

HOW DOES THE PARENTING COORDINATION PROCESS WORK?

1. A Parenting Coordinator (PC) is agreed upon by both parents and their attorney(s) or mediator(s). If the case is already involved in the court system, the Judge makes a formal appointment contract, which is called a "stipulation." Both types of contracts should include: a term for the contract (typically 18 months to two years), which includes starting and ending dates; a list of related professionals who may communicate with the PC; a list of documents that will be provided to the PC for assessment purposes; a financial agreement; specific information related to the PC's requirement to report to the Court, and a detailed description of how the contract will be dissolved if any of the parties wishes to end the relationship.
2. Upon the signing of the PC contract or upon agreeing to a stipulation, a meeting or meetings are set up to begin the PC process. Parents are encouraged to attend a joint meeting with the PC, except in cases that involve domestic violence. If a joint meeting is not feasible, separate meetings will be set up. The first meeting includes a verbal explanation of the PC process, the signing of all forms and releases, a review of the financial agreement, the signing of all documents related to this agreement, and a review of the current parenting plan.
3. An individual structure will be created to address parenting issues. Depending on the needs and resources of a particular family, a format for contact (e.g. e-mail, phone, mail, etc.) will be determined. Each party will have a clear understanding of how communications will be handled. A schedule for future meetings will be determined by the PC and agreed upon.
4. Regular office sessions will be expected at the outset for the PC to become familiar with family members. Costs for information gathering time and children's sessions will be shared equally by both parties unless otherwise agreed upon in writing.
5. The PC will be available by phone during regular (weekdays 9:00 – 5:00) business hours. Phone time will be billed at the same rate as office time. PC services are not intended to be a crisis intervention service. Your PC will attempt to return calls within 24 hours, although in certain instances this may not be possible. All health and safety concerns that need immediate attention must be handled directly by parents, using whatever resources (doctors, therapists, etc.) are available until the PC can be reached. If your PC is out of town or otherwise unavailable for a

significant period of time, you will be notified in advance and another PC may be appointed for emergency issues.

6. As a mental health professional, the PC is a mandated reporter and is therefore required by law to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. PCs are also mandated to report any threats of violence in accordance with the Tarasoff law.