

**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COUNSEL
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA**

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The Child Dependency Unit (CDU) of the Office of the County Counsel includes 16 attorneys plus 15 supportive staff who provide a wide variety of attorney, paralegal and support services to the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS). Among these services are:

COURTROOM ADVOCACY

County Counsel attorneys appear at every juvenile court dependency hearing to represent DFCS. Attorneys also appear with social workers at contested hearings, dependency mediations, Dependency Wellness Court hearings, non-minor dependent review hearings, Teen Court hearings and dually involved youth hearings.

CDU attorneys handle all appeals of dependency cases.

CDU staff provide notices of all scheduled dependency hearings to the parties and attorneys (over 1,000 per month), distribute social worker reports, assist in obtaining a wide variety of ex-parte orders, and prepare orders after juvenile hearings.

LEGAL ADVICE

County Counsel attorneys review court reports to make sure they are legally sufficient, prepare social workers to testify at trial, review petitions and protective custody applications prior to filing, and attend individual case staffings on request. Attorneys review DFCS policies and procedures, advise DFCS as an adoptions agency, and monitor new legislation and case law.

FORENSICS TRAINING

County Counsel attorneys provide legal training for DFCS staff and their community partners and present annual updates on juvenile dependency law for social workers.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS IN THE JUVENILE DEPENDENCY SYSTEM

County Counsel attorneys have an attorney-client relationship with DFCS and its social workers, and CDU attorneys interact with children's and parent's attorneys on a daily basis, while promoting and advocating DFCS recommendations. County Counsel provides a representative to the Child Advocate Coordinating Committee and participates in Child Advocate training. Direct contact with individual Child Advocates regarding a particular child is unusual. Advocates are commonly in close contact with a child's social worker.