



Strengthening relationships, from troubled to cooperative, by reducing conflict and improving communication

PARENT COORDINATOR AGREEMENT (Sample)

Date:

PARENTS:

MOTHER:

FATHER:

CHILDREN:

Names	DOB	LEGAL CUSTODY	PHYSICAL CUSTODY	PRIMARY RESIDENCE
1)				
2)				
3)				

A. INTRODUCTION:

- The goal of any parenting plan in a post-separation / divorce process is to foster the **best interests of the children** involved in all communication, decision making and parenting time moving **forward** through the transition of divorce.
- If each parent is determined a fit and proper person to be actively involved in the **parenting** of the minor children, the parents are to share, to a reasonable and practical extent, the rights and responsibilities of raising the minor children, drawing upon both cooperative and parallel strategies to keep conflict at a minimum.
- Both Mother and Father acknowledge the needs of the minor children may change as they mature and, when agreed upon, the agreed upon Parenting **Plan** will be adjusted in a way that best serves the evolving interests of the minor children. Any changes will be documented in writing and signed off by both parents.
- The parents agree to engage use of a Parent Coordinator when agreement is not readily achievable on any issue in order to prevent conflict from escalating. The purpose is to reduce the potential impact on the children’s development and relationship with each parent.

B. OVERVIEW:

Parenting coordinator (PC) is a relatively new practice used in some US states to manage ongoing issues in high-conflict child custody and visitation cases by professional psychologist or a lawyer assigned by the Court, or mutually agreed upon by the parties.

The Parenting Coordinators are usually of two types: licensed professionals in a mental health or pastoral field of counseling, or attorneys who are in good standing with their state's Bar Association. The parenting coordinator usually meets with both parties regularly, receives day-to-day questions and complaints about any aspect of a party's conduct, and makes recommendations to the parties. These recommendations effectively become obligatory for parents to follow because the Parental Coordinator can later testify in court about the non-compliance. PC have extremely wide range of issues they can decide on parents' relations with their children, including but not limited to:

- In most of the states, there is a law required that court-ordered parenting plans must set forth the *minimum amount* of parenting time and access (i.e. supervised/unsupervised) a non-custodial parent is entitled to have. According to laws of many states and AFCC guidelines, the Parenting Coordinator cannot change the court order, only the minor changes or clarification of parenting time/access schedules or conditions including vacation, holidays, and temporary variation from the existing parenting plan is allowed.
- PC can limit where parents can and cannot go during his/her daily routine with the child, and what activities are allowed.
- PC can prevent parents from discussing certain topics with their children in their conversations.
- PC can take complaints from either party about almost any subject of the other parties conduct during the past visit, and make decisions the parties must abide by. For example, PC can decide what sports kids will attend, what friends they can visit, what religious services to attend, what food parents can feed them and more.
- PC can make decisions in cases when the parties do not agree on child non-urgent medical care.
- PC can decide when, where, and how the non-custodial parent's family and friends are allowed to see the children.
- PC can report suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services;
- and many other issues that can be considered in the children's best interests.

If either party does not agree with the PC recommendations, then he/she can file a motion with the court to make a decision on the disputed issue. Either party can also ask court to appoint a new PC to the case, but has to provide sufficient evidences to convince the court that valid reasons exist.

PROTOCOL FOR USE:

For decision-making, the parents are to initiate proposals on issues to be decided to attempt resolution at the lowest level, i.e. between them while following the protocols established for communication (i.e. using timelines established, BIFF guidelines and OFW).

If agreement is not reachable within two weeks, either parent may initiate contact with the Parent Coordinator to weigh in and facilitate resolution, i.e. make the final decision based on information presented within one week of an issue presented.

DURATION:

The parents agree to maintain a Parent Coordinator (PC) on a monthly retainer for a minimum of six months, renewable in 6-month increments.

RETAINER:

Retainers are established for pre-payment on a monthly basis; such retainers may range anywhere from \$300 up to \$1500, depending on where the parents are in their divorced parenting process as well as the level of use and the agreements reached with the Parent Coordinator. Each parent is responsible for direct payment within five days to the Parent Coordinator upon receipt of invoice. Regardless of who initiates the request of services, each parent is responsible for their respective 50% of the costs incurred. A ledger of services used is maintained; should there be unused time in any given month, the balance will be rolled over to the next month.

The Parents in this matter are expected to comply with all terms of this agreement. Failure to do so results in consequences that may impact parenting time, financial responsibilities, and further court action. This is where the PC shall first be utilized to broker resolution on issues that develop.

Signature of Understanding and Agreement

By signature below, the _____parents attest to their understanding, commitment and agreement to the terms outlined above for use of a Parent Coordinator in the oversight of their recently agreed upon parenting plan.

Mother

Date: _____

Father

Date: _____

Prepared by:

Dr. Debra Dupree, LMFT #23250

Date:

Parent Coordinator

619-417-9690