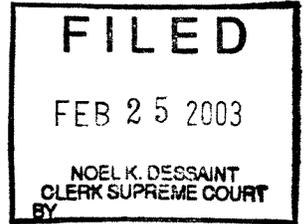


IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA



In the Matter of: )  
)  
AUTHORIZING INTEGRATED FAMILY )  
COURT PILOT PROGRAMS IN )  
COCONINO, MARICOPA AND PINAL )  
COUNTIES )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Administrative Order  
No. 2003- 23

The continued examination of innovative ways to resolve family disputes in a fair, timely and cost-effective manner is important to the administration of courts of this state and the citizens that are served. A system that resolves legal disputes involving families in a manner that facilitates the stabilization of the family rather than one that contributes to a family's emotional distress has long been a subject of study by judiciaries around the country. Through these studies, a number of key elements of a "family-friendly" court system have emerged, including the following:

- Enhanced use of non-adversarial processes, including Alternative Dispute Resolution methods, in family law cases to the extent possible
- Process cases fairly, more efficiently, and eliminate, when possible, hearing delay
- Improve service delivery in family law cases
- Expand services available in family law cases
- Lower the cost of providing services in family law cases
- Streamline case flow procedures and eliminate duplicative efforts in family law cases
- Enhance the assignment to and status of the family law bench and provide the public with a bench that is dedicated to, interested in, and specially trained in all facets of family law
- Develop an automated case management system capable of identifying and retrieving court records located in different divisions or departments of the court
- Develop statewide rules of procedure that are specific to the needs of family law cases

On August 22, 2002, SB 1088, as signed by Governor Jane Hull, became effective and provided that the Domestic Relations Committee prepares and submits a statewide plan for an Integrated Family Court on or before December 31, 2002. That plan, *An Integrated Family Court for Arizona* (Plan), was presented to the Arizona Judicial Council on December 12, 2002, and is attached to this Administrative Order to serve as a reference and model. The model incorporates many of the key elements referenced above.

The Arizona Judicial Council has recommended the Supreme Court create Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs in at least three counties based on the Plan. The pilot programs will encompass

cases involving juveniles, divorce, paternity, and other family matters to test the effectiveness and financial feasibility of the various components of the Plan. The presiding judges of Coconino County, Maricopa County, and Pinal County have expressed interest in participating in the pilot programs.

Now, therefore, pursuant to Article VI, Section 3, of the Arizona Constitution,

IT IS ORDERED that three Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs be established in the Superior Court in Coconino, Maricopa and Pinal Counties as follows:

1. **PILOT PROGRAMS:** The presiding judge in each county shall appoint an administrative integrated family court presiding judge for development and implementation of the pilot program.

The administrative presiding judge of the Integrated Family Court Pilot Program in each county shall review the Plan and incorporate into each pilot program any and all aspects of the Plan that are financially and administratively feasible based upon county resources.

2. **TERM:** The designated Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs shall run for a period not to exceed two years from the date the local court plan is approved.

The presiding judges of the Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs shall develop and submit an outline for an Integrated Family Court Pilot Program Plan for review by the Arizona Judicial Council in June 2003.

The presiding judges shall submit a final Program Plan for review by the Arizona Judicial Council in December 2003.

The presiding judges shall submit a detailed implementation and progress report for review by the Arizona Judicial Council in December 2004. The detailed county plan and progress report shall contain recommendations for systemic changes to family court and juvenile court, including recommended rule and statute changes.

The Integrated Family Court Pilot Program plans shall be fully implemented no later than December 2004.

3. **MODEL COURT APPLICABLE TO THIS ORDER:** The Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs shall be based upon those components of *An Integrated Family Court Plan for Arizona*, as devised by the Domestic Relations Committee, that are determined financially and administratively feasible.
4. **REPORT:** The administrative presiding judge of the Integrated Family Court Pilot Program in each county shall submit a report on their pilot program to the Arizona Judicial Council at one year after full implementation and upon the pilot program's conclusion in December 2005. The report shall include the county's evaluations of the feasibility and results obtained

based on recommendations and minimum standards described in *An Integrated Family Court Plan for Arizona* that were included in the pilot program.

The Administrative Office of the Courts shall conduct an independent evaluation of the Integrated Family Court Pilot Programs in each of the three counties.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Administrative Office of the State Courts shall establish a statewide rules committee to examine and recommend rules of practice in family law (domestic relations) cases.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Administrative Office of the Courts shall study family court processes, the case management systems, and all related services and procedures, including ancillary services, in the Superior Court in Maricopa County Juvenile and Family Courts. The study shall be conducted in the early stages of this pilot program's term and the results and recommendations considered and incorporated into the Integrated Family Court Pilot Program in Maricopa County.

Dated this 25th day of February, 2003.

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CHARLES E. JONES  
Chief Justice