 57% said that court forms were easy to fill out.
- 63% felt there were too many judges involved in their case; 91% said they liked their case being heard by one judge, or one team of judges.
- 30% said their family case was handled in a timely manner; 60% said there were too many delays.
- 39% said the judge never issued conflicting orders.
- 21% agreed the judge was familiar with all of the issues affecting their family; 39% said the court made every effort to protect the children in their family.
- 38% said the judge ordered services they needed; 42% said judges ordered services needed by the other parties.

*Appendix L, Litigant Survey Pre-Test Assessment*

- 29% said the court helped them find the services ordered; 23% said the court checked to see they received the services ordered.
- 25% agreed the court-ordered services helped their families.
- 36% said the court was “family-friendly.”
- 28% said the court helped them become a better parent.
- 32% doubted they would return to court to settle family disputes; 16% didn’t feel they would return to court to deal with child support problems; and 20% believed they would not return to court to settle visitation/parenting plan issues.
- 38% agreed the court helped reduce the likelihood of future domestic violence problems.