



Report to Governor  
C.L. "Butch" Otter  
and the 1st Regular  
Session of the 63rd  
Idaho Legislature

Idaho Supreme Court  
451 W. State St.  
PO Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720

P: (208) 334-2246  
F: (208) 947-7590  
[www.isc.idaho.gov](http://www.isc.idaho.gov)

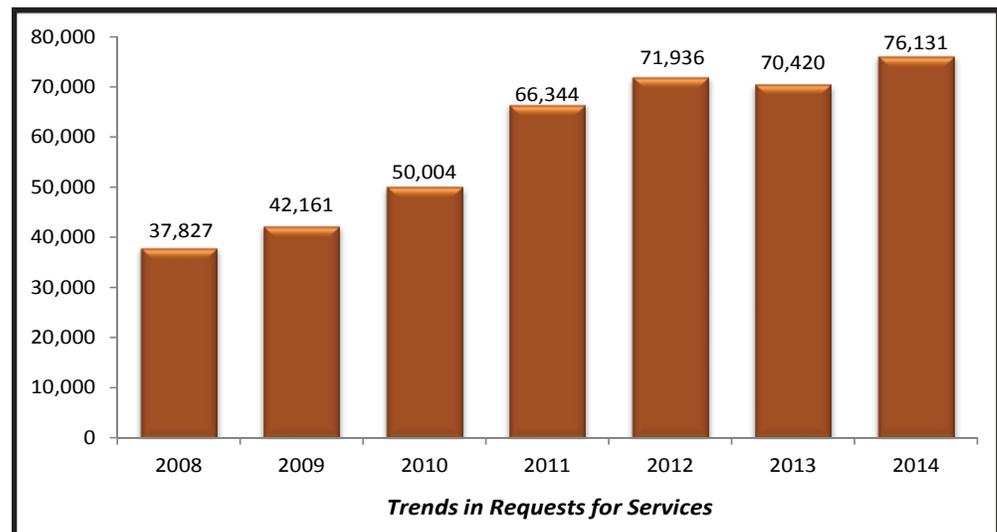


# Family Court Services

Promotes Respectful, Collaborative, and Timely  
Problem-Solving of all Family Court Cases

*Empowering families to make their own decisions through educational programs and support services reducing the need for intensive, costly judicial intervention.*

Family Court Services (FCS) helps resolve cases involving children and families through the combined efforts of the courts, the family, and community services in ways that are less adversarial and intrusive. Parents engaged with FCS experience a legal system working with them. The FCS model utilizes a problem solving approach that helps parents develop a parenting plan, calculate child support, and establish property distribution for the court's review and approval. Parties find they have the capacity to achieve this goal because they are empowered with information to make informed decisions about their family's future. Family Court Services makes navigating the formidable legal process manageable. In turn, this fosters an increased public trust and confidence in Idaho courts. Last year FCS had over 76,000 contacts, providing families with information, direct services, or community referrals.



## STATEWIDE CORE SERVICES ESTABLISHED

In 2014, the Children and Families in the Courts Committee identified seven statewide core services. The goal is to ensure these seven services are consistent and available in all jurisdictions throughout Idaho. The seven core services are:

- **Workshops and Education in Collaboration with the Court Assistance Office:** Designed with self-represented litigants in mind, pre-filing workshops help parents prepare for the process of filing for divorce with minor children. The content includes parenting considerations and information about children according to the age and stage of development, assistance with the standard parenting plan, and assistance with child support calculations

- **Co-Parent Education (including mediation orientation):** Co-parenting education seeks to: provide parents with the information and skills necessary to promote healthier communication with each other and their children; help parents understand children's developmental needs; provide orientation to the mediation process; and reduce the amount of litigation and conflict between parents going through divorce or separation. The class is mandatory throughout the state and consistently demonstrates its effectiveness in keeping parents focused on reducing conflict for the sake of their children.
- **Idaho Family Civil Intake Screening (including financial screening):** Most often used with self-represented parties in contested cases, this process helps provide families with information to make better, more informed decisions and provides the court with recommendations for services appropriate to each case. It also assists the court to identify companion cases that may affect decisions made in awarding custody.
- **Mediation:** Child custody mediation provides parents with an appropriate alternative to a historically adversarial process. Through the process of mediation parents have the opportunity to work together and create a parenting plan that honors each parent's unique contribution to their children's upbringing. Mediation is an impartial and neutral process that reduces conflict and stress, costs less than litigation, and focuses on the future. Parents report the process gives them the opportunity to find common ground and determine a solution to their own problems.
- **Brief Focused Assessments:** Brief Focused Assessments address a specific, narrowly defined referral question, identified by a judge in a court order. It can be an efficient and effective tool to assist judicial decision-making, avoiding the time and cost of a full parenting time evaluation.
- **Parenting Time Evaluations:** A Parenting Time Evaluation (PTE) is a comprehensive forensic investigation ordered by the court. A forensic expert assists parents and the court in determining a parenting plan that is in the children's best interest. PTE's typically address a full range of psychological, child custody, and co-parenting issues. Courts utilize these evaluations when there are questions about parental psychiatric illness, substance abuse, child alienation, domestic violence, child abuse, or children with special needs whose parents are divorced or divorcing.
- **Supervised Access and Exchange:** Supervised Access and Exchange are services ordered by the court to provide children with access to both parents when circumstances prevent routine parental sharing or exchange of children. Trained supervisors monitor parents and children to ensure the safety and comfort of all parties.

## IDAHO SUPREME COURT ADOPTS IDAHO RULES OF FAMILY LAW PROCEDURE

The Idaho Supreme Court unanimously approved the statewide adoption of the Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure (IRFLP), effective July 1, 2015. As of September 1, 2014, all seven judicial districts have adopted the new rules. The Administrative Office of the Court will continue to collect comments on the rules from each district through December 31, 2014, to improve application of the rules and correct unforeseen issues arising from initial implementation.

### The Primary Goals of the Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure are:

- Create a simpler, less technical standard of evidence for presentation of information and exhibits.
- Standardize the discovery process, thereby reducing costs and accelerate settlement opportunities.
- Organize family court rules to increase attorney efficiency and assist self-represented parties.
- Identify issues early in the court process to strengthen and enhance case management.