

An evaluation of the Intensive Case Management Program: Reducing the court involvement of
high conflict co-parents

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High conflict co-parents engage in recurrent litigation (Neff & Cooper, 2004) that significantly strains the court system and exacerbates their conflict (Kelly, 2004; Haddad, Philips, & Bone, 2016). To date, few studies have been conducted to evaluate programs designed to reduce the conflict and recurrent litigation that occurs when high conflict couples engage in custody proceedings. Those evaluations that do exist are limited by small sample sizes, lack of comparison groups, lack of significance testing, and/or do not include relevant methodological information for replication. Using a quasi-experimental design, the present study compared court involvement and the proportion of parenting cases who reached an agreement among high conflict parents who received three different court services, with particular focus on two novel targeted services that were designed for high conflict parents. The study also surveyed Family Relations Counselors (FRCs) who implemented Online-ICM to gain insight on their perspectives of ICM's effectiveness, challenges, and their perceptions of factors that influence participant responsiveness and engagement. Court data were provided on 318 parenting cases who were referred to one of these services between 2015-2018. Results demonstrated that there were no significant differences between groups in number of court negotiations, child-related issues, court services, or in the proportion of parenting cases who reached an agreement. There was a significant reduction in parents' court involvement from pre to post-intervention for all three services. Overall, FRCs survey responses were favorable towards Online-ICM, with the majority

of FRCs reporting that it was more effective than other court services at reducing high conflict parents court involvement and at achieving long-term change. Findings are discussed within the context of study limitations and research on evaluation best practices. Recommendations are provided for future evaluations of ICM with implications that all courts must consider when developing, piloting, and evaluating services for high conflict parents.