

# What you need to know about Parenting Coordination (PC)

## **WHAT is parenting coordination?**

- Parenting coordination is a process where an impartial third person, designated by a court order of appointment, helps parties implement their parenting plan by facilitating the resolution of disputes between parents and/or legal guardians, providing education, making recommendations to the parties, and with prior approval of the parties and the court, making decisions within the scope of the court order of appointment.
- The parenting coordinator may assist the parties by: providing education regarding the developmental needs of the children and the effects of parental separation on family members, co-parenting, and parental communication. The parenting coordinator monitors compliance with the established parenting plan and assists the parties in effectively facilitating their time-sharing arrangements. The parenting coordinator will use conciliation skills to assist the parties in resolving child related issues and reducing the potential for future parental conflict.
- The process of parenting coordination is generally **NOT** confidential.

## **WHY do we need parenting coordination?**

- Because parenting coordination helps high conflict families resolve their disputes out of the court and reduces the excessive use of litigation...
- Because parenting coordination serves as another-alternative dispute resolution method for high conflict cases with child related issues which are not amenable to mediation...
- Because parenting coordination helps families survive conflict with a more intact family unit, even if separated, reducing the harmful effects of conflict which jeopardizes the well-being of children.

## **WHO are parenting coordinators?**

- A Parenting Coordinator is defined as a licensed mental health provider or legal professional with a minimum number of years of experience in the following disciplines: family systems theory, child development, high-conflict divorce resolution techniques including mediation,

children adjustment issues specific to divorce including parental alienation, domestic abuse, and knowledge of the legal facets of divorce.

- Parenting Coordinators must have specific training in the parenting coordination process. The number of training hours required varies from State to State, but is generally between 16-40 hours.
- **What a Parenting Coordinator is NOT:** A parenting coordinator is not a custody evaluator, parenting plan evaluator, mediator, therapist, financial advisor, attorney, or guardian ad litem.

### **WHEN are parenting coordinators used?**

- A parenting coordinator may be appointed by the court to provide the parents with assistance to effectively implement existing court orders on issues of shared parenting when:
  - The parties have failed to adequately implement their shared parenting arrangements in relation to their child or children
  - Mediation has not been successful or has been determined by the court to be inappropriate;
  - The court finds that appointment of a parenting coordinator is necessary to protect the children from harm caused by the parents' failure to implement their shared parenting plan;
  - The parties can afford to pay for the parenting coordinator's services or the services of the parenting coordinator can be provided at no expense to the parties.

### **HOW does Parenting Coordination work?**

- The parties may meet with a parenting coordinator either together or separately in an effort to identify parenting disputes. The parenting coordinator may meet with the children. The parenting coordinator helps parents prioritize their disputes and helps facilitate resolution of those disputes in an effort to stabilize the family unit and shield their children from the harmful effects of exposure to chronic hostility and conflict.

### **Is the parenting coordination process for me/for my client?**

- Parenting coordination is appropriate for high conflict cases dealing with child related issues, such as when:
  - A. mediation has not been successful or has been determined by the judge to be inappropriate
  - B. children are denied emotional and/or physical access to a parent or have severely limited contact with their parent
  - C. there are restrictions on children's access to extended family members
  - D. there is interference or refusal of access to information about child(ren)'s health, education, and welfare
  - E. the parents/guardians are unable to agree as to substantive issues concerning the child(ren)
  - F. there is a high rate of re-litigation especially concerning non-legal issues

**Parenting coordination is NOT for cases in which it has been determined that the process may compromise the safety of any party, the minor children, or the parenting coordinator.**

### **What states have Parenting Coordination Statutes?**

- Oklahoma
- Idaho
- Oregon
- Colorado
- Texas
- North Carolina
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Vermont
- South Dakota
- Florida (*the latest state to pass a parenting coordination statute (F.S. 61.125) effective October 1, 2009*)

**States where Parenting Coordination is authorized through a related statute:**

- Arizona (Rules of Family Law Procedure 74)
- California
- Georgia
- Kansas (Court Rules 902)
- New Mexico
- Ohio (Rule 14.01)
- Minnesota (Parenting Time Expeditor)
- Pennsylvania (Erie County)
- Kentucky (Jefferson Circuit)

**States with non-statutory Parenting Coordination programs:**

- Kentucky
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey (there are pilot programs in four counties)
- Delaware (small pilot program)
- British Columbia, CANADA (uniform Parenting Coordination agreement)