



PUBLIC WORKING DRAFT · VERSION 0.1

FAMILY JUSTICE PROTOCOL

A public proposal for safer, more traceable,
less destructive family-court decision-making

**“Family court is broken” cannot
be the end of the sentence.**

Contents

This paper is designed to be challenged. Source IDs remain attached to claims; jurisdiction and causation limits remain part of the claim.

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Executive summary

A one-minute guide

Family court has to make high-stakes decisions while families are under pressure and important facts may be incomplete, disputed, private, or expensive to prove. FJP is a proposed way of organizing that work. It does not tell a judge who should win. It asks the court to make risk, evidence, cost, uncertainty, reasons, and review easier to see.

The central idea is simple: protect people quickly when danger is credible, then test important claims fairly and on time. A temporary decision should not become permanent just because the case moved slowly. An allegation that cannot be proved is not automatically a lie. A law written without sex-based preferences still needs auditing to learn whether people experience it fairly in practice.

Readers do not need legal training to use this paper. Technical terms are explained in the plain-language guide below. Bracketed labels such as [S01] point to the public Source Register, where each source and its limits can be checked.

Family courts make decisions of extraordinary consequence with incomplete information, uneven representation, limited public data, fragmented professional workflows, and families already under stress. The institutional temptation is to treat disposition as success. But a case can close while an unsafe arrangement persists, a family is financially depleted, a parent cannot meaningfully participate, or the same dispute returns under a new docket event.

The Family Justice Protocol (FJP) proposes a different operating discipline:

- 1 diagnose risk and complexity before selecting the pathway;
- 2 stabilize urgent safety, housing, contact, and financial needs with time-bounded provisional orders;
- 3 make material evidence traceable, including contrary evidence and uncertainty;
- 4 require professionals to expose the chain from observation to conclusion;
- 5 scope and price neutral work before it expands;
- 6 detect when resource inequality makes necessary proof functionally unavailable;
- 7 make the family burden of intrusive steps visible;
- 8 issue reasoned, proportionate orders linked to evidence and legal standards;
- 9 verify that ordered safeguards exist in practice;
- 10 audit repeat professionals and appointment concentration without rewarding conformity;
- 11 measure safety, fairness, cost, stability, correction, and durability after disposition; and
- 12 revise or stop mechanisms that do not outperform existing practice without new harm.

FJP does not assume that technology can resolve contested human judgment. The proposed Evidence Ledger is an information architecture, not a truth machine. It can begin with a conventional secure database,

role-based access, digital signatures, and tamper-evident audit history. Blockchain would be considered only if a multi-institution threat model establishes a need that simpler systems cannot meet.

The proposal begins with hostile interdisciplinary review and a narrow pilot—not immediate legislation or universal deployment.

1. Why another reform proposal?

1.1 The accepted sentence

Parents say the system is broken. Lawyers say it. People hear a case story and say it before the ending. Repetition can turn a diagnosis into weather: unfortunate, everywhere, and beyond anyone's control.

But “broken” is not a conclusion. It is the beginning of an investigation.

Which information arrived too late? Which safeguard existed only on paper? Which cost changed who could still participate? Which metric rewarded closure but missed the aftermath? Which rule solved the last failure while creating the next one?

FJP converts those questions into observable fields, review points, and pilot measures.

1.2 Pressure is measurable; quality is harder

Illinois reported 58,679 new family cases, 541 reinstatements, 49,507 closures, an 83.6% clearance rate, and 85,246 open cases at the end of 2024. The open family caseload increased by 8,974, or 11.8%, from 2023. Those figures are a pressure signal, not proof of misconduct or avoidable delay. The category changed before 2022, “open” does not mean continuously contested, and aggregate data cannot distinguish protective complexity from process failure. [\[S01\]](#)

A National Center for State Courts/IAALS study examined 147,436 disposed domestic-relations cases in 11 large urban courts. It found that most litigants did not hire attorneys, contested and uncontested cases took about the same time, one in four cases reopened, and existing data could not answer many basic questions. Reopening can be necessary and appropriate; the finding supports measuring durability, not condemning every return to court. [\[S02\]](#)

California recorded 108,403 marital filings and 210,326 other family-law filings in fiscal year 2023–24. Separately, the Judicial Council reported that 71.3% of 4,214,365 hearings across family law, probate, and unlimited civil matters from April 2023 through March 2026 had no verbatim record. The categories are combined, and “no verbatim record” does not mean no minute order. The data nevertheless reveal the scale and the difficulty of later reviewing what occurred. [\[S34, S35\]](#)

1.3 Cost can change substance

The Legal Services Corporation found that low-income Americans received inadequate or no legal help for 92% of their substantial civil legal problems; the survey is broad civil-justice evidence, not a family-court-only estimate. [\[S04\]](#)

An unpublished Illinois appellate order records roughly \$165,000 in one spouse's attorney time over three years. That is an illustration, not an average and not proof that all of the work was avoidable. Its significance is narrower: private cost can reach a level at which the procedure itself becomes a family event. [\[S05\]](#)

U.S. Supreme Court cases show the constitutional edge of this problem. In *Turner v. Rogers*, a parent was incarcerated for civil contempt without an express finding that he could pay and without adequate substitute safeguards. [S12] In *M.L.B. v. S.L.J.*, Mississippi could not condition an appeal from termination of parental rights on a mother's ability to prepay \$2,352.36 in record fees. [S13]

1.4 Children, conflict, and causal humility

A 2020 meta-analysis combined 115 samples from divorced families, 24,854 participants, and 2,257 correlations. Interparental conflict, parenting, and child adjustment were significantly associated, usually with small effect sizes; much of the underlying evidence was observational and does not isolate harm caused by court process. [S06]

A small, older randomized-assignment follow-up found differences in some long-term coparenting outcomes after mediation compared with adversarial settlement, but it cannot establish a universal rule. [S07] A different randomized study involving families reporting high intimate-partner violence found no significant one-year group differences among shuttle mediation, videoconference mediation, and litigation on selected conflict, satisfaction, parenting, and functioning outcomes. That null result is a warning against one pathway for every family. [S08]

The CDC's adverse-childhood-experience research supports minimizing preventable adversity generally; it is not evidence that family litigation caused the reported adult health outcomes. [S09]

The honest conclusion is therefore limited but important: conflict and adversity matter; procedures can plausibly add or reduce stress; and better prospective research is needed to separate pre-existing risk from process-added harm.

2. The design thesis

A family case is a system under stress. The court must resolve legal questions, yet its choices also alter the environment in which children and caregivers live after the order.

FJP distinguishes pre-existing adversity, **A0**, from adversity added by process, **A-court**: delay, uncertainty, duplicative investigation, unmanaged cost, unsafe procedure, and preventable escalation. The aim is not to minimize court involvement at any price. Emergency intervention may be indispensable. The aim is to limit avoidable process-added harm while improving decision quality.

Two gates control every module:

- **Safety gate:** no efficiency, settlement, contact, or cost goal overrides a substantiated safety need.
- **Due-process gate:** speed is not success if a person cannot understand, answer, test, or correct material claims.

Within those gates, decisions should seek accuracy, developmental stability, durable resolution, and preservation of the resources families need to recover.

"Net Family Benefit" is a checklist, not a score. It asks decision-makers to consider safety, accuracy, developmental gain, and stable relationships alongside economic depletion, psychological burden, attachment harm, time loss, and error risk. No number decides a case.

3. The protocol: twelve modules

Module 1 — Structured, private intake

Use separate, confidential screening for domestic violence, coercive control, stalking, child maltreatment, immediate instability, disability, language access, substance-use concerns, financial asymmetry, and urgent developmental needs. Record the source and confidence. A screen directs attention; it does not prove an allegation.

Module 2 — Risk-and-complexity triage

Distinguish ordinary disagreement from danger, and simplicity from hidden complexity. The working taxonomy includes communication dysfunction, mutual escalation, impairment, domestic violence, coercive control, child maltreatment, gatekeeping, strategic allegations, litigation abuse, and capable parents who simply dislike each other. Classification must remain revisable.

Anti-bias rule: no label may substitute for the observations and sources beneath it.

Module 3 — Immediate stabilization

Address urgent safety, housing, child care, contact, and financial continuity with the least intrusive safe intervention. Temporary orders should identify their evidentiary basis, what remains uncertain, their provisional character, and a review date. The purpose is to prevent inertia from turning an emergency snapshot into an unexamined final arrangement.

Module 4 — Evidence Ledger

For each material claim, record the source, supporting evidence, contrary evidence, relevance, status, uncertainty, access restrictions, and change history. Suggested statuses are *corroborated*, *partially corroborated*, *unresolved*, *contradicted*, *knowingly fabricated*, and *immaterial*.

Unsubstantiated does not mean false. Corroboration may be unavailable because of fear, privacy, incomplete investigation, or evidence limits. A fabrication finding requires evidence of knowing or reckless falsity, not merely failure to prove the claim.

Pattern-level objects are necessary because coercive control can disappear when each act is atomized. The ledger must also allow correction without erasing history.

Module 5 — Auditable professional reasoning

Material professional opinions should expose this chain:

observation → reported information → inference → alternative explanations → conclusion → confidence → what could change the conclusion

The record should distinguish behavior observed under litigation pressure from baseline functioning. Illinois evaluation law already requires procedures, data, results, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations. FJP extends that logic into a shared architecture. [\[S16\]](#)

Module 6 — Scoped neutral engagements

Each neutral appointment should identify the decision question, authorized scope, expected work, initial budget ceiling, deliverable, deadline, conflict disclosures, and completion rule. Expansion requires a written marginal-need explanation. Safety-critical investigation remains available; growth becomes visible and reviewable.

Module 7 — Procedural insolvency trigger

Flag when a party cannot access evidence, expertise, translation, accommodation, a transcript, or participation necessary to be heard. Depending on lawful authority, responses may include fee allocation, legal aid, limited-scope help, or publicly supported neutral fact-finding. The module preserves advocacy and does not excuse lawful support obligations.

Module 8 — Family Impact Statement

Before an expensive or intrusive discretionary step, record its expected safety benefit, evidentiary need, duration, direct cost, time burden, privacy cost, developmental disruption, less intrusive alternatives, and review conditions. The statement informs judgment; it does not replace it.

Module 9 — Reasoned, proportionate orders

State material findings, evidence relied on, important contrary evidence, unresolved uncertainty, the governing burden, and why significant alternatives were rejected. Restrictions should be tied to the identified risk, use the least intrusive safe option allowed by law, and state conditions for review, modification, or termination.

Module 10 — Implementation verification

Check whether safeguards written into an order exist in practice: whether supervised contact has the ordered supervisor; whether a provider is available; whether safety incidents are escalated; whether a required exchange arrangement works. Verification is narrow and time-limited, not indefinite family surveillance.

Module 11 — Professional calibration and audit

Review repeat professionals across cases for evidence traceability, timeliness, uncertainty calibration, scope compliance, corrections, safety misses, unnecessary intervention, complaints, and appointment concentration. Disclose material referral relationships and revenue dependencies. Qualified rotation or randomization may reduce concentration; written specialist exceptions preserve necessary expertise.

The scorecard must never reward agreement with a judge. Dissent can be professionally sound.

Module 12 — Longitudinal outcome review

Use de-identified data at 6, 12, and 24 months to examine safety events, procedural fairness, time to durable resolution, relitigation, family cost, child stability, compliance, correction of error, and unwanted restriction. No single metric governs. Timeliness counts as success only if the safety, evidence, and due-process gates pass.

4. What hard cases reveal

Extreme cases are not a representative sample. They are hazard tests.

4.1 Proven institutional corruption: Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

Former Pennsylvania judges Mark Ciavarella and Michael Conahan were convicted or pleaded guilty in a federal racketeering case connected to payments surrounding privately owned juvenile detention facilities. Ciavarella received a 28-year sentence; Conahan received 17 years. Pennsylvania's Supreme Court vacated and expunged thousands of juvenile adjudications from 2003 through 2008. An official interbranch commission described children as young as 11 detained for failing to pay fines and identified money, silence, fear, weak oversight, and failures across institutions. [S38, S39]

This was juvenile delinquency court, not private domestic-relations litigation. It proves that an extreme corruption and oversight failure occurred; it does not establish a family-court corruption rate.

FJP stress-test: financial-interest disclosures, appointment and placement concentration reports, anomalous detention or restriction rates, counsel-confirmation gates, independent audit, and a traceable correction process could increase the chance of earlier detection. Prevention is not established.

4.2 Illinois information failure: Cook County

A 1998 Government Accountability Office review reported that an independent committee examining a prominent Cook County child-death case identified the collective failure to provide crucial information as a major systemic failure. Hard-copy files, caseload pressure, discontinuity, and a judge without prior family-court experience left relevant information unassembled. The report stated that an automated system might have made a significant difference. [S40]

This is a historic child-protection example, not current private-custody data. Its enduring lesson is architectural: information can exist and still fail to become decision knowledge.

4.3 Constitutional proof and process

In *Santosky v. Kramer*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that due process requires at least clear and convincing evidence before the state permanently terminates parental rights. The holding does not govern every custody dispute, but it makes the stakes of burden-aware evidence unmistakable. [S36]

In *Nicholson v. Scopetta*, New York's highest court held that exposure to domestic violence is not presumptively neglect or presumptively grounds for removal. Courts must assess actual or imminent impairment, the parent's conduct in context, reasonable alternatives, and the harm removal itself may cause. [S37]

4.4 Legislative safety cases

Official legislative accounts concerning Kayden Mancuso in Pennsylvania and Kyra Franchetti in New York describe children killed during court-ordered contact and have motivated proposed or enacted reform activity. [S14, S15, S25] The underlying family records were not independently reviewed for this paper and may be restricted. Legislative summaries are not judicial findings. FJP therefore treats violent-history fields, private safety screening, explicit reconciliation of risk evidence, written transition reasons, and implementation checks as safeguards to test—not as claims that either death would certainly have been prevented.

4.5 International comparators

The European Court of Human Rights found an Article 8 violation in *I.M. and Others v. Italy*, involving contact sessions that did not supply ordered protections and delayed response to reports. [S10] In *M. and M. v. Croatia*, the court addressed protracted custody proceedings, delayed representation of the child, child voice, and serious distress. [S11]

These judgments do not describe U.S. law and cannot estimate American prevalence. They are included because implementation drift, child voice, and procedural delay are transferable failure modes. The law does not travel automatically; the question can.

4.6 The other blind spot: men can be disadvantaged

The documentary *The Red Pill* presents first-person accounts and arguments about harms experienced by men, including family-court litigation, separation from children, support and paternity disputes, financial exhaustion, and disbelief when men report abuse. The film is a source of questions and human testimony. It is not a court record, a representative sample, or proof of every factual claim it contains. [S44, S45]

Stronger public sources establish several narrower points:

- Men can be victims of intimate-partner violence. The CDC's 2023-2024 survey estimates that 17.0% of U.S. men experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetimes, and 13.0% reported at least one related impact. The estimates for women were 34.0% and 29.9%. The survey had a 16.5% response rate and should not be compared directly with earlier survey years because the method changed. [S46]
- In 2022, 78.2% of the parents in the Census Bureau's "custodial parent" population were mothers and 21.8% were fathers. The report expressly says this is a measure of living arrangements, not legal custody. It cannot show what parents requested, whether they agreed, what evidence was presented, or whether a judge favored one sex. [S47]
- A controlled vignette study found that otherwise matched "good mothers" received more custody than "good fathers" in hypothetical decisions. This supports testing for caregiver stereotypes; it does not measure bias in real U.S. court judgments. [S49]
- Illinois law directs courts to decide parenting time by the child's best interests, presumes both parents fit, and permits restrictions when parenting time would seriously endanger the child. A parent-neutral written rule is essential, but it does not establish that every investigation, recommendation, temporary order, or hearing applies the rule consistently. [S48]

Published cases show specific men encountering serious family-related procedural failures. In *Little v. Streater*, the Supreme Court held that an indigent alleged father was denied a meaningful opportunity to be heard when he could not obtain state-funded blood testing in the circumstances of that paternity case. [S51] In *Turner v. Rogers*, a father was jailed for civil contempt without an express finding that he had the ability to pay and without adequate substitute safeguards. [S12] A later federal order in *Alexander v. Michigan* records a default paternity and support order, later DNA exclusion, and decades of consequences, while also explaining why the federal civil case was dismissed and why the court did not find the statute sex-discriminatory. [S50]

These sources do not prove a universal anti-male bias. They do establish why a credible protocol must be able to detect unfairness to men without denying the serious dangers faced by women and children. FJP's response is to screen every parent privately with behavior-based questions; protect quickly when danger is credible; preserve the source, support, contradiction, and uncertainty behind each important claim; give temporary restrictions prompt review; make decisive testing accessible; explain material decisions in writing; and audit outcomes for unexplained differences by sex, race, income, representation, and location. Maryland's official account of improving abuse screening shows that tools must be tested in real workflow: incomplete screening can send an unsafe case to mediation or keep a suitable case out. [S52]

The standard is not false equivalence. Sex and gender can matter to violence patterns, health, economic conditions, stigma, and access to services. The narrower rule is this: identity must not replace evidence about this person, this behavior, this child, and this risk.

5. Existing law and professional practice

FJP is not built on the premise that safeguards do not exist. Illinois law already addresses the scope and contents of custody evaluations, roles and invoices for child representatives, attorney-fee allocation, and court-record access. [S16, S17, S26, S27] The American Psychological Association has custody-evaluation guidelines addressing competence, relevant methods, multiple sources, limitations, and attention to violence and maltreatment. [S18] AFCC publishes practice guidance. [S21]

The design problem is often connection and implementation: whether a safeguard is triggered, whether the right information reaches the decision-maker, whether the reasoning is visible, whether the ordered condition exists in practice, and whether anyone measures what happens later.

The National Center for State Courts has already advanced family-justice performance measures, open-court-data standards, and pathway/triage principles. [S19, S22, S28] FJP draws on that public reform foundation but is independent of those organizations; citation is not endorsement.

6. Technology, privacy, and the blockchain question

Technology should reduce information loss without creating a permanent dossier of a child's most intimate experiences.

The baseline architecture should use:

- role-based and matter-based access;
- encryption in transit and at rest;
- digital signatures for material entries;
- append-only or hash-chained audit events;
- source, status, correction, and contrary-evidence fields;
- separate identity and analytics layers;

- retention limits and automatic expiry where lawful;
- accessible interfaces and language support;
- auditable exports for appeal and correction; and
- breach response, threat modeling, and vendor-exit requirements.

Sealed evidence, children's narratives, addresses, therapy records, and intimate images do not belong on a public or permissionless ledger. NIST's Privacy Framework is a useful general governance reference, not an FJP endorsement or implementation specification. [\[S23\]](#)

Blockchain is a contingency, not a branding device. A distributed system should be considered only when multiple institutions must verify a shared record without trusting a single operator, and only after confronting correction, revocation, validator governance, metadata leakage, key loss, sealed-record law, and the right to outgrow childhood litigation. In most pilots, a secure conventional database with signed, tamper-evident history will be the better starting point.

No predictive custody recommendation or automated risk score is proposed in version 0.1.

7. Pilot before proclamation

7.1 Sequence

- 1 hostile multidisciplinary review;
- 2 legal and privacy feasibility analysis in one jurisdiction;
- 3 usability tests with judges, attorneys, self-represented litigants, advocates, and court staff;
- 4 low-risk pilot modules;
- 5 independent evaluation with pre-registered outcomes;
- 6 public release of positive, null, and adverse results; and
- 7 revision, expansion, or termination based on evidence.

Begin with evidence provenance, scoped neutral appointments, reasoned-order templates, cost/time capture, and limited implementation checks. Predictive tools are outside scope.

7.2 Evaluation design

A stepped-wedge or matched-site design could introduce selected modules across comparable teams while preserving ordinary judicial authority and emergency practice. Independent evaluators should pre-register the design, maintain a comparison strategy, and monitor safety signals.

Report results by representation, income proxy, race and ethnicity where lawful and ethically justified, language, disability, gender, case pathway, violence indicators, and geography. Small cells and sensitive variables require privacy protection.

7.3 Balanced measures

- **Safety:** verified safety events, response time, protective action, false-positive and false-negative review.
- **Process:** time to key events, pending-case age, continuances, reopening, postjudgment activity.
- **Fairness:** notice, opportunity to respond, comprehension, accessibility, perceived procedural fairness.
- **Cost:** party spending, professional fees, lost wages, travel, child care, uncompensated work, missing necessary proof.
- **Child and family:** stability, age-appropriate wellbeing, parenting capacity, privacy burden, source of report.
- **Durability:** compliance, modification, relitigation, workability, necessary change, and unsafe silence.

7.4 Stop rules

Pause or end a module for credible safety deterioration, denial of meaningful participation, a serious privacy breach, disparate harm, or unmanageable added burden. Publish adverse events and null results. A reform that cannot survive honest reporting is not ready for families.

8. Red-team and peer review

Participation is not endorsement. Review should include family-law attorneys, judges with appropriate independence, child representatives, evaluators, domestic-violence and coercive-control experts, due-process and civil-liberties counsel, court administrators, economists, statisticians, child-development researchers, privacy and security technologists, language and disability-access experts, and people with diverse lived experience.

Each objection should receive an ID, area, severity, source, response, revision status, and unresolved-risk statement. Reviewer identity should be disclosed only with consent. Conflicts and material affiliations should be recorded.

The public review commons should accept:

- a mechanism red-team showing how a proposal can be gamed or cause harm;
- primary evidence or a serious counterexample;
- a carefully sourced case nomination;
- a pilot measure, stop rule, or privacy safeguard; and
- a factual, legal, methodological, interpretive, or ethical correction.

No contribution should include a child's identity, sealed or impounded information, addresses, school details, intimate images, or unauthorized family records.

9. Known weaknesses

- Version 0.1 was synthesized from a working dialogue and has not undergone formal interdisciplinary peer review.

- The research review is targeted, not systematic; there was no dual screening or formal risk-of-bias score.
- U.S. family-court data are fragmented and often incomparable across jurisdictions.
- Extreme cases are intentionally selected for hazard analysis and cannot estimate prevalence.
- Some legislative safety-case accounts could not be checked against full underlying court files.
- Structure can formalize bias, create false confidence, or make a bad decision look more scientific.
- New fields and review points can add time and bureaucracy.
- Cost controls can suppress necessary investigation.
- Outcome measurement can intrude on family privacy and reward silence.
- Professional audits can chill dissent or entrench administrators and vendors.
- Legal feasibility varies by statute, court rule, funding, labor conditions, technology, and constitutional requirements.

These are not footnotes to solve later. They are part of the design.

10. Call to action

The first task is not to persuade everyone that FJP is right. It is to make the proposal clear enough to be wrong in public.

Read one module. Try to break it. Find the legal barrier, the safety risk, the perverse incentive, the evidence gap, the privacy problem, or the better alternative. Then record the objection in a form another person can test.

The families of the future do not need another slogan. They need a system willing to learn.

Plain-language guide

- **Due process:** a fair chance to know the important claims, respond to them, present evidence, and ask for review.
- **Triage:** an early sorting step that directs a case to the level of safety response, investigation, help, and court time it appears to need. It is not a final judgment.
- **Neutral professional:** a court-appointed or jointly selected person whose defined role is to assist the decision process rather than advocate for either parent.
- **Evidence traceability:** keeping a claim connected to its source, supporting and contrary material, uncertainty, corrections, and use in a decision.
- **Coercive control:** a pattern of conduct used to dominate or restrict another person's safety, freedom, money, communication, or daily life. One isolated event may not reveal the pattern.

- **Counterfactual:** a careful statement about what might have happened if a different safeguard had existed. It is a testable possibility, not proof that the safeguard would have prevented an outcome.
- **De-identified data:** information with direct identifiers removed or transformed. De-identification lowers risk but may not eliminate it, especially in rare cases.
- **Pilot:** a small, controlled trial used to learn whether a proposal helps, harms, or creates unexpected problems before wider use.
- **Pre-register:** publicly record a pilot's questions, measures, and stop rules before seeing the results, reducing the temptation to redefine success afterward.
- **Blockchain:** one possible way to share a tamper-evident record across institutions. FJP does not require it; a simpler secure database should be used unless a documented need justifies added complexity.

Citation key and companion materials

Bracketed source IDs correspond to the searchable Source Register on the website. The complete 52-item register includes titles, URLs, source types, jurisdictions, uses, and limits. A machine-readable CSV is provided with this paper.

Key groups:

- S01–S05: Illinois caseload, U.S. domestic-relations landscape, current comparator, access, and cost
- S06–S09: empirical research on conflict, parenting, mediation/litigation, and adversity
- S10–S15: published judgments and legislative case records
- S16–S28: Illinois law, federal law, professional standards, court data, privacy, and reform frameworks
- S29–S32: participation, credibility, civic-technology, and service-design research
- S33–S35: current Washington and California administrative records
- S36–S40: U.S. constitutional cases, New York child-protection authority, Luzerne County official records, and the Cook County GAO review
- S41–S43: family-court case management, court technology, and language-access implementation
- S44–S45: *The Red Pill* director and film descriptions, used as a documentary lens rather than proof of underlying claims
- S46–S49: current partner-violence data, custodial-parent living arrangements, Illinois parenting-time law, and an experimental custody-stereotype study
- S50–S52: published paternity and due-process cases and an official family-abuse screening implementation account

Research current through 14 September 2026. Links and official records can change. Corrections should identify the page, exact claim, proposed revision, supporting source, and whether the issue is factual, legal,

methodological, interpretive, or ethical.

Appendix · Complete source register

The source register is a claim map, not an endorsement list. Each entry states the use and principal boundary recorded for version 0.1. P01 and P02 are separately credited public-domain photographs.

S01 · [Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, 2024 Annual Report](#)

S01 · Court data · Illinois · 2024

Family filings, reinstatements, dispositions, clearance rate, and pending caseload. Used with reporting-definition caution.

S02 · [NCSC & IAALS, The Landscape of Domestic Relations Cases in State Courts](#)

S02 · Court study · United States · 2018

147,436 disposed cases from 11 urban courts; reopening, representation, timing, and data-quality findings. Not a nationally representative probability sample.

S03 · [UK Ministry of Justice, Family Court Statistics Quarterly](#)

S03 · Court data · England and Wales · Q1 2026

Current private-law children starts, disposals, case duration, open-caseload aging, and representation. Comparator only; not a U.S. estimate.

S04 · [Legal Services Corporation, The Justice Gap](#)

S04 · National survey · United States · 2022

National survey of low-income Americans' civil legal needs and barriers. Broad civil scope, not family-court-specific.

S05 · [In re Marriage of White, 2023 IL App \(2d\) 120720-U](#)

S05 · Appellate order · Illinois · 2023

One documented high-cost illustration. Rule 23 order; unpublished and nonprecedential; not a typical-cost estimate.

S06 · [van Dijk et al., Interparental conflict and child adjustment in divorced families](#)

S06 · Meta-analysis · 2020

115 samples, 24,854 participants, 2,257 correlations. Associations and mediation; does not isolate court-process causation.

S07 · [Sbarra & Emery, Coparenting conflict, nonacceptance, and depression among divorced adults](#)

S07 · Randomized assignment follow-up · 2008

Twelve-year follow-up of 109 parents assigned to mediation or adversarial settlement. Small, older, context-specific study.

S08 · [OJP, IPV and Family Dispute Resolution: One-Year Follow-Up Findings](#)

S08 · Randomized study · Intimate-partner violence

Reported no significant one-year group differences across shuttle mediation, videoconference mediation, and litigation on selected outcomes. Important null result and scope caution.

S09 · [CDC MMWR, Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

S09 · Population study · 25 U.S. states · 2019

Cross-sectional, self-reported ACE associations and population-attributable fractions. Not family-court-specific and not proof of causation.

S10 · [I.M. and Others v. Italy, Application no. 25426/20](#)

S10 · Final judgment summary · ECHR · 2022

Official legal summary of the Article 8 judgment concerning protected contact, implementation failures, and parental-responsibility measures.

S11 · [M. and M. v. Croatia, Application no. 10161/13](#)

S11 · Final judgment · ECHR · 2015

Custody delay, allegations of ill-treatment, child participation, representation, and state response. Includes nuance about steps authorities did take.

S12 · [Turner v. Rogers, 564 U.S. 431](#)

S12 · U.S. Supreme Court · 2011

Due-process safeguards when ability to pay is a critical issue in civil-contempt incarceration. Does not establish automatic counsel in every case.

S13 · M.L.B. v. S.L.J., 519 U.S. 102

S13 · U.S. Supreme Court · 1996

Access to appellate review after parental-rights termination could not be conditioned on prepayment of record fees.

S14 · Pennsylvania Senate co-sponsorship memorandum concerning Kayden's Law

S14 · Legislative account · Pennsylvania

Official legislative characterization of the Kayden Mancuso case. Not a judicial finding and not a substitute for the underlying family record.

S15 · New York Senate Bill S5998B, Kyra's Law

S15 · Legislative record · New York · 2025–2026

Sponsor memorandum and bill text. The Assembly reported passage by both chambers in June 2026; this register does not call it enacted without a later official enactment record.

S16 · 750 ILCS 5/604.10, Interviews; evaluations; investigation

S16 · Statute · Illinois

Scope and report requirements for court-appointed evaluators and related professionals.

S17 · 750 ILCS 5/506, Representation of child

S17 · Statute · Illinois

Roles, fees, detailed invoice requirements, and court review for child representatives and attorneys.

S18 · APA, Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings

S18 · Professional guideline · 2022

Competence, methods, data sources, relevance, interpretation, and attention to violence, maltreatment, and substance use.

S19 · NCSC, Family Justice Performance Measures

S19 · Court performance framework

Timeliness, pending-age, hearings, postjudgment activity, procedural fairness, and court/party cost. NCSC does not endorse FJP.

S20 · UK Ministry of Justice, Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases

S20 · Government expert-panel report · England and Wales · 2020

More than 1,200 responses; qualitative themes and sample analyses. Not a population prevalence study.

S21 · Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, Practice Guidelines

S21 · Professional practice resources

Parenting-plan evaluation, research use, and parenting-coordination guidance. AFCC does not license or regulate practitioners and does not endorse FJP.

S22 · NCSC, National Open Court Data Standards

S22 · Court-data standard

Data definitions and governance for comparable court administrative data. Reference vocabulary, not an FJP endorsement.

S23 · NIST Privacy Framework

S23 · Privacy risk framework

Voluntary privacy-risk management framework. General reference, not a family-court implementation specification.

S24 · NIJ, Beliefs and Recommendations in Custody and Visitation Cases

S24 · Professional survey · 2016

Survey of 1,187 professionals; associations among professional role, knowledge, beliefs, and recommendations. Not an outcome-accuracy study.

S25 · 34 U.S.C. §10446, Grants to support families in the justice system

S25 · Federal statute · United States

Current codified state-incentive framework associated with Kayden's Law, including safety and training conditions.

S26 · 750 ILCS 5/508, Attorney's fees

S26 · Statute · Illinois

Fee awards and consequences for improper-purpose hearings, including harassment, unnecessary delay, or needless cost.

S27 · Illinois Supreme Court Rule 8, Case and Document Accessibility

S27 · Court rule · Illinois

Definitions and access treatment for public, impounded, confidential, and sealed court records.

S28 · NCSC Family Justice Initiative, Principles for Family Justice Reform

S28 · Court reform principles · United States

Pathways, triage, process simplification, and data principles. The similar name predates and is not affiliated with FJP.

S29 · Tannenbaum et al., Appealing to Fear

S29 · Meta-analysis · Persuasion design · 2015

127 papers, 248 independent samples, 27,372 participants. Threat messages had greater average effect when paired with efficacy information; not specific to legal reform campaigns.

S30 · Fogg et al., What Makes Web Sites Credible?

S30 · Web credibility study · 2001

Study of more than 1,400 participants; credibility factors included real-world feel, usability, expertise, trustworthiness, and tailoring. Older study; used as a baseline design reference.

S31 · Rumbul et al., The design of civic technology

S31 · Civic-technology study · 2017

Mixed-methods study emphasizing ease of participation, reduced process complexity, conversation, emotion, feedback, and community. Context-specific.

S32 · GOV.UK Design System, Start using a service

S32 · Government design standard

Recommends enough context to know whether a service meets the need, then an action-consistent primary button and secondary link.

S33 · Washington Courts, Superior Court Cases Filed by Type

S33 · Court data · Washington · 2025

Published statewide total of 24,113 domestic filings. King County is shown as zero; incompleteness is preserved as a material limitation.

S34 · Judicial Council of California, 2025 Court Statistics Report

S34 · Court data · California · FY 2023–24

108,403 marital filings and 210,326 other family-law filings. Measures volume, not timeliness or outcome quality.

S35 · Judicial Council of California, Shortage of Court Reporters

S35 · Operational data · California · updated 2026

Reports that 71.3% of 4,214,365 combined family-law, probate, and unlimited-civil hearings had no verbatim record from April 2023 through March 2026.

S36 · Santosky v. Kramer, 455 U.S. 745

S36 · U.S. Supreme Court · 1982

Due process requires at least clear and convincing evidence before a state permanently terminates parental rights.

S37 · Nicholson v. Scoppetta, 3 N.Y.3d 357

S37 · State high court · New York · 2004

Domestic-violence exposure is not presumptively neglect or grounds for removal; courts must assess imminent risk, context, alternatives, and removal harm.

S38 · U.S. Department of Justice, appellate court upholds Ciavarella conviction and sentence

S38 · Federal prosecution record · Pennsylvania · 2011–2012

Official account of Mark Ciavarella's racketeering-related convictions and 28-year sentence, Michael Conahan's guilty plea and 17-year sentence, and corrective action following the Luzerne County juvenile-court scandal.

S39 · Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, findings and recommendations

S39 · Official interbranch investigation · Pennsylvania · 2010

Official commission summary addressing detention without meaningful safeguards, children as young as 11, institutional silence and inaction, and recommended juvenile-justice reforms.

S40 · U.S. Government Accountability Office, Juvenile Courts: Reforms Aim to Better Serve Maltreated Children

S40 · Federal oversight report · Illinois · 1998

Historic Cook County case study describing fragmented hard-copy information, continuity and caseload problems, and an independent committee's finding of a major systemic information failure. Child-protection context; not a current private-custody performance measure.

S41 · NCSC, Courts selected for family case management initiative

S41 · Family-court implementation initiative · United States · 2025

Official description of a 12-court initiative using training, tools, triage, tracking, data coaching, and peer learning without requiring wholesale system replacement. It does not evaluate or endorse FJP.

S42 · NCSC, Managing court technology

S42 · Court technology lifecycle guidance · United States · 2026

Current collection of planning, procurement, implementation, evaluation, accessibility, security, and responsible-exit guidance for court technology. General implementation reference; not an FJP specification.

S43 · U.S. Department of Justice, Language Access in State Courts

S43 · Federal civil-rights guidance · United States · updated 2023

Official federal guidance explaining meaningful language access in state courts. Used to identify inclusive access as an implementation requirement, not as a complete accessibility standard.

S44 · Cassie Jaye, The Red Pill

S44 · Documentary · director's description · 2016–2017

First-party description of the film as an exploration of the Men's Rights Movement and gender inequality from men's perspectives. Establishes the film's framing, not the accuracy of each interview claim.

S45 · The Red Pill, full film via YouTube Movies & TV

S45 · Documentary · Gravitas Ventures release

Primary audiovisual source for the documentary's content. Personal accounts and statistics in the film remain attributed claims unless separately verified.

S46 · CDC, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: Intimate Partner Violence Data Brief

S46 · National survey · United States · 2023–2024

Current sex-disaggregated estimates for contact sexual violence, physical violence, stalking, psychological aggression, and reported impacts. Self-report survey; response rate 16.5%; methodology changed, so CDC cautions against comparison with earlier NISVS years.

S47 · U.S. Census Bureau, Custodial Parents and Their Child Support: 2022

S47 · National household survey · United States · 2022

Estimates parents living with children while the other parent lives elsewhere. The report expressly does not measure legal custody, contested-court outcomes, parental requests, or judicial bias.

S48 · 750 ILCS 5/602.7, Allocation of parental responsibilities: parenting time

S48 · Statute · Illinois

Requires parenting-time decisions based on the child's best interests, presumes both parents fit, lists relevant factors, and limits consideration of unrelated conduct. The text does not prove uniform implementation.

S49 · Costa et al., Gender stereotypes underlie child custody decisions

S49 · Experimental vignette research · 2019

Across tightly matched hypothetical cases, participants allocated more custody to good mothers than good fathers; shared-custody endorsement reduced the asymmetry. Vignettes test judgment under controlled conditions, not actual U.S. court outcomes.

S50 · Alexander v. Michigan, No. 2:16-cv-11385, Document 22

S50 · Federal district-court order · Michigan · 2017

Records a 1989 default filiation/support order, later felony non-support proceedings, 2013 DNA exclusion, and 2015 dismissal of the felony case. The later civil suit was dismissed on jurisdiction, standing, and immunity grounds; the order did not find systemic anti-male bias.

S51 · Little v. Streater, 452 U.S. 1

S51 · U.S. Supreme Court · 1981

Held that denying an indigent alleged father state-funded blood testing in the specific paternity proceeding violated due process because it denied a meaningful opportunity to be heard.

S52 · NCSC Trends in State Courts 2025, family mediation and abuse screening

S52 · Court implementation report · Maryland · 2025

Describes Maryland's response to inconsistent and incomplete family-mediation abuse screening, including expansion to coercive control and a pilot of an empirically validated tool. It is an implementation account, not an evaluation of FJP.