



The CCJ/COSCA Family Justice Initiative

Supported by the State Justice Institute

Miami-Dade County, Florida FJI Pilot Site Overview



Court Structure

In Miami, Florida (2.76 million population), Domestic Relations cases are heard by the Family Court Division of the 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida (Miami-Dade County). The Family Court Division handles dissolution of marriage, paternity/parentage, child support, temporary support/alimony, adoptions, and name change. There is also a Unified Children's Court that operates the One Family, One Judge model and has jurisdiction over related family law matters from cases in Family Court, Juvenile Court, and the Domestic Violence Division. There were 32,305 Domestic Relations petitions filed per year in 2017.

Staffing Capacity

The Family Court Division has 14 circuit court judge and 8 general magistrates. A judicial nominating commission recommends judicial candidates to the Governor who appoints judges. After one year in office, judges must run in the next general election.

Current & Future Triage Practices

The Family Division is planning to pilot a team case management approach. In the pilot, three pods will be formed, each with one case manager, two judges, and an assigned magistrate. Within the pods, the two judges will be supported by the same case manager and refer all matters to the same magistrate. The remaining judges, magistrates, and case managers will remain business-as-usual to provide a basis for comparison.

Miami-Dade
County

Quick Facts



**172 DAYS
MEAN TIME TO
DISPOSITION**



**57% OF CASES
BOTH PARTIES SRL**



**83% OF CASES
UNCONTESTED**

Data taken from the FJI Landscape of Domestic Relations Cases in State Courts (2018).

Miami-Dade, FL Family Justice Initiative Overview

Court Services and Self-Help Center

The Family Court Division currently has six Case Managers. Most are attorneys, but there are also interns who act as Case Managers. Case Managers are responsible for confirming that all paperwork is submitted to move cases forward. They are assigned to uncontested cases, case management conferences, and joint domestic violence and family court cases. The majority of their time is spent preparing for and attending hearings.

Family Court Services is staffed by 16 employees and serves the Unified Children's Court, Family Court, and Domestic Violence. They provide supervised visitation, in-house counseling and support services, and referrals to community resources. In 2000, a non-profit organization, KidSide, Inc., was formed to help support Family Court Services.

The court has a robust self-help program that is entirely self-supported. Between 200-250 customers access services provided by self-help every day. Pro se litigants filing a divorce action, name change, paternity, child custody, or post-judgement modification can obtain packets for a \$25-65 fee and have their paperwork reviewed. The program also offers a free online chat and individual workshops for assistance with completing forms (\$50-100).

In December 2018, Self Help services implemented the option for dissolutions of marriage with no children, property, or debt to be able to bypass a court appearance for a small fee. Since starting this option, 244 out of 300 eligible cases have opted to avoid a court appearance.



Data Capacity

The data system for Miami-Dade Court Clerk is Odyssey. Many of the court's programs, such as mediation and Family Court Services, track their data through internal case managements systems developed in-house. The entire Miami-Dade court system is rolling out CourtMap which will allow the public to schedule their hearings and relieve the Judicial Assistant from this responsibility.

