



The CCJ/COSCA Family Justice Initiative

Supported by the State Justice Institute

Pima County, Arizona FJI Pilot Site Overview



Court Structure

In Pima County (Tucson), Arizona (population of 1.02M), domestic relations cases are heard in the Superior Court. The Family Law Bench handles all domestic relations matters, including divorce or legal separation, parenting plans, paternity, child or spousal support, and protective orders. There are approximately 5,000-6,000 Domestic Relations cases filed per year.

Staffing Capacity

The Pima County Superior Court has 30 judges: four judges sit on the Family Law Bench, including a Presiding Judge. Judges rotate every two to three years at the discretion of the Superior Court Presiding Judge. There are also nine full-time commissioners (judicial officers), two of which hear only IV-D child support matters. Commissioners also rotate, and many come to the position with long-term domestic relations experience.

Current & Future Triage Practices

Pima County's current model requires all parties without children to go through the same procedural steps; parties with children go through a slightly different

process from one another depending on the level of agreement regarding their children. There is a 60-day minimum waiting period for divorces in Arizona.

Pima County is working on implementing the Streamlined Pathway. As part of this effort, Pima County will do the following: switch to court-initiated scheduling of default hearings; set Early Resolution Conferences for streamlined cases; set Resolution Management Conferences for more complex cases; issue inactive notices at 120 days after service as opposed to 180 days; and provide parties at an earlier stage with better information on how to move the case forward.

FY 2018/2019

**60 % OF PRE-DECREE
CASES DISPOSED
WITHIN 0-180 DAYS**



**70% OF CASES
WITH AT LEAST
ONE SRL AT TIME OF
INITIAL FILING**



**82% OF CASES
UNCONTESTED**



Court Services and Self-Help Center

The Pima County 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. Another free service is a Legal Decision-Making/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. Unlike the above-listed services, the Parent Education Program is not free and is mandatory for parties with children. However, the fee can be waived or deferred.

Conciliation Counseling is another 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.

Pima County has a Law Library that 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 self-represented litigants (SRLs). There are five librarians who work at the library, two of which are Spanish-speaking. The library sees about 50,000 people in one year.

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 for more information or to schedule an appointment with one of the pro bono attorneys. Pima County also provides a unique service where parties have access to a free settlement conference program with volunteer pro tems.



Data Capacity

The current case management system collects various data points on family law cases but has difficulty tracking post-decree and IV-D matters. The data is put into monthly reports and provided to the judges, but the data provided is not overly helpful for judicial management. Pima County is creating a new dashboard that will help collect better data and present data in a more helpful manner.

