



PARENTING COORDINATION

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DEVELOPMENT


- The term “Parenting Coordination” - Colorado in the early 90’s.
- Role and Process used under different names, such as Special Master or Parenting Time Expeditor.
- The practice emerged at the time in response to:
 - the growing family court caseloads; repeated conflicts; ongoing litigation among high conflict parents post final orders; and the growing evidence of the harmful effects of high conflict on children.
- In USA over half have statutes or rules authorising appointment of PC.
- Internationally: PC practiced in Canada, Sweden, Italy, Singapore and Hong Kong
- Positive responses from PCs, lawyers and judges
- Research – promising but limited.

WHAT IS PARENTING COORDINATION

- Non adversarial dispute resolution process
- Child focused
- Focus is on facilitating communication between the conflicted parents
- Purpose of exchanging information and making joint decisions for the benefit of their children
- When parents are unable to come to terms, the parenting coordinator may make a recommendation or a decision for an end result




FUNCTIONS OF A PC

- ▶ Mediate
 - ▶ Case management
 - ▶ Parental education: child development; children's experience of separation; grief and loss
 - ▶ Gather information (third parties?) limited to the dispute
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FUNCTIONS OF PC Cont.

- **Coaching**
 - **Where permitted, arbitration of specified child-related disputes**
 - **Where required, prepare reports/give evidence**
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FEATURES

- **Concrete and directive**
 - **Not therapy**
 - **Sophisticated communication skills: Use active inquiry, empathic listening, and psychologically framed observations of the relationships and behaviours of the parents (and children)**
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FEATURES Cont.

- **Assessment NOT family report evaluation**
 - **Commitment to the process**
 - **PC contract**
 - **Court order and/or parties' consent**
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WHO ARE PCs

- Legal professionals, mental health professionals, or a hybrid of the two professional groups
- Some jurisdictions have statutes or rules which vary as to qualifications and experience
- Regardless, boundaries need to be drawn around the familiar and characteristic functions of the lawyer and therapist so that the PC's work does not inadvertently shift into therapy or adversarial representation with one or both parties

Models/Variables

What's reasonable/legal

- Source of appointment
- Court ordered and/or by consent
- Authority/ Extent of authority (eg. scheduling, substance abuse testing, schools, referrals, extra curricula activities, health care management, homework, bedtimes, diet, discipline)

MODELS/VARIABLES Cont.

- Involvement of children
- Minimum period of commitment
- Face to face or otherwise (In USA over 1/3 not face to face)
- Relationship and responsibilities to the court

Court ordered - Structure & Guidance

- ▶ Develop precedents
- ▶ Impact of variations of models
- ▶ Typically include:
 - Statement of appointment
 - Term of service
 - Legal authority
 - Scope of authority
 - Quasi- judicial immunity?
 - Reportable or confidential
 - Access to information & third parties

Challenges

- Education and promotion
- Grievance procedures/Accountability
- Quasi judicial immunity
- Insurance
- Clinical Issues for the Parenting Coordinator:
 - Role shift
 - Fees and billing
 - Record keeping/Reports
 - Limited research to inform practice. Relying on anecdotal evidence. Research which looks at experience of clients is virtually non existent. No robust evidence