



FAMILY SERVICES

What are family services?

They are programs meant to help the court and you if your case involves child custody (decision-making authority or parenting time). Some services help the court to learn more about you and your family. These include:

- custody and specific issue evaluations,
- mental health evaluations, home studies, drug, and alcohol screenings; and
- child counsel.

Other services are meant to help you and the other party or parties best support your children. These include:

- parenting education,
- family mediation, and
- supervised visitation and monitored exchanges

Do I have to participate in family services?

Not necessarily. If you and the other party or parties can reach an agreement about your children outside of court, you may not need to participate in family service programs.

The court may order you and the other party or parties to participate in some, none, or even all of the family service programs. It will depend on your situation, your family, and the issues the court needs to resolve. You can also request specific services if you think they would be helpful to your case.

Do I have to pay for these services?

It depends. There is usually a cost for family services, but they vary by court and service. In general, fees are divided among the parties, but the court can order one party to pay all or most of the cost. It can get expensive. Some courts offer some services at no cost. Others offer fee waivers if you are eligible based on your income.

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How do I learn more about family services?

Each circuit court handles family services differently, so a good person to talk with is the court's Family Support Services Coordinator. They can tell you what family services are available to you, answer questions, and connect you with resources.

Learn about these options at mdcourts.gov/familyservices.

