

# Abstract for the Seattle Conference: Association of Family and Conciliation Courts 53rd Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2016.

## MODERN FAMILIES: New Challenges, New Solutions,

I will be presenting with Tali Bayer-Topilsky, PhD, Researcher, Engelberg Center for Children and Youth, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, and Anat Inbar, Director of Social Services Units attached to Family Courts and Rabbinical Courts.

### Abstract

#### FAMILY COURT SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE EYES OF THE CLIENTS—A National Evaluation Study

The current study evaluated outcomes of interventions by the Family Court Social Services (FCSS), a public service provided free of charge in Israel targeted at promoting out-of-court agreements for families entangled in legal proceedings, and looked for predictors of successful interventions.

The FCSS is staffed by social workers who, using mediation techniques, assist families in conflict to create adequate, prompt conflict-resolutions. However, the effectiveness of the FCSS is unknown because few studies have examined the outcomes of such public mediation services, especially how the clients perceive the work done by FCSS.

This nationwide study was the first to examine the outcomes of the activities of all FCSS units in Israel from the client's perspective, and thereby was able to identify predictors of FCSS outcomes. This enabled the researchers to propose ways to improve the service.

The study was conducted through a telephone survey on a representative sample of 321 clients, and also used information from intake forms and administrative data.

According to the findings, most cases are high-conflict, and most clients reported that they had experienced some degree of domestic violence. However, most clients had a positive perception of their relationship with the caseworker and almost half of the clients reached an agreement at the FCSS. Furthermore, six months after the intervention has ended, most clients reported high satisfaction with the agreement and noted that it was stable. While reaching an agreement at FCSS was highly related to intake variables, such as client motivation and the severity of the conflict, even where no agreement was reached, several clients reported that they had benefited from the intervention.

In conclusion, despite the high-conflict nature of most cases treated by the FCSS, the service is successful in helping many of the families to reach an enduring, satisfying agreement. The research identified factors that may influence FCSS outcome.

The study offers important operative implications for social work practitioners and those involved in legislation and Family Court management.

Also attached abstract for the London conference

The International Centre for Family Law, Policy and Practice

Conference on **Culture, Dispute Resolution and the Modernised Family**

London, July 2016

The title of my talk for UKAJLJ is:

**The Israeli Family Court: Achievements, Challenges and Comparisons with England and Wales.**

Please let me know what you propose to do with each item.

Thanks

Philip