

e-Newsletter

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Parenting Coordinators - A New and More Effective Tool for Resolution of Parenting Disputes

Are you in the middle of a divorce and unable to have effective communication with your spouse regarding parenting issues? Are you already divorced and seem to keep going back to court because you cannot communicate effectively as parents?

Either situation is a big problem for you, your children, and your pocketbook. Parenting disputes are incredibly fact specific. As a result, they are very expensive to litigate. Even more important, every good family lawyer and every family law judge knows that the least likely place to actually resolve a parenting dispute is in the courtroom. In a courtroom there is always a loser and a winner (sometimes both parties feel that they lost). When one parent/party feels like they have been unfairly treated in a court action, there is strong likelihood that parenting issues will only become more difficult.

Good news!

Florida Statute §61.125, recently enacted by the Florida Legislature, now specifically authorizes a family law judge to appoint a parenting coordinator, either during the divorce or after a divorce. The specific purpose of a parenting coordinator is to assist the parents in the resolution of disputes regarding parenting issues. A parenting coordinator is defined as an impartial third person whose role is to assist the parties in successfully creating or implementing a parenting plan. To be qualified as a parenting coordinator an individual must meet one of the following professional requirements: licensed as a mental health professional, licensed as a physician, certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a family law mediator with at least a master's degree in a mental health field, or be a member in good standing of the Florida Bar. In addition, a qualified parenting coordinator must have completed three years of post-licensure or post-certification practice in their particular field, completed a family mediation program, and completed a minimum of 24 hours of parenting coordination. A court has the option to require additional qualifications to



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address issues specific to the parties.

The fees for the parenting coordinator will be allocated between the parties based upon the court's determination. Typically, the fees will be allocated in the ratio of the parties' net incomes. Regardless, the fees associated with a parenting coordinator are almost always significantly less than litigation fees and, being much more likely to lead to resolution of parenting issues, a much better investment than litigation fees if the goal is to resolve parenting issues.

Bottom line, if you are continually involved in parenting disputes post-dissolution or in the middle of a divorce and unable to effectively parent, ask your attorney about a parenting coordinator.



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