



DIVORCE DMZ:

CO-PARENTING COORDINATORS

POST DIVORCE: THE PROS AND CONS OF A PROFESSIONAL DECISION-MAKER FOR THE CHILDREN

DO THEY REDUCE CONFLICT OR ARE THEY A CHIC ACCESSORY?

(Tysons Corner, VA)—Divorce attorney Alan Plevy notes a dramatic increase in the number of court appointed co-parenting counselors and a related spike in the number of problems associated with the process.

Co-parenting coordinators are professionals, often psychologists or mental health counselors, who are appointed by the courts to help reduce, decide and settle conflicts between divorced parents on matters regarding their children. During regularly scheduled meetings, co-parenting coordinators serve as an impartial third party to hear and resolve such issues as:

- Schooling
- Visitation and custodial arrangements
- Holidays
- Camp
- Medical care
- After school activities
- Numerous other issues

Ideally, the co-parenting coordinator hears both sides and helps the parents come to a mutually agreed upon decision. The process helps avoid larger arguments, and greatly helps reduce log jams at the courts caused when parenting disputes are forced in front of a judge. Ultimately, the co-parenting coordinator can help smooth out the often difficult period after a divorce and reduce court costs.

But Alan Plevy, Cofounding Principal of SmolenPlevy of Tysons Corner, Va (www.smolenplevy.com), has concerns as the courts turn more and more to co-parenting coordinators to work with divorced parents. “Despite their increased use, co-parenting coordinators are not a panacea,” says Plevy. “They’re not a magic pill for simultaneously curing problems with your ex *and* raising your kids.”

Plevy’s says too often, there’s no time limit set for the use of a co-parenting coordinator. “Parents aren’t forced to figure out how to deal with each other,” say Plevy. “Instead they just expect the coordinator to continue to solve their problems, and their childrens’ problems, forever.

Another concern: the “win at-all-cost” parent who bullies the coordinator, and their ex-spouse. “In many cases, a parent will constantly call and e-mail the coordinator, trying to dominate the proceedings and eventually wear down the coordinator in order to win battles and get back at their ex-spouse,” says Plevy. “I’ve also even seen parents demand meeting after meeting with the coordinator, just to run up the bill (which both parents split) and hurt their ex financially.”

Plevy suggests several steps to ease the process of working with a co-parenting coordinator:

- Thoroughly interview the therapist assigned to your case. Find out if they’ve worked in these situations before, how much they help they offered, their professional and educational backgrounds, etc.
- Only use a co-parenting coordinator when both parents agree to the process. The program doesn’t work when the idea is forced upon one of the ex-spouses.
- Set an end date for the use of a co-parenting coordinator. (Ideally, 3-6 months). Parents need to learn how to deal effectively with their ex-spouse and their children.
- Realize the program has its limitations.

Alan Plevy is available to discuss the pros and cons of co-parenting coordinators. For interviews, please contact Marc Silverstein at marc@onthemarcmedia.com or at (410) 963-2345.