SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 734

SPONSOR: Committee on Children and Families

SUBJECT: Family Services

DATE: January 24, 2002 REVISED: _____ _____ _____ _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Dowds	Whiddon	CF	Favorable/CS
2.			JU	
3.			FT	
4.			APJ	
5.			AP	
6.				

I. Summary:

CS/SB 734 sets forth the following provisions pertaining to the implementation of the unified family court:

- Provides a framework for courts and social service agencies to develop a system for coordinating services for children and families in the court.
- Establishes the presuit-mediation pilot program which is funded with an increase in the service charge for modification of a final judgment of dissolution.
- Requests that the Supreme Court establish a formal process to encourage the filing of stipulated agreements for the modification of family matter judgments that would not necessitate a court appearance.
- Authorizes the Department of Revenue and Office of State Courts Administrator to pursue federal Title IV-D funds for mediation services and provides for an appropriation for the staffing study required to secure approval of the federal funds.
- Tightens the time frame required for parents in a dissolution of marriage or paternity proceeding to complete the Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course to 45 days.
- Repeals the sections contained in ch. 753, F.S., on Family Visitation Network and replaces them with sections that set forth elements for providing safety and quality services in supervised visitation programs.
- Provides incentives for law enforcement officers to volunteer their security services for supervised visitation programs through continuing training hours and volunteer programs in certain community organizations.
- Directs the Department of Juvenile Justice to organize a workgroup with the Department of Children and Families and Department of Education to address issues relative to serving children who cross jurisdictional lines and to execute an interagency agreement for handling these issues.

- Amends the definitions for "domestic violence" and "family or household member" in four sections of Florida Statutes to include individuals who have or have had a dating relationship and to require present or prior co-residency between the victim and the family or household member, with the exception of when the victim and perpetrator have a child in common or when there has been a dating relationship.

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 25.385, 39.902, 44.108, 61.21, 741.28, 943.135, and 943.171. Sections 44.1012, 44.202, 753.01, 753.02, 753.03, 753.04, 753.05, 753.06, 753.07, 753.08, 753.09, and 943.254, of the Florida Statutes are created. Sections 753.001, 753.002, and 753.004, of the Florida Statutes, are repealed.

II. Present Situation:

Unified Family Court Concept

Family court reform, such as the unified family court concept, has been triggered by the demands of cases involving children and families on the judicial system. The volume of family court case filings dramatically increased over the last 10 to 15 years. Many of the children and families before the court have multiple pending cases and are unrepresented by legal counsel. In addition, the legal problems of many of these children and families flow from or are exacerbated by underlying non-legal issues which, if detected or addressed earlier, would have facilitated resolution of the legal matters and might even have obviated judicial intervention or involvement in the first place. However, courts often lack the network of informational resources or management system to facilitate coordination of their multiple legal proceedings and the delivery of services from outside the court system to children and families. As a result, many children and families repeatedly and unnecessarily appear before the court with the same or more serious civil, if not criminal, matters.

The unified family court model consolidates the fragmented courts for families by providing comprehensive jurisdiction over all cases involving children and families. One judge or one team coordinates the different court cases for a family and ensures that each family is viewed as a whole. Beyond the organization or operation of the courts to unify a family's multiple court cases, the unified family court concept embraces a new way of thinking about the justice system, that of emphasizing the resolution not only of the family's legal problems but also the underlying problems that created the need for the family's interaction with the court system, and of providing opportunities for the family to build their ability to resolve their own disputes by developing and utilizing collaborations with community and social services. Both of these elements build family skills, functioning and responsibility which, in turn, reduces the need for judicial intervention. [For more background information on the unified family court, see the Senate Interim Project Report 2002-121, *Review of Family Courts Division and the Model Family Court: Other Services and Systems for Children and Families*]

Coordination with Community and Social Services

The legal issues before the family court often have their genesis in other underlying social problems such as unemployment, inadequate housing, drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence and poverty. The court system possesses limited authority and lacks the jurisdiction to provide

families with the services needed for achieving the positive and lasting outcomes desired for families. Developing a system that connects the numerous community and social service agencies that serve children and families with the courts would provide a mechanism for making services needed by families more easily accessible through the court system. Many family courts have already begun to develop partnerships with the social services agencies in their communities. However, historically, building partnerships and designing systems to coordinate services has been found to be a long and difficult process.

Alternatives to Litigation

Currently, the provisions of Florida statutes which guide alternative dispute resolution for civil actions focus primarily on court-ordered mediation and arbitration. Chapter 44, F.S., sets forth the statutory framework for mediation alternatives to judicial action. The alternatives provided for in ch. 44, F.S., are court-ordered nonbinding arbitration, voluntary binding arbitration, voluntary trial resolution and court-ordered mediation, the latter of which is the alternative most frequently applied in family law cases. The Supreme Court is authorized to establish standards and provide a certification process for mediators and arbitrators. Each board of county commissioners is permitted to levy the following service charges, as designated in s. 44.108, F.S.: up to $5 on any circuit court proceeding to be used for mediation and arbitration as directed by the chief judge in the circuit, up to $5 on any county court proceeding to fund county civil mediation services, or up to $45 on any petition for a modification of a final judgment of dissolution to fund family mediation services. The service charge allowed for petitions of modification only applies to a dissolution of marriage final judgment and not to other paternity actions where the parents were not married. According to the Office of State Courts Administrator, many counties levy the permitted service charge. These service charges and county commission court allocations are the primary source of funding for mediation services, in addition to the fees assessed the parties who are able to pay for the mediation services.

With the continuous growth in family law cases and in the number of parties not represented by attorneys, greater attention is being given to the appropriate utilization of the judicial system for dispute resolution. The effectiveness of a traditionally adversarial judicial process in adequately resolving family legal problems that are often so intertwined with highly charged emotional and social family problems has also increasingly come into question. As a result, unified court efforts in other states have examined and begun integrating into their systems alternative avenues to assist families to resolve their disputes and to provide them with the tools to appropriately deal with future conflicts, as well as to improve the efficiency of the court system.

Parent Education Services

All parties in a dissolution of marriage or paternity proceeding where minor children are involved are required to complete the Parent Education and Family Stabilization course (s. 61.21, F.S.). This course is designed to educate the parents as to the consequences of divorce on the parents and children. Section 61.21(3), F.S., requires that the course be completed prior to the entry of the final judgment by the court. However, it has been reported that the education gained in the parenting course aids in the mediation process, if completed in time. In some cases, the course helps the parents to communicate better, to get over their anger and bitterness earlier

and minimizes the conflict, thus enhancing the chances that the parents will work together to resolve their children's issues during the dissolution of marriage or paternity proceedings.

Supervised Visitation Program

A supervised visitation program provides the opportunity for contact between a noncustodial parent and a child in the presence of a third party responsible for observing and ensuring the safety of those involved [s. 753.001(1), F.S.]. These programs provide the facilities, resources and administrative services in the course of offering a safe and structured setting for supervised visitation and exchange. Cases served by the supervised visitation programs include dependency, domestic violence and divorce cases. In 1996, the legislature created ch. 753, F.S., the Family Visitation Network (ch. 96-402, L.O.F.). This chapter was created as supervised visitation programs were evolving and provided a definition for supervised visitation programs, created the Florida Family Visitation Network to provide formal communication between the existing and emerging programs, and provided a mechanism for new community supervised visitation projects to receive assistance.

There are currently 40 supervised visitation programs in Florida. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court established minimum guidelines for supervised visitation programs used by the courts. However, there are no standards by which to assess the quality of the programs and no reporting requirements to track the services provided.

The volatile nature of the relationship between the family members that created the need for supervised visitation programs has made security at the programs critical. Law enforcement officers have in some areas of the state provided security services for supervised visitation program through either volunteer service or paid employment. However, it has been reported that supervised visitation programs often do not have the resources to provide adequate security.

Department of Children and Families and Department of Juvenile Justice Cross Jurisdictional Children

In examining how to improve the coordination of family court cases and address more comprehensively the family's needs, one population for whom the need for greater shared responsibility has been identified are the youth who cross the jurisdiction of the Department of Juvenile Justice's delinquency system and the Department of Children and Families' dependency system. The juvenile justice system focuses on two groups: youth under the age of 18 years who have been charged with a crime (governed by ch. 985, F.S.) and youth who run away from home, are habitually truant or are ungovernable at home (ch. 984, F.S.). Children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned are the responsibility of the Department of Children and Families, pursuant to ch. 39, F.S..

Each of these systems offer services to children and families from the perspective of the agency's own particular purposes and goals. However, there are a significant number of children served by the Department of Juvenile Justice who are also under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Families, either simultaneously or following their placement with the Department of Juvenile Justice. There are also children and families who do not fall clearly within the jurisdiction of one department and may require services from multiple state agencies.

These "cross-over" children include, but are not limited to, children who have reached the maximum time for detention or commitment with the Department of Juvenile Justice and their parents refuse to allow them to return home, children who have committed an act of domestic violence on another family member and cannot return home, and children who do not meet the criteria for Department of Juvenile Justice detention.

Act of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence encompasses a variety of criminal acts committed against a family or household member. The definition of an act of domestic violence in Florida Statute requires both a definition of the criminal acts considered domestic violence and a definition of those individuals who are considered a family or household member who have committed the act. While "domestic violence" and "family or household member" is defined in five different sections of Florida Statute, s. 741.28, F.S., is the predominant definition because the primary utilization of the definition is to seek an injunction for protection against domestic violence which is in ch. 741, F.S. A discrepancy exists between the definitions of "domestic violence" and "family or household member" in four of the statutes relative to whether present or prior co-residency is required for two groups of the family or household members; those in which there is a child in common and those involving individuals related by blood or marriage. As a result of this discrepancy, the definitions could either be interpreted to require co-residency or not require co-residency for these groups, resulting in differing determinations as to when an act of domestic violence has been committed.

Over the years, the individuals to whom the definition of domestic violence applies has expanded from the individuals who were or had been married to include individuals who lived together or had a child in common. Twenty-nine states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have included dating violence victims in some or all of their domestic violence laws, most of which apply some form of a dating relationship to their protective order. The 2000 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (P.L. 106-386) added "dating violence" to a number of the act's grant programs. Common to each of the groups to which the definition of domestic violence has applied and is being expanded to with the inclusion of dating relationships is the intimate nature of the individuals' relationships.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 734 sets forth the following provisions pertaining to the implementation of the unified family court:

- Provides a framework for courts and social service agencies to develop a system for coordinating services for children and families in the court.
- Establishes the presuit-mediation pilot program which is funded with an increase in the service charge for modification of a final judgment of dissolution.
- Requests that the Supreme Court establish a formal process to encourage the filing of stipulated agreements for the modification of family matter judgments that would not necessitate a court appearance.

- Authorizes the Department of Revenue and Office of State Courts Administrator to pursue federal Title IV-D funds for mediation services and provides for an appropriation for the staffing study required to secure approval of the federal funds.
- Tightens the time frame required for parents in a dissolution of marriage or paternity proceeding to complete the Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course to 45 days.
- Repeals the sections contained in ch. 753, F.S., on Family Visitation Network and replaces them with sections that set forth elements for providing safety and quality services in supervised visitation programs.
- Provides incentives for law enforcement officers to volunteer their security services for supervised visitation programs through continuing training hours and volunteer programs in certain community organizations.
- Directs the Department of Juvenile Justice to organize a workgroup with the Department of Children and Families and Department of Education to address issues relative to serving children who cross jurisdictional lines and to execute an interagency agreement for handling these issues.
- Amends the definitions for "domestic violence" and "family or household member" in four sections of Florida Statutes to include individuals who have or have had a dating relationship and to require present or prior co-residency between the victim and the family or household member, with the exception of when the victim and perpetrator have a child in common or when there has been a dating relationship.

Coordination with Community and Social Services

The bill sets forth a framework to assist courts and social service agencies to develop a system for coordinating services for children and families in the court. Legislative intent that the circuit courts and social service agencies collaborate to assist families with the problems that are contributing to their legal issues and need for judicial intervention is expressed. The chief judge of each circuit court is requested to develop a collaborative initiative between the circuit court and the social service agencies. Goals and specific elements that circuit courts can choose to use to develop effective collaboration systems with the social service agencies are delineated. The bill requests that social service agencies cooperate with these collaborative initiatives and requests that the Supreme Court provide on-going guidance to the initiatives. The Office of State Courts Administrator is directed to submit to the Legislature a copy of the report required by the Supreme Court of each circuit on the progress of the family law advisory group. Certain information specific to the collaborative initiatives is requested to be provided in the report and the first report is to be submitted by June 30, 2003.

Alternatives to Litigation

CS/SB 734 sets forth a series of provisions related to alternatives to court intervention. First, legislative intent that a range of alternatives to judicial intervention be available to families in order to reduce the level of costly court intervention required to resolve disputes is stipulated. Second, the presuit-mediation pilot programs are created to provide families with an opportunity to mediate a post judgment disputed family matter before filing a petition with the court to modify or enforce a judgment and to facilitate entry of agreed modifications without a court appearance. An evaluation of the pilot programs is required, with a report to be submitted to the legislature by December 31, 2004. Third, the bill requests that the Supreme Court establish a

formal process to encourage the filing of stipulated agreements for modifications of family matter judgments that does not necessitate an appearance before the court. The use of the designated funds for the presuit mediation pilot programs is contingent on the establishment of this process and the pilot programs' use of the process. Fourth, the $45 county permitted service charge for modifications of final dissolution judgments to fund family mediation services under s. 44.108, F.S., is amended to become a required statewide service charge and increased to $65. The additional $20 is to fund the presuit mediation pilot programs and up to 50 percent is permitted to be used for court-ordered mediation in circuits where such mediation services are not adequate. Finally, the bill authorizes the Department of Revenue and Office of State Courts Administrator to pursue federal Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement funds for mediation services. Currently, circuits are providing mediation services which could potentially receive federal reimbursement for 66 percent of the costs when provided to Title IV-D clients. Additional state funds are not required to generate this federal funding. The bill provides for an allocation to conduct a staffing study, which is necessary to justify the mediation service costs required for federal approval. These provisions will enhance the availability and utilization of alternatives to the judicial process which not only relieves the workload of the court but provides families with less adversarial avenues to resolve their disputes.

Parent Education Services

Section 61.21, F.S., is amended to shorten the time frame in which parents filing for a dissolution of marriage or paternity action are required to complete the Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course. With the bill, parents would be required to complete the course within 45 days after filing if the petitioner and 45 days after service of the petition if the respondent, instead of the current deadline of prior to entry of the final judgment. The court is provided the authority to waive the stipulated time frame for completing the course for good cause.

Supervised Visitation Program

Sections 753.001 through 753.004, F.S., which constitutes ch. 753, F.S., titled Family Visitation Network, are repealed. New ss. 753.01 through 753.09, F.S., are created in their place, which set forth elements for ensuring the safety of families and staff in supervised visitation programs and for offering quality child visitation and exchange services. Specifically, legislative findings and intent to provide for uniform standards, security, training and certification for supervised visitation programs, subject to available funding, are articulated. Definitions are specified for certain core terms. The bill stipulates that comprehensive standards are to be developed to provide a uniform set of guidelines that will be used by supervised visitation programs and form the basis for certification of such programs in this state. A process for certifying and monitoring compliance of supervised visitation programs with the comprehensive standards is to be phased in based on the availability of funds. Certification, once fully implemented, will be required for receipt of both state or federal funds and referrals from the court. Prior to the development of comprehensive standards and implementation of a certification process, the bill requires that supervised visitation programs meet the minimum standards adopted by the courts and prohibits a supervised visitation program from receiving federal access and visitation grant funds unless documentation is provided that the program has entered into agreement as required by the court. The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation at the Institute for Family Violence at Florida State University is charged with developing training materials for supervised visitation programs,

offering training to staff, tracking training compliance, and developing and maintaining a mechanism for collecting data on supervised visitation services, to the extent the available funding permits. The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation is directed to develop standards for supervised visitation programs, criteria for approving and rejecting certification of a program, a process for phasing in the standards and certification process, and a recommendation for the state entity that should be charged with certifying and monitoring supervised visitation programs. An advisory board is to assist in developing the standards and recommendations, with a report to be submitted to the legislature and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by December 31, 2003.

The bill communicates the importance of security in ensuring the safety of the children and program staff. Supervised visitation programs are encouraged to collaborate with law enforcement agencies to facilitate volunteerism of law enforcement officers at their programs using the newly created provisions in this bill. Section 943.135, F.S., requires that all law enforcement officers receive a minimum of 40 hours of training or education every 4 years as a condition of continued employment. The training must be approved by the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. This bill requires that the commission permit law enforcement agencies to allow officers to meet up to 3 hours of the 40 hours of required continuing education or training by volunteering at a community-based, not-for-profit organization that serves children and families who have experienced or are at risk for child abuse or domestic violence, including, but not limited to, a supervised visitation program. Section 943.254, F.S., is created and articulates in statute law enforcement agencies' authority to administer volunteer security services for officers during off-duty hours at community-based, not-for-profit programs that serve children or families who have experienced or are at risk for child abuse or domestic violence and where there is a potential danger to staff or clients, including, but not limited to, a supervised visitation program. The bill provides that the community-based programs are responsible for the acts or omissions of the law enforcement officer. However, for the purposes of workers' compensation, law enforcement officers who are volunteering, pursuant to this section, and meeting the requirements of s. 440.091, F.S., are to be considered as acting within the course of their employment, pursuant to s. 440.091, F.S. Section 440.091, F.S., provides for those circumstances when a law enforcement officer who is off-duty is acting within the scope of employment and, therefore, covered by the employer's workers' compensation.

Act of Domestic Violence

CS/SB 734 amends the definitions of "domestic violence" and "family or household member" in s. 741.28, F.S., as follows:

- Includes as family or household members to which the definition of domestic violence would apply, individuals who have or have had a continuing romantic or intimate relationship (referred to and defined as a "dating relationship"); and
- Requires present or prior co-residency between the victim and the family or household member in establishing an act of domestic violence, with the exception of when the victim and perpetrator are parents of a child in common or when there has been a dating relationship.

This amendment corrects the current inconsistency in the definitions. However, the impact of this revision in issuing of injunctions for protection against domestic violence is indeterminant since the current application of the co-residency requirements in the circuits is not known.

Circumstances under which an injunction for protection against domestic violence could be sought would also be expanded to include victims for whom the perpetrator of the violence is a person with whom there has been a relationship of an intimate or romantic nature. Residency would not be required. The court is provided with the discretion to determine if the relationship meets the definition of "dating relationship" based on the length of the relationship, the nature of the relationship and the frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship. The definition of "dating relationship" specifically excludes the casual acquaintanceship or ordinary fraternization between individuals in a business or social context. While individuals in dating relationships currently can be granted a protective injunction for victims of repeat violence, under the provisions of this legislation, they would not have to meet the higher threshold for an injunction of two incidents of violence, one of which must be within the last 6 months. This expansion in the individuals who could request an injunction for protection against domestic violence is anticipated to increase the number of injunctions sought.

The following statutory definitions of "domestic violence" and "family or household members" are also being amended to replace the actual definitions with a specific reference to the definition in s. 741.28, F.S. These definitions have historically closely mirrored the s. 741.28, F.S., definitions, with the exception of the list of offenses. The definitions of domestic violence in these statutes initially included the same offenses. In 1995 and 1997, additional offenses were added to s. 741.28, F.S., but not to the other statutory definitions.

- s. 25.385, F.S., Standards for instruction of circuit and county court judges in handling domestic violence cases: This section of law directs the Florida Court Educational Council to establish standards for the instruction of those circuit and county court judges with the responsibility for domestic violence cases. Since the definition of domestic violence is a component of the instruction to the judges, the revision in the definition would potentially require some minor alteration of information provided to the judges.
- s. 39.902, F.S., Definitions: Part XI of ch. 39, F.S., requires the Department of Children and Families to develop, certify and fund domestic violence centers. The amendment to the definition of domestic violence would not alter service delivery for the domestic violence centers since a substantial portion of their funding is either from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which uses the definitions provided for in s. 414.0252(4), F.S., or private sources, neither of which require co-residency.
- s. 943.17(2)(a), F.S., Basic skills training in handling domestic violence cases: Under this section, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission is directed to establish the standards for instruction of law enforcement officers in the subject of domestic violence. As with the instruction for judges, the revision to the definition would potentially change the information provided to law enforcement.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

The $45 service charge imposed on a petition for modifying a final judgment of dissolution will be applied in every county and will be increased to $65. Currently, 37 counties apply the $45 modification fee, 7 counties require a fee that is less than $45, and 20 counties reported that they do not require the modification fee. Based on FY 2000-2001 dissolution modification information, the additional $20 on the modification fee is anticipated to generate $251,951 for the presuit-mediation pilot programs.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Individuals seeking a modification to their dissolution of marriage order will be required to pay a $65 service charge. This represents a $65 increase for individuals in those counties where no fee is required to obtain a modification. For other counties, this service charge will require a minimum of a $20 increase in the fee paid for a modification. This fee is only applied to individuals who were married and are modifying their final judgment of dissolution of marriage. Parents who were not married and file for a modification of their child support, visitation, custody or other provisions of their final paternity order are not required to pay this fee. While some of these modifications sought are uncontested, many are not, necessitating court time to resolve or refer to court-ordered mediation. A required fee for all modifications can, therefore, serve as a disincentive to using the court to unnecessarily resolve disputes that could be resolved by parents.

Supervised visitation programs will be required to meet the minimum standards adopted by the courts. However, the Supreme Court had already required programs to agree to meet these standards in order to receive referrals from the courts. The statutory provision reinforces the court's directive and facilitates compliance. The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation at Florida State University has agreed to convene the advisory committee and develop the requested recommendations within their existing revenues. The existing revenue is a small grant through the Department of Children and Families, without which the Clearinghouse could not perform the identified function.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill provides for an appropriation to conduct a study that documents the mediation costs that are eligible for reimbursement by Title IV-D funds. This documentation is required for approval to draw down the federal dollars. The cost of the study has not yet been determined.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement reports that there would be no fiscal impact to their agency with this bill. They also note that the provision that allows volunteering in lieu of required continuing education or training will work in conjunction with their current practice.

The bill does not pose a fiscal impact on the Department of Children and Families.

The Department of Revenue reports that the proposed language for the modification fee in s. 44.108, F.S., could be interpreted to require that the fee be applied to modifications sought through the Child Support Enforcement Program. Section 409.2571, F.S., provides that the Department of Revenue be charged no fee for court reporter, clerk or comptroller services. Section 409.259, F.S., caps the amount to be reimbursed by the department for non-public assistance Title IV-D clients at the federal financial participation rate on $40, which eliminates the department's requirement to pay the additional fees that are provided for in s. 28.241, F.S. The contractual arrangements with the clerks for reimbursement for services rendered have not included the modification fee currently allowed. However, the Department of Revenue contends that there is no specific direction relative to modification fees and, with the proposed language, it could be interpreted that the modification fee applies to Title IV-D clients. It is anticipated that 12,200 modifications to existing orders will be sought next fiscal year. The proposed modification fee increase only applies to dissolutions of final judgments and not other paternity actions. The number of the anticipated modifications which are to final dissolution judgments versus paternity actions is indeterminant.

The Office of State Courts Administrator anticipates that if the presuit-mediation pilot programs are successful and the increased availability of mediation is realized, the judicial workload could be expected to lessen as a result of more cases reaching settlement outside the court process. The requirement that all counties impose the modification fee will also require that all counties provide $1 per modification of the dissolution of the final judgment to the state mediation and arbitration trust fund. This is anticipated to generate approximately $1,200 in new revenue for the state level mediation functions prescribed in s. 44.106, F.S., including administering the mediation certification process and training mediators and arbitrators.

The Office of State Courts Administrator also reports that the court and social services collaborative initiative in the bill is duplicative of the Supreme Court's Family Court initiative and will require judicial and staff time at the circuit and state level. Specifically, OSCA states that a full-time senior court analyst would be required to

perform the state level functions delineated in the bill, at a cost of $65,668. It should be noted, however, that no portion of this provision is required of either the courts or the social services. The bill recognizes and encourages the use of existing collaborative efforts. While the bill requests that the Family Court Steering Committee assume additional responsibilities and that a report be made to the legislature, there is some question as to whether these tasks would require a full-time position.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.