

Parenting Coordination

A child-focused alternative dispute resolution process for separated families

Some parents find themselves in constant conflict about their children long after separation and long after mediation or trial. Others just worry that they will have the conflict, so it makes settling parenting plans hard because the stakes feel very high.

Parent Coordinators (“PCos”) give parents quick access to a neutral to resolve day-to-day parenting disputes. The first step will usually be to see if there is an option with which both parents can agree. Usually this will be the case. However, if no mutually agreeable option is available within an appropriate time, the PCo makes the decision while educating the parents about the rationale and the process. *The goal is to minimize conflict, get decisions made which are in the childrens’ interests and within times needed by the children, and keep the family out of court. It is also the goal to educate parents so they know how to self-manage better in the future.*

PCos generally do not make decisions about custody. They help once those decisions have been made by the parents in mediation or the courts.

Bringing a neutral into the support system of the family means that parents have an avenue on which they can depend for resolving the tensions that arise between them. This acts as a calming influence. The reduced exposure to litigation or its threat means that everyone, especially the children, get an often much-needed break from anxiety. Having a period of relative calm means people become much more able to self-manage over the long term, as they learn to work together. Because the services of a PCo are much less expensive than using the court system, the family also has more resources available to spend on making life more enjoyable!

Parenting Coordinators are highly trained and very experienced family law mediators and counsellors. They have special training in helping parents recognize the needs of their children and in mediating and arbitrating parent disputes. Parents may retain a PCo on their own or be referred to one by the court. PCos are usually retained for a period of two years.

Parenting coordination is new to BC but has been used extensively in California, Washington and other places in the US for years. In one California study in the year before a PCo was appointed 166 sets of coparents had 993 court appearances. In the year following the PCo appointment they had 37. Most reported high levels of satisfaction and reported decreased conflict with the other parent.

For more information go to www.bcparentingcoordinators.com or contact Patricia at plane@patricialane.bc.ca .



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Member of the B.C. Mediator Roster (Civil & Family), the ICBC Roster and the B.C. Parenting Coordination Roster

* denotes Law Corporation