



Demonstration Site Report: Pima County

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The Family Justice Initiative (FJI) is guiding courts toward improved outcomes for families, while managing costs, controlling delays and facilitating healthy outcomes. FJI is a partnership of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). It is overseen by the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and supported with a grant from the State Justice Initiative (SJI).

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Methods and Data	3
Landscape Data.....	3
Process Evaluation	4
Site Visit.....	5
All-Site Meetings.....	5
Pima-Specific Meetings	5
Key Players.....	6
Process Map (Statutes, Court Rules, Business Practices).....	7
Alignment with FJI Principles and Recommendations.....	10
Adopt a Problem-Solving Approach (Principles 1–4)	10
Triage Family Cases (Principles 5–8).....	12
Training and Stakeholder Relationships (Principles 9–10)	14
Data Collection, Evaluation, and Technology Innovations (Principles 11–13).....	15

Introduction

In 2017, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) with support from the State Justice Institute launched the Family Justice Initiative (FJI) Project to evaluate and improve the way state courts handle domestic relations cases. IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) partnered with the NCSC on this important project. This partnership resulted in the first landscape of domestic relations cases with a national scope, reported in [*The Landscape of Domestic Relations Cases in State Courts*](#). Based on the findings of the landscape report, the FJI Advisory Committee developed 13 recommendations for family justice reform, contained in the [*Family Justice Initiative's Principles for Family Justice Reform*](#) and the supplemental [*A Model Process for Family Justice Initiative Pathways*](#). To test the practicality and effectiveness of these recommendations, four courts ranging in geographical location and size planned to pilot the recommended principles to demonstrate their feasibility in practice and effects on key outcomes for domestic relations cases.

The Superior Court in Pima County, Arizona, was selected to be one of the four official FJI pilot sites. The other three pilot sites included Miami-Dade County, Florida; King County, Washington; and Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The IAALS evaluation team partnered with the Pima County Superior Court to assess current practices and identify opportunities for implementing the FJI Principles to improve family case processing.

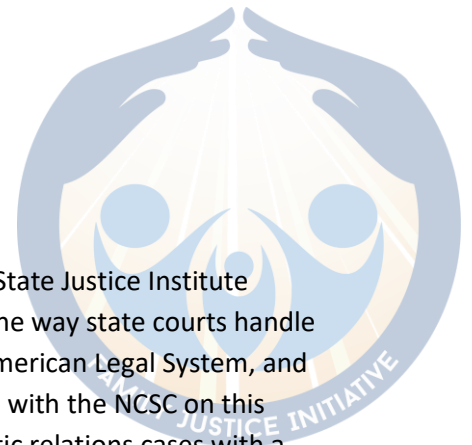
Prior to the pilot, the Superior Court already employed strategies aligned with the FJI Principles and that serve to support families throughout domestic relations cases; however, the court has identified four main opportunities for improvement.

1. Revise current packets and forms

Family Justice Initiative Principle 4 outlines the importance of courts providing clear, straightforward information to parties about the court process. This includes providing court self-help information and materials in plain language and in languages other than only English. The court should revise their packets and forms to have up-to-date information, in plain language, and in both English and Spanish.

2. Implement the streamlined pathway

The Model Process for Family Justice Initiative Pathways suggests three pathways and related criteria as a flexible approach to triaging domestic relations cases. Pima County should screen cases as early as the filing of the Petition and Response to determine whether a case fits in the streamlined pathway.



3. **Provide more judicial training opportunities**

Family Justice Initiative Principle 9 calls for courts to implement high quality judicial and court staff training. In addition to the trainings judges currently receive, the court should provide judges on the Family Law Bench with trainings on how to manage cases with self-represented litigants (SRLs) and handle the process changes that will come about from implementation of the FJI Principles.

4. **Improve current data collection and reporting methods**

Family Justice Initiative Principle 11 recommends that courts improve ongoing data collection, analysis, and use of data to inform case management. The court should have a clear definition of all case data elements, effectively collect and display those elements, and provide those elements to judges in order to better prioritize their cases.

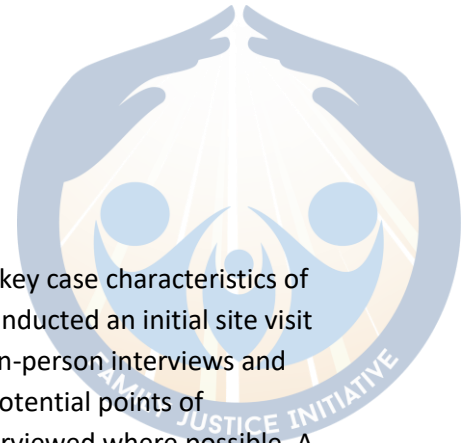


Methods and Data

A comprehensive assessment was conducted of the current operations and key case characteristics of the Pima County Family Law Bench. The IAALS and NCSC evaluation team conducted an initial site visit as part of a larger, ongoing process evaluation of the court. The team used in-person interviews and court observations to enhance understanding of court operations and any potential points of intervention. Key players were identified prior to the site visit and were interviewed where possible. A process map was drafted to outline the key procedural events and case process under local rules and practices. The following sections provide an overview of each method and the findings.

Landscape Data

The other three pilot sites in Florida, Washington, and Ohio participated in the initial Landscape study. Another jurisdiction in Arizona—Maricopa County—was part of that study as well, but given other evaluation efforts in Maricopa not related to family justice reform, Pima County was identified as a desirable alternative. As a result, Landscape data is not available for Pima County.



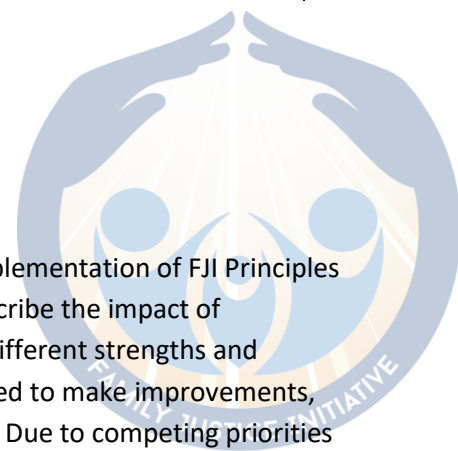
Process Evaluation

We initially planned to conduct four process evaluations to describe the implementation of FJI Principles and two outcome evaluations (King County and Miami-Dade County) to describe the impact of implementation on performance measures. Each of the four sites brought different strengths and opportunities to the project; some sites had clear ideas of where they wanted to make improvements, while others were looking to the FJI project team to inform their next steps. Due to competing priorities in all of the sites, and especially given the drastic change in court operations nationwide due to COVID-19, our sites will not have implemented evaluable changes before the end of the project.

Alternatively, we offer here an assessment of each site's current adherence to the FJI Principles (i.e., the first step in a process evaluation) as well as recommendations for how each of the four sites can improve practices within the context of the Principles. These recommendations have been shared with the sites, and the sites have indicated their intention to work towards one or more of the recommendations in the future. We are also in the process of surveying the sites to collect more information on their current priorities, next steps, drivers, and barriers.

We plan to continue communication with the sites to monitor their progress on their practice improvements, and we have also asked the sites to consider their evaluation support needs in the future. We recognize how important it is to gather empirical evidence to determine whether the FJI Principles, as implemented, result in lower caseloads, more satisfied litigants and court staff, and more timely dispositions, and we will continue to seek opportunities to engage in research to measure these anticipated outcomes.

In addition, and in response to our most common requests from the field, we are offering a deliverable for public dissemination that describes "real-life" application of the FJI Principles. The online resources will incorporate content from the assessments of the four sites as well as information collected from other sites across the country that are at various stages of implementing strategies that align with the FJI Principles. These resources will outline specific strategies that courts use to implement the FJI Principles as well as barriers they have encountered and solutions they have used to address the barriers.



Site Visit

The project team participated in a site visit from September 30 through October 1, 2019, at the Arizona Superior Court in Pima County. Superior Court Presiding Judge Kyle Bryson, former Family Law Bench Presiding Judge Scott Rash,¹ current Family Law Bench Presiding Judge Greg Sakall, Court Administrator Ron Overholt, and Deputy Court Administrator Cassandra Urias hosted the visit and provided a great deal of information on the history and current practices within the Family Court. In addition to the hosts listed above, project staff interviewed Superior Court Associate Presiding Judge Jeffrey Bergin, Commissioner John Assini, Director of the Conciliation Court Joi Hollis, Director of the Law Library Leanne Yoder, Clerk of the Court Gary Harrison, Manager of Research and Statistics Andrew Dowdle, and Director of the Court Interpreters Zaonii Sierra. Project staff also sat in on a temporary protective order hearing.

Judge Bryson, Judge Sakall, Ron Overholt, and Cassandra Urias have led Pima County through the process of implementing the FJI Principles. They are leaders of their respective departments in the Pima County Superior Court, and this demonstration of leadership throughout the engagement with the Family Justice Initiative reflects to the entire court the importance of this work.

All-Site Meetings

On November 4, 2019, the FJI Task Force held an all-sites conference call with the four FJI pilot sites. During this call, each pilot site discussed the FJI Principles they were looking to implement and asked the other jurisdictions questions about implementation strategies.

On January 10, 2020, NCSC, IAALS, and NCJFCJ hosted a webinar on business process simplification for the four pilot sites. Stacey Marz, Administrative Director of the Alaska State Court System, and Danielle Hirsch, Principal Court Management Consultant for NCSC, facilitated the webinar.

Pima-Specific Meetings

On November 8, 2019, IAALS held a conference call with the Pima County team to discuss the themes that came out of the site visit, including the five FJI Principles of interest to Pima County stakeholders: Principles 4, 5, 6, 9, and 11. IAALS followed up with a preliminary assessment detailing potential implementation of those Principles.

On January 29, 2020, IAALS held a follow-up call with the Pima County team to discuss the process evaluation outline. The Pima County team asked a number of questions regarding best practices on implementing the FJI Principles. The IAALS team answered their questions by providing them with

¹ Judge Scott Rash was nominated for the federal bench midway through implementation, but he played a key role in readying Pima County's Family Bench for implementation of the FJI Principles.

resources and by reaching out to other jurisdictions, including the other three pilot sites to the extent they were working on the same issues.

Key Players

Judicial Officer

The judicial officers that handle family law cases are all part of a dedicated Family Law Bench within the Pima County Superior Court. There are four judges on the Family Law Bench. They have four-year terms and rotate every two to three years at the discretion of the Superior Court Presiding Judge. They have both law clerks and judicial administrative assistants to help with cases. Interviewees mentioned that some judges enjoy their time on the Family Bench while others see it more as an obstacle to overcome. There are a number of training opportunities that the judges take advantage of, both in Pima County and Maricopa County. Judges go through a review process every four years.

Like judges, commissioners also rotate. They do not rotate to the civil or criminal benches, though they do rotate between the juvenile, family, Title IV-D, and probate benches. There are nine full-time commissioners: seven cover all family law issues and the other two handle Title IV-D child support matters only. The commissioners tend to have the most experience in family or juvenile law, usually from private practice prior to becoming a commissioner. Approximately one week every two months they cover initial requests for Orders of Protection, and the remaining time they handle all parts of family cases, including Dissolution of Marriage, Legal Separation, Annulment, Non-IV-D Establishment of Paternity, and Custody determinations. Commissioners go through a review process every two years.

In addition to judges and commissioners, the Family Law Bench has over 50 volunteer judges pro tempore who assist with mandatory settlement conferences.

IAALS' judicial officer key contacts include: Judge Kyle Bryson, Judge Greg Sakall, and Commissioner John Assini.

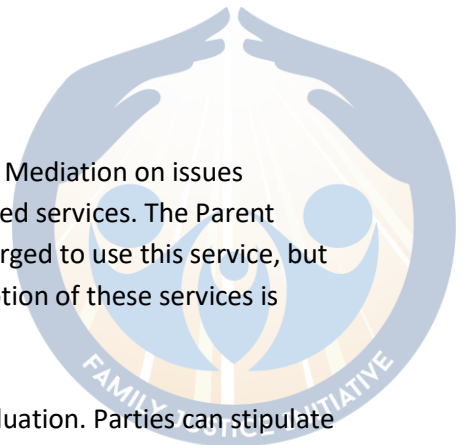
Law Clerk

Each judge on the Family Law Bench has a law clerk. The law clerk's essential functions include: performing legal research, providing input on decisions, participating in conferences between attorneys and the judge, and assisting in writing and preparing judicial opinions. Commissioners are not provided law clerks.

Judicial Administrative Assistant

Both judges and commissioners are provided a Judicial Administrative Assistant (JAA). Their essential functions include: making decisions in regard to caseload management; conducting research to answer inquiries; reviewing incoming documents, mail, and pleadings to ensure compliance with court rules; and assigning hearing dates and trials.





Conciliation Court

The Conciliation Court provides a variety of services, most of which are free. Mediation on issues relating to children, for example, is free and is one of the most frequently used services. The Parent Education Program is mandatory for all parties with children. Parties are charged to use this service, but parties can ask for the fee to be waived or deferred. A more detailed description of these services is provided below under the Process Map section.

Another free service provided is a Legal Decisionmaking/Parenting Time Evaluation. Parties can stipulate to a thorough assessment of the child's needs to help guide the court on decisions of legal decision-making and parenting time.

Conciliation Counseling is also a free service provided by the Conciliation Court, and parties can use it whether or not there is an existing action for divorce or separation. If an action has already commenced, the use of Conciliation Counseling puts a 60-day hold on the case.

IAALS' key contact at the Conciliation Court is its Director, Dr. Joi Hollis.

Pima County Law Library

The Law Library and Resource Center provides books, self-service packets/forms, computer-assisted legal research, brochures on legal and domestic violence services, and self-service photocopies. It was recently redesigned to assist SRLs. There are five librarians who work at the library, two of whom are Spanish-speaking. Pima County Superior Court has free legal clinics where every party can have a 30-minute meeting with a volunteer attorney. There are three organizations of pro bono attorneys and the court pays around \$39,500 per year to run the clinic. SRLs can go to the Law Library either for more information or to schedule an appointment with one of the pro bono attorneys. The library sees about 50,000 people each year.

IAALS' key contact at the Law Library is its Director, Leanne Yoder.

Domestic Relations Bar

Interviewees described the Family Law Bench as having a good working relationship with the Domestic Relations Bar. In addition to other continuing legal education events, the State Bar holds biannual Bench-Bar seminars, and the Pima County Bar Association hosts an annual Family Law Review seminar that involves bench participation. The Family Bar supports pro bono programs to assist parties in family court cases.

Process Map (Statutes, Court Rules, Business Practices)

Divorce in Arizona is called Dissolution of Marriage. There is a mandatory 60-day waiting period for divorces. The Family Law Branch in Pima County Superior Court handles all family law matters whether or not children are involved, including but not limited to: divorce or legal separation, parenting plans,

paternity, spousal support, and protective orders. There are four judges, including the Family Law Bench Presiding Judge, and nine commissioners who handle family court cases.

At Filing

The Petitioner begins the dissolution of marriage/legal separation case by filing with the court the necessary initial paperwork, including but not limited to, the Domestic Relations Cover Sheet, Summons, Petition, and Preliminary Injunction, if necessary. The Petitioner has 120 days to serve the Respondent from the date the petition is filed or the case may be dismissed. Proper forms of service include personal service, mail, and publication (only if the Respondent cannot be located or is avoiding service). The Respondent has 20 days (or 30 days if the Respondent lives out-of-state) to file a Response to the Petition.

Parent Education Class

Parties in an action for divorce, annulment, legal separation, paternity, and even some post-decree actions involving minor children are required to attend the Parent Education Class. Both parties must attend within 45 days of filing or being served the Petition for Divorce. The parties are not responsible for the other party's attendance, but no request regarding legal decision-making or parenting time will be granted to a party that does not attend the class. The class costs \$45, but parties can apply for a waiver or deferral of the fee. The party must register for the class prior to scheduling Conciliation Court Mediation.

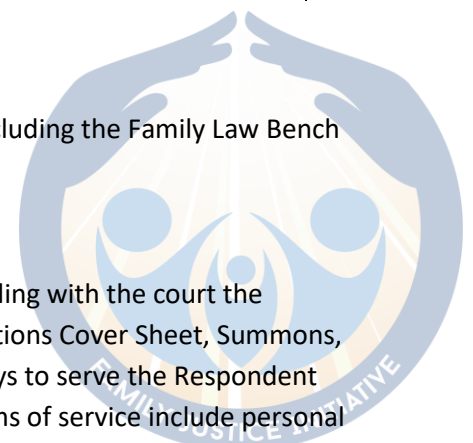
Mediation

Mediation is a free service provided by the Conciliation Court. Parties can voluntarily schedule mediation, but the majority of cases the Conciliation Court sees are parties ordered to mediation because they cannot agree on how legal decisions will be made for their children or when children will spend time with each party. Mediation is for the purpose of creating a custody/parenting time plan, its purpose is not for enforcing an existing custody/parenting plan or for working out child support issues. A request for mediation, whether stipulated by both parties or contested, can only be filed after a Response to the Petition has been filed. If the request is contested, the responding party must file a response within 20 days. After the 20 days, the requesting party can file the Request for Order Granting or Denying Request for Mediation.

In pre-decree and paternity cases in which there are no permanent orders for legal decision-making and/or parenting time, both parties should complete the mandatory Parent Education Class prior to mediation. In post-decree cases and in paternity cases where parties are requesting a change of legal decisionmaking and/or parenting time, parent education will be required prior to mediation only upon the order of the assigned judge.

Request Trial

To request a trial, a party must file the Motion to Set and Certificate of Readiness. If this is not filed within six months (180 days) after the Petition was filed, the case will be placed on the inactive calendar, and the court may dismiss the case after an additional 60 days. The other party can then file a



Controverting Certificate disagreeing with information contained in the Motion to Set. The judge will review these documents and then issue a Trial Notice.

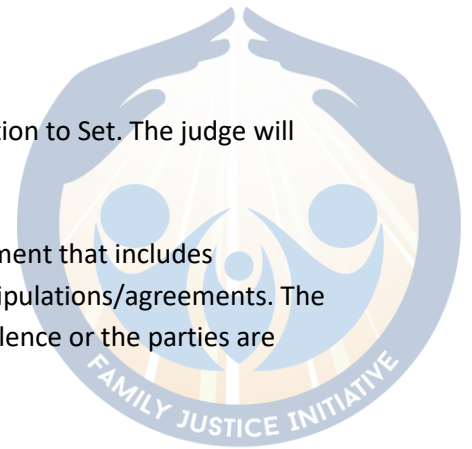
Once the Trial Notice is sent out, the parties must file a joint Pre-Trial Statement that includes information such as the estimated length of trial, witnesses, exhibits, and stipulations/agreements. The parties can file separate Pre-Trial Statements if there has been domestic violence or the parties are unable to work together.

Settlement Conference

After filing the Pre-Trial Statement, the parties must attend a Settlement Conference. Here the parties will meet with another judge or volunteer judge pro tempore to see if they can solve any of the remaining issues set for trial. If any issues remain unresolved after the Settlement Conference, the case will go to trial.

Default Judgment

If the Respondent does not file a Response to the Petition within 20 days, the Petitioner can file an Application and Affidavit for Default. The Petitioner must then serve the Respondent with the Application and Affidavit for Default either in-person or via mail. The Petitioner must wait 10 days after filing the Application and Affidavit for Default before calling for a default hearing date. Based upon a recent statewide rule change, in most conditions, a Decree may be entered upon motion (without a hearing) supported by the Affidavit.



Alignment with FJI Principles and Recommendations



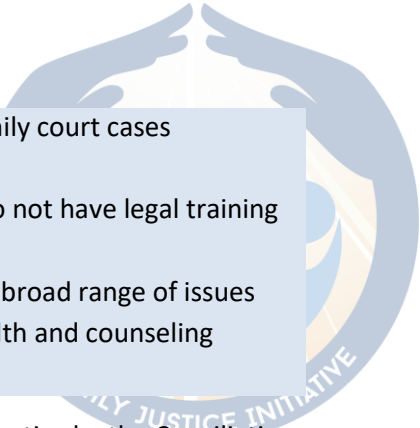
Adopt a Problem-Solving Approach (Principles 1–4)

- Does trial court leadership (chief judge, court administrator, court executive committee) generally agree that the court is responsible for managing the pace of litigation in family court?
- Do judges assigned to the family court division agree that the court is responsible for managing the pace of litigation in family court?
- Does the local domestic relations bar agree that the court is responsible for managing the pace of litigation in family court?
- Is there disagreement within or among the above groups?

Trial court leadership and the judges we interviewed agreed that the court is responsible for managing the pace of litigation in family court. We did not speak directly with Pima County's Domestic Relations Bar, but court leadership did note that the court has a good working relationship with the local bar. It's unclear, however, whether there is any disagreement among the court and the bar regarding management of the pace of litigation.

- Does the court have experience in problem-solving court processes (e.g., drug court, mental health court, domestic violence court, veterans' court)?
- Does trial court leadership broadly support this approach to case management?
- Does the trial bench broadly support this approach to case management?
- To what extent do trial judges have training or experience in problem-solving court procedures?
- To what extent do trial judges agree that parties in most family court cases are reasonable adults who are capable of making rational decisions in the best interest of their family?

Pima County has experience with problem-solving court processes as they have both a drug court and a mental health court. Court leadership and the bench support this approach to case management, and the interviewees we spoke with agreed that parties in most family court cases are reasonable adults who are capable of making rational decisions. Pima County has statewide training for new judges in addition to training at their annual judicial conference. They are working on creating local training that focuses on judges coming on to family law.

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- To what extent do the information and resources available to parties in family court cases encourage cooperation and problem-solving to reach workable solutions?
 - Are information and resources easily understandable for individuals who do not have legal training or experience in court procedures?
 - Does the court provide information and resources to support parties in the broad range of issues likely to arise in family court cases (e.g., financial management, mental health and counseling support, parenting support, and child development education)?

There are a number of resources (e.g., informational packets) provided to the parties by the Conciliation Court—on site and online—on a broad range of topics, including child development education, parenting support, and mental health and counseling support. These resources are available in English and Spanish, but they are not in plain language such that parties of all education levels can easily understand them.

- Does the court ensure that judges and court staff assigned to the family court have specialized training in managing cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, and other issues that merit closer judicial supervision?
- What screening tools does the court employ to identify risks to party and/or child safety and wellbeing? When and how are these screening tools employed?

Judicial officers who are new to Pima County's Family Law Bench attend a training in Maricopa County that discusses a variety of issues, including domestic violence, child abuse, and substance abuse. When there are allegations of domestic violence, the court often uses the Intimate Partner Risk Assessment. Screening typically takes place at the hearing.

- To what extent do family court self-help resources (forms, instructions, checklists, referrals) use plain language? Do resources exist to assist parties at every stage of the case?
- Are these resources available in languages other than English?
- Are all self-help resources available for download from the court's website? How easy or difficult is it to locate these materials online? Do online materials reflect the current version of forms, rules?

Pima County has self-help forms and packets that go into great detail on how to fill out the forms. The forms are available on the court's website such that parties can download them, and the forms are also available in the Law Library. The instruction packets are lengthy and are not in plain language; the language could be simplified and the packets would benefit from more checklists and flowcharts. Many packets, though not all, are available in both English and Spanish. The forms and packets, for the most part, have outdated references to statewide and local rules in light of recent rule changes in 2019.

Recommendation

Revise packets and forms to have up-to-date information and to be in plain language, using more checklists and flowcharts. Convert the remaining packets into Spanish.

Triage Family Cases (Principles 5–8)

- Does the court currently employ some form of triage procedure on family court cases?
- If yes, what criteria are used to triage cases? How are these criteria documented in the case management system or case files?
- How transparent are triage decisions to parties?
- Given case and litigant characteristics in family court cases, are most cases assigned to the appropriate pathway for resolution? Why or why not?
- At what stage of the case is the triage decision made? Under what circumstances can the triage decision be modified?
- What kinds of resources and assistance are allocated for each pathway?

Currently, Pima County does not triage family court cases, so there is a great opportunity for the court to begin doing so. The current model requires all parties without children, no matter how different the cases may be, to go through the same procedural steps. Parties with children, however, can go through a slightly different process depending on whether the parties agree on all issues that concern their children. With the implementation of Principle 6, a streamlined pathway, parties that require minimal court resources and little to no exercise of judicial discretion would be proactively guided toward a swift resolution, whether or not children are involved.

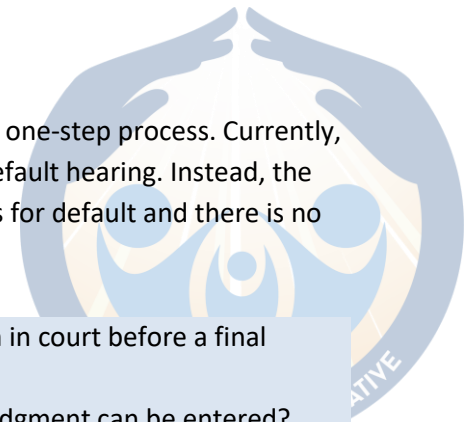
Recommendation

Implement the streamlined pathway. Instead of creating a cover sheet for parties to fill out in addition to the Petition and Response, Pima County will verify that the Petition and Response ask the necessary questions to determine whether a case fits in the streamlined pathway, and will modify appropriate forms (as needed). Pima County will create a checklist for a court employee (not yet determined who) to check off while reviewing the Petition and Response in making the triage determination. The checklist will likely not become part of the official case file.

The court will set up an Early Resolution Conference for cases that fit in the streamlined pathway. The court will utilize existing volunteer judges pro tempore, and it is looking into creating a specialized division to handle streamlined cases.

For cases that do not fit within the streamlined pathway, the court will schedule a Resolution Management Conference. The court is considering using this conference for discussing settlement on as many issues as possible and then setting disclosure/discovery deadlines and trial in order to keep the case moving forward.

The court will send a reminder to the parties to file a Motion to Set around 120 days after the Petition is filed, rather than waiting the full 180 days to send a Notice of Inactivity/Dismissal. Parties will also be provided with a flowchart and/or checklist that explains the process in plain language, potentially alleviating the need to send a reminder to file the Motion to Set at 120 days.



The court is also planning to revise the default process from a two-step to a one-step process. Currently, Petitioners must file for default, wait 10 days, and then call to schedule a default hearing. Instead, the court will initiate the scheduling of default hearings after the Petitioner files for default and there is no response from the Respondent within 10 days.

- Do state statutes or local court rules require parties to appear in person in court before a final judgment can be entered in a family court case?
- Do judges generally require parties to appear in person before a final judgment can be entered?
- What criteria must be satisfied for a final judgment to be entered without a personal appearance?
- Do judges or experienced court staff review cases to ensure complete documentation before hearings take place?

In 2019, Arizona's statewide rules on default hearings changed to now allow for default in almost all cases, except 1) when relief that is requested in default is different than in the petition, unless there is a written separation agreement; 2) when the party in default is a minor or incompetent person; or 3) when service was by publication. Pima County recently began a partnership with the law school at the University of Arizona to offer a pro bono clinic to assist SRLs in filling out the paperwork for default. The review of paperwork for default is primarily done by each chamber, and for some cases not yet set for trial that review is done by Case Management.

- What techniques does the court employ to encourage parties to collaborate and engage in problem-solving approaches to dispute resolution?
- Is alternative dispute resolution available to parties? Are fees charged for these services? What types of training or experience are required for ADR professionals? Are ADR professionals court staff, private contractors, or volunteers?
- Are judges amenable to entering temporary orders on uncontested or agreed issues while the parties continue to negotiate on disputed issues? Or do judges prefer to wait until all issues are fully resolved before entering judgments?

Pima County's Conciliation Court provides parties with the ability to go through Conciliation Counseling whether or not a divorce/separation case has been initiated. The Conciliation Court provides other services, such as mediation, a parent education program, and legal decision-making/parenting time evaluation. Some of these services are free, and some are not. A deeper explanation of these services is provided above under the "Process Map" section.

The judges are amenable to entering temporary orders on uncontested or agreed-upon issues while the parties continue to negotiate on disputed issues, and the court is considering implementing this procedure in cases that are too complex for the streamlined pathway.

- What types of resources are available to parties in cases involving high levels of conflict or other cases that merit greater levels of judicial involvement and oversight?
- Do judges and court staff have specialized training on techniques to manage cases involving domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, substance abuse, and other issues that may impede parties' ability to resolve disputed issues fairly and reasonably?

The Conciliation Court provides a number of resources for cases involving high levels of conflict, including mediation and the Parent Education Program (both of which are described above) and conciliation counseling. The Conciliation Court provides at least one session of mandatory marriage counseling to spouses who are experiencing an ongoing conflict that might lead to divorce or separation. It is not necessary for there to be an action before the court in order to take advantage of this service. Conciliation counseling is provided by a trained marriage and family counselor to help spouses take time out to give thoughtful consideration to whether or not to reconcile or to end a relationship.

The judges attend annual trainings on a variety of issues that family law judges encounter, but the interviewees noted that judges could always receive more training.

Training and Stakeholder Relationships (Principles 9–10)

- Do judicial and court staff education programs encompass the breadth of legal topics that are likely to arise in family court cases (family, child welfare, criminal, civil, military, immigration, bankruptcy)?
- Do judicial and court staff education programs encompass the breadth of non-legal topics that are likely to arise in family court cases (child development, child abuse and neglect, implicit bias, cultural competence, impact of trauma, mental health, substance abuse)?
- Does judicial and court staff education provide techniques and strategies for effectiveness communication and management of cases involving self-represented parties?
- Do judges and court staff agree that courts have an obligation to provide legal information to self-represented litigants?
- Do court rules clearly define distinctions between legal advice and legal information? Are judges and court staff trained on these distinctions?

As noted above, judges participate in multiple trainings each year. These trainings encompass a number of the legal and non-legal topics family law judges deal with, but the judges could receive more trainings to be better equipped. Pima County is planning on implementing trainings for all judges, new and seasoned, on how to manage cases involving SRLs. There are a group of judges who attended SRL training at the National Judicial College, and they are working on preparing in-house training. This will include IAALS' recent publication [*Ensuring the Right to be Heard: Guidance for Trial Judges in Cases Involving Self-Represented Litigants*](#). During the interviews, it was also noted that judges do not receive enough training on how to deal with process changes.

Pima County Family Bench judges broadly agree that they have an obligation to provide legal information to SRLs, but they do worry about overstepping. The Pima County Law Library has a poster toward the front of the library that explains the difference between legal information and legal advice.



Recommendation

Provide judges on the Family Law Bench with trainings on how to handle process changes, specifically those changes that will come about from implementation of the FJI Principles. Provide judges with additional training on how to manage cases with SRLs.

Data Collection, Evaluation, and Technology Innovations (Principles 11–13)

- What kinds of reports are routinely generated by the court's case management system (CMS) for use in court administration? How are those reports disseminated to and used by court leadership? Do these reports provide information needed for informed policymaking?
- Are the data elements that are collected and stored in CMS clearly defined and standardized?
- Does the court regularly train court staff on the importance of consistent and accurate data entry?
- How does the court seek feedback from parties in family court cases about their experience with the court's process?
- How does the court use technology innovations to improve access for parties in family court cases?

Pima County's case management system currently tracks a wide variety of case characteristics, but it does not track the necessary data elements for post-decree cases and not all data elements are clearly defined. There is no specific training on consistent and accurate data entry, but Pima County has implemented a new dashboard that better tracks case characteristics, which will be rolled out shortly.

Judges currently receive emailed monthly reports of all their cases, but a number of interviewees mentioned a desire for a more manipulatable and comprehensive data report. Pima County believes that this new dashboard will be able to provide exactly that.

Recommendation

Come to a consensus on the definitions of post-decree data elements and set the new dashboard to display that information. The new dashboard will be used to produce monthly reports that are manipulatable and comprehensive, providing the judges with the information they need to better prioritize their cases.