

12 FAMILY COURT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Children should live in safe and permanent homes.
- The needs and best interests of children should be the primary consideration of any family court.
- All persons, whether children or adults, should be treated with objectivity, sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Cases involving inter-related family law issues should be consolidated or coordinated to maximize use of court resources to avoid conflicting decisions and to minimize inconvenience to the families.
- Therapeutic justice should be a key part of the family court process. Therapeutic justice is a process that attempts to address the family's interrelated legal and non-legal problems to produce a result that improves the family's functioning. The process should empower families through skills development, assist them to resolve their own disputes, provide access to appropriate services, and offer a variety of dispute resolution forums where the family can resolve problems without additional emotional trauma.
- Whenever possible, parties and their attorneys should be empowered to select processes for addressing issues in their cases that are compatible with the family's needs, financial circumstances, and legal requirements.
- The court is responsible for managing its cases with due consideration of the needs of the family, the litigants, and the issues presented by the case.
- There should be a means of differentiating among cases so that judicial resources are conserved and cases are diverted to non-judicial and quasi-judicial personnel for resolution, when appropriate and consistent with the ends of justice.
- Trial courts must coordinate and maximize court resources and establish linkages with community resources.
- The court's role in family restructuring is to identify services and craft solutions that are appropriate for long-term stability and that minimize the need for subsequent court action.
- Court services should be available to litigants at a reasonable cost and accessible without economic discrimination.
- Courts should have well trained and highly motivated judicial and non-judicial personnel.