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## THE 411 OF PARENTING COORDINATION

**What Is It:** Parenting Coordination (PC) is a form of alternative dispute resolution. It is a case and conflict management service that is utilized for the implementation and clarification of parenting plans. A PC facilitates resolution of parental disagreements and has decision making authority over an identified scope of parenting issues. The systems utilized by the PC are designed to reduce the ongoing conflict between the parents and shield the child(ren) from the conflict, while providing an avenue of conflict resolution in a timely focused fashion outside of the Courtroom and ongoing litigation.

**Why And When Is It Done:** Parenting Coordination (PC) is for families with chronic unresolved high conflict. These families have demonstrated an ineffective parental dynamic, thus being unable to sustain their parenting plan and ongoing communication without intervention, including but not limited to, litigation. The goal is containment of the parents' discord and reduction of conflict - providing them an avenue of resolution that is cost effective, timely and focused on their family's needs as an alternative to never ending court motions and proceedings. As the process is case management ADR, the vast majority of families utilizing a PC do so post-judgment. PC may be ordered and agreed to in the pendente lite stage as well, provided there is a baseline parenting plan in place.

**Who Does It:** A Parenting Coordinator is a professional with extensive practical experience in divorce, families, children, custody and parenting issues. A PC can either be a mental health or legal professional with specific training in Parenting Coordination.

**How Is It Done:** The scope for Parenting Coordination is laid out from the onset to include assessment, coaching, case and conflict management, and certain decision making functions. As such, the engagement of a PC requires a contract and court order. The full scope of case management and authority can be discussed, agreed upon and tailored to the specific needs of the family. The PC may utilize a variety of methods for meeting and communicating with the parties to facilitate the parenting plan and troubleshoot the parenting issues. The PC may also utilize and conference with other professionals involved with the family, including but not limited to, mental health professionals and guardian ad litem.

**What Type Of Issues:** The scope of authority for the Parenting Coordinator is laid out specifically in the contractual agreement at its commencement. Some examples of the issues for a PC are: implementation of the parenting access schedule, conditions attached to parenting access, vacation and holidays and temporary variation from the same; transitions of the minor children; health care services management; the educational and child care needs of the minor children; extracurricular activities; religious observations and education; travel of the minor children; communication issues between the parents, and, between the parents and children; the integration of significant others; and many other areas.

**What It Is Not:** Parenting Coordination is not therapeutic in nature; it is neither therapy nor counseling. PC is not legal in nature as it does not create an attorney client relationship nor does the PC advocate for either party. A PC does not perform a custody and visitation evaluation.

*Since 1995, William RJP Brown's legal career has focused on domestic relations litigation representing children, parents and parties in all aspects of divorce, custody and parenting access disputes. That background is integrated with the training and work he has performed as a mediator, a Family Special Master at the Regional Family Trial Docket, his extensive experience as a guardian ad litem across the state, and his network of mental health professionals. Attorney Brown received his Parenting Coordination training through the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. For additional information about Parenting Coordination, please feel free to contact us.*