



FAMILY AND JUVENILE LAW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF OPEN SESSION

March 16, 2026

4:30-5:30 p.m.

Virtual

Advisory Body Members Present: Hon. Tari Cody (Cochair), Hon. Stephanie Hulseley (Cochair), Hon. Akemi Arakaki, Hon. Craig Arthur, Hon. Brett Bianco, Hon. Michael Bishay, Hon. Roger Chan, Hon. Ana España, Ms. Lizette Estrada-Valencia, Hon. Katherine Fogarty, Hon. Susan Gill, Ms. Julia Hanagan, Ms. Leslie Heimov, Mx. Cory Hernandez, Hon. Michelle L. Kazadi, Ms. Selis Koker, Mr. Joseph Koller, Hon. Mary Kreber Varipapa, Mr. Jonathan Laba, Hon. Frank Menetrez, Mr. Joe Navarro, Hon. Kelly Neel, Ms. Alexandra O'Neill Muller, Ms. Melissa Poulos, Ms. C. Joy Ricardo, and Ms. Susan Thrall.

Advisory Body Members Absent: Ms. Holly Benton, Hon. Dawn Bittleston, Hon. Brooke A. Blecher, Ms. Trina Edwards, Ms. Diane Iglesias, Hon. Clare Keithley, Hon. Esther P. Kim, Ms. Jessica Muñoz, and Hon. Monica F. Wiley.

Others Present: Ms. Nadine Blaschak-Brown, Mr. Tony Cheng, Ms. Audrey Fancy, Ms. Felicia Fleming, Ms. Diana Glick, Ms. Frances Ho, Mr. Cyrus Ip, Ms. Sarah Jacobvitz, Ms. Tracy Kenny, Ms. Stephanie Lacambra, Ms. Anna Maves, Ms. Cassie McTaggart, Ms. Amanda Morris, Ms. Lollie Roberts, Ms. Sarah Saria, Ms. Kristen Schmit, Ms. Marymichael Smrdeli, Ms. Marina Soto, Mr. Rodney Trevino and Hon. Daniel Zeke Zeidler.

OPEN MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and roll was taken.

Approval of Minutes

The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the December 22, 2025, Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee meeting.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM (ITEM 1)

Item 1

Child Support: AB 1058 Child Support Commissioner and Family Law Facilitator Program Funding for Fiscal Year 2026-27 (Action Required)

(Presenter: [Lollie Roberts](#), Supervising Attorney, Center for Families, Children & the Courts)

The committee reviewed a draft report to the Judicial Council regarding fiscal year 2026–27 funding allocations for the AB 1058 Child Support Commissioner (CSC) and Family Law

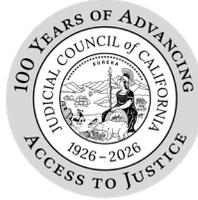
Facilitator (FLF) programs. The allocations apply the Judicial Council–approved workload-based methodology for the CSC program and the population-based methodology for the FLF program. The committee considered whether to recommend the proposed allocations to the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee.

Action: The committee approved the draft report regarding fiscal year 2026–27 funding allocations for the AB 1058 Child Support Commissioner (CSC) and Family Law Facilitator (FLF) programs and agreed to recommend the proposed allocations to the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee.

A D J O U R N M E N T

There being no further open meeting business, the open session was adjourned at 4:41 p.m. and the committee moved to the closed session of the meeting.

Approved by the advisory body on



Judicial Council of California

2850 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300 · Sacramento, California 95833-4348

Telephone 415-865-4200 · Fax 415-865-4205

MEMORANDUM

Date

March 19, 2026

Action Requested

For Review and Approve Submission to the
Judicial Branch Budget Committee

To

Members of the Family and Juvenile Law
Advisory Committee

Deadline

April 25, 2026

From

Kelly Meehleib, Supervising Analyst
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

Contact

Kelly Meehleib
Center for Families, Children & the Courts
916-263-1693 phone
kelly.meehleib@jud.ca.gov

Subject

Juvenile Law: Fiscal Year 2027–28 Budget
Change Concept – Workload Assessment for
Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee’s annual agenda for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025–26 provides that the committee will advise on the court-appointed dependency counsel (CAC) funding allocation methodology.¹

At its meeting on February 19, 2026, the Judicial Branch Budget Committee (JBBC) requested that Judicial Council staff develop a Budget Change Concept (BCC) for support to complete a comprehensive workload assessment for court-appointed dependency counsel, to be heard at the next JBBC meeting in April 2026, for consideration by the council for the 2027–28 budget cycle.² BCCs related to CAC must be approved by the committee before submission to JBBC. At this time, CAC staff request that the committee consider and approve the attached draft BCC for submission to JBBC.

¹ See FY 2025–26 Annual Agenda, New or One-Time Projects, item 13.

² At its meeting on July 18, 2025 the Judicial Council approved a budget change proposal (BCP) requesting support to conduct a comprehensive workload assessment for court-appointed dependency counsel which was submitted to the Department of Finance for consideration in the FY 2026–27 budget. However, this item was not included in the Governor’s proposed budget released in January 2026.

Tracking
Number:

Judicial Branch 2027–28 Budget Change Concept

(4 Page Maximum Length)

Requesting Entity	Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee
--------------------------	--

Proposal Title	Workload Assessment for Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel
-----------------------	--

Proposal Summary

The Judicial Council requests 2.0 limited term positions and \$807,000 General Fund in fiscal year (FY) 2027–28 and 1.0 limited term positions and \$217,000 General Fund in FY 2028–29 to support costs of producing a comprehensive workload assessment on court-appointed juvenile dependency counsel practice in California. The Judicial Council also requests to add provisional language in the Budget Act to allow the Judicial Council to encumber and expend the ongoing \$186.7 million appropriated for Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel for two years to provide greater flexibility to schedule contract payments and reimbursements.

Does this proposal require a statutory change? Yes No

Does this proposal have an information technology component? Yes No

Does this proposal require data collection or reporting? Yes No

Proposed fund source: General Fund

Estimated Cost (Enter whole dollars rounded to thousands) *

Fiscal Year	2027–28 (BY)	2028–29 (BY+1)	2029–30 (BY+2)	2030–31 (BY+3)	2031–32 (BY+4)
Positions	2.0	1.0			
Personal Services	\$357,000	\$181,000			
Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$450,000	\$36,000			
Local Assistance					
Total	\$807,000	\$217,000			
One-time	\$351,000				
Ongoing					

*Please include all costs associated with request including costs for other offices and courts.

Problem or Issue

Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel (CAC) is a legislatively mandated service¹ which ensures that children and parents in foster care proceedings are represented by counsel. The Judicial Council is appropriated \$186.7 million annually in the state budget to fund CAC in all 58 trial courts. The CAC funding methodology used to allocate this funding to trial courts, approved by the Judicial Council in [2016](#) and as amended in [2022](#), may be outdated based on several changes to federal and state laws that impact juvenile dependency practice and workload. The current methodology assumes a standard caseload of 141 clients per full-time dependency attorney, based on a workload study published in 2004. Attorney caseloads are one of the key factors used in the current CAC funding methodology to determine the total statewide funding need for dependency counsel. It is urgent that the council conduct a workload assessment on dependency representation to update data that is more than two decades old, account for the many new hearings and procedures required in dependency cases since 2004 and revise the current CAC funding methodology. Generating an accurate funding need for dependency counsel will allow the judicial branch to assess whether resources are meeting the needs of one of California's most vulnerable populations. Establishing reasonable dependency caseload standards will also help ensure the consistent provision of high-quality legal services for dependent children and their parents in trial courts statewide. The Judicial Council requests funding to support the costs for a contractor to conduct a comprehensive workload assessment and two temporary analyst positions (1.0 Senior Analyst and 1.0 Associate Analyst) for 18 months as the Judicial Council currently does not have the staffing or resources to perform this work. The Judicial Council also requests to add provisional language in the Budget Act to allow the Judicial Council to encumber and expend the ongoing \$186.7 million appropriated in the Budget Act for Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel for two years, to provide greater flexibility to schedule contract payments and reimbursements including costs associated with attorney transitions, unbudgeted necessary attorney services, insufficient attorney coverage for complex cases, and sudden increases in caseloads.

Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion: Court-appointed dependency counsel providers serve clients that cannot afford representation; client populations include those that have been historically overrepresented in the child welfare system as compared to their portion of California's population.

Background/History of Problem

The Judicial Council has received requests from court leadership and legal service providers to review whether a caseload standard of 141 is viable based on current dependency representation in California. One of the key factors used in the current CAC funding methodology to determine the total statewide funding need for dependency counsel is attorney caseloads. The current methodology assumes a standard caseload of 141 clients per full-time dependency attorney, based on a workload study published in 2004.² Since the workload study was published in 2004, there have been several federal and state changes to laws that impact juvenile dependency practice. These changes include the introduction of a new category of foster youth aged 19 to 21 (non-minor dependents), the widespread implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act, extensive new responsibilities for attorneys related to psychotropic medication orders for

¹ Welf. & Inst. Code, § 317.

² In 2002, the Judicial Council and the American Humane Association conducted a time study of all dependency attorneys in California. Caseload study results published in 2004 indicated an optimal practice standard maximum caseload of 77 cases or clients per full-time dependency attorney, and a basic practice standard caseload of 141 clients per full-time dependency attorney.

children, Continuum of Care reform, court oversight of educational outcomes, and most recently the federal legislation promoting family connections and preventive services (the Family First Prevention Services Act), which have all contributed to a change in the workload of dependency attorneys. In addition, while filings dropped by approximately 30 percent over the past 10 years, courts and attorneys report that much of the decline is due to keeping relatively simple cases out of the dependency system, and workload has increased due to a growing proportion of complex cases. Because the workload standards utilized in the methodology have not been revisited since 2004, they may not accurately reflect the current juvenile dependency attorney workload. Determining appropriate caseload standards will help to ensure more effective representation. The Judicial Council's target caseload of 141 is significantly higher than reasonable caseload standards recommended by the American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and Family Justice Institute.

- American Bar Association – recommends a caseload of no more than 50-100 for attorneys [representing parents](#); and a caseload of no more than 60 for attorneys [representing children](#).
- [National Association of Counsel for Children](#) – recommends a caseload of no more than 40-60 individual clients, assuming one case equals one client (not an entire sibling set), at a time.
- [Family Justice Initiative](#) – recommends a caseload of no more than 60 clients at a time for a full-time attorney, assuming a caseload that includes clients at various stages of the case.

However, these studies do not focus on cases and attorneys in California. A new workload assessment will assist the Judicial Council in determining appropriate workload standards for the important and critical representation that court-appointed counsel provide in dependency cases. The assessment would collect and review time-study data from a sample of large, medium and small California courts. It will account for factors that both drive and mitigate the workload of a case in California. These include: determining the proportion of cases with multiple siblings or sibling groups; accounting for time spent by attorneys on best practices including family finding and early efforts and family reunification; unique characteristics of non-minor dependent representation; hearings related to psychotropic medication orders; and notice and hearings related to the Indian Child Welfare Act. The assessment will also determine workload differences among court sizes and whether caseloads and other factors should differ between, for example, a small court with a panel of part time attorneys and legal services agencies in a large court with economies of scale allowing them to deploy paralegals, investigators and social workers. Finally, the assessment will identify any strategies that could improve cost efficiency including the use of remote proceedings or the use of non-attorney professionals for certain parts of the work which might be prioritized in a revised workload methodology. In addition, this request seeks to add provisional language in Provision 1 of Item 0250-102-0932, permitting the encumbrance and expenditure of the \$186.7 million, appropriated annually for Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel, to extend through June 30, 2028, and be adjusted annually with each subsequent Budget Act to provide greater flexibility in management of payments for court-appointed juvenile dependency counsel expenses. The ability to encumber funds over two fiscal years is significant in allowing the most efficient and maximum use of the allocated funds and eases the budget demands for each fiscal year as well as easing the contracting burdens related to the provision of court-appointed dependency counsel services.

Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion: CAC providers serve clients that cannot afford representation; client populations include those that have been historically overrepresented in the child welfare system as compared to their portion of California's population. In California, all parents and children in dependency proceedings have a statutory right to representation by an attorney. Court-appointed counsel services ensure that children and parents receive access to fair, understandable judicial

proceedings leading to timely, well-informed, and just permanency outcomes. Almost all families are appointed counsel funded by the CAC appropriation. A very small number of families reimburse some of the costs through the Judicial Council's Juvenile Dependency Counsel Collections Program (JDCCP) which was established to collect reimbursements from parents or minors demonstrating an ability to pay for representation. However, on average, JDCCP recovers less than one percent of dependency representation costs annually.

Impact of Denial of Proposal

If this proposal is denied, the total funding need for court-appointed dependency counsel used to allocate CAC funding may be incorrect and result in an understated total funding need for CAC statewide and individual courts. Underestimating the funding need can result in attorneys carrying unrealistic caseloads and impact their ability to provide quality representation. Courts and the Judicial Council continue to have difficulty both retaining and attracting new attorneys into the profession. Furthermore, an understated funding need based on inaccurate workload and caseload standards will impact access to justice for dependency clients that cannot afford representation in dependency cases. In addition, an understated funding need—based on inaccurate workload and caseload standards—directly affects access to justice for dependency clients who cannot afford representation. High turnover and excessive caseloads can cause inconsistent representation, leaving attorneys with inadequate time to prepare for hearings and ultimately leading to more continuances.

Outcomes and Accountability of Proposal

Conducting a comprehensive workload assessment on dependency counsel practice will enable the Judicial Council to determine how additional factors or metrics to the CAC funding methodology can better support the workload to provide counsel to children and families and strengthen access to justice for vulnerable dependency populations.

Tracking
Number:

Required Review/Approval

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee
Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee

Proposal is Consistent with the Following Strategic Plan Goals/Other Considerations

Goal I: Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion
Goal IV: Quality of Justice and Service to the Public
Goal VII: Adequate, Stable, and Predictable Funding for a Fully Functioning Branch

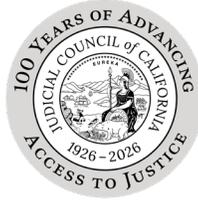
Please use this space to add any additional considerations.

Approval

I certify that I have reviewed this concept, and an accurate, succinct, well written, and effectively justified request is being submitted.

Director Signature: Type your name to enter signature.

Contact Name: Kelly Meehleib, Supervising Analyst, Center for Families, Children & the Courts



Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

Telephone 415-865-4200 · Fax 415-865-4205

MEMORANDUM

Date

March 24, 2026

Action Requested

Please review and vote.

To

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory
Committee

Hon. Tari L. Cody, Cochair

Hon. Stephanie E. Hulse, Cochair

Deadline

March 25, 2026

Contact

Gregory Tanaka, 415-865-7671

gregory.tanaka@jud.ca.gov

From

Gregory Tanaka, Supervising Attorney
Center for Families, Children & the Courts

Subject

Access to Visitation Grant Program: Proposed
Recommendation for Midyear Reallocation of
Unspent Grant Funds for the Fiscal Year
2025–26 Contract Period.

This memorandum presents staff's proposed recommendation to the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee for the Access to Visitation (AV) Grant Program midyear reallocation of unspent grant funds for the contract period FY 2025–26.

Background

At its meeting on November 17, 2017, the Judicial Council approved modifications to the AV Grant Program's midyear reallocation process to ensure timely redistribution of limited funds. The council delegated authority to the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee to

reallocate any unspent funds for each contract year to courts with existing AV programs that request additional resources.¹

Under the Judicial Council's funding methodology, AV grant funds that become available—whether because a grantee court withdraws from the program or does not expend its full allocation—are redistributed through a midyear reallocation process based on a needs assessment. Courts seeking additional funding submit a justification and complete a detailed questionnaire that provides the information required to determine appropriate reallocation levels.

Recommendation

Funding Reallocation for the Access to Visitation Grant Program Contract Year 2025–26

Based on the midyear questionnaires submitted by the eight grantee courts, one court reported that \$44,780.50 in AV grant funds will remain unspent for the 2025–26 contract period.

One court also requested an additional \$50,000 in AV funding for the same period. Program staff recommends reallocating available funds as follows for the remainder of the FY 2025–26 contract year:

- The Superior Court of Orange County's allocation be reduced by \$44,780.50 from \$98,780.50 to \$54,000; and
- The Superior Court of San Francisco County's allocation be increased by an additional \$44,780.50 from \$98,780.50 to \$143,561.

Judicial Council staff will develop a plan to expend any remaining unspent funds at the end of the contract period and will report that plan to the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee at a future meeting.

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Access to Visitation Grant Program: Funding Allocation for Federal Grant Fiscal Years 2018–19 through 2020–21* (Nov. 17, 2017), p. 2, <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5526793&GUID=1E232B38-3A39-44D0-AFF0-4D34DEAE2985>.