



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

Feb. 28, 2019

Pa Supreme Court Adopts New Rules Aimed at Helping Families During High-Conflict Custody Cases

HARRISBURG — In an effort to assist families during high-conflict custody cases, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court announced the adoption of new rules regarding parenting coordination, incorporating a mediation concept to assist parties with resolving issues.

Developed by the Supreme Court Domestic Relations Procedural Rules Committee, the new rules that go into effect March 1 closely align with rules governing the processes for child custody and juvenile dependency hearings.

“Family court cases are some of the most difficult for a jurist to oversee and far too often, innocent children become entangled in the conflicts between their parents,” said Supreme Court Justice Max Baer.

“By implementing the new parenting coordination rules, we are providing an opportunity for the courts to help families resolve these conflicts in a way that is safe and healthy for the entire family and provides for the well-being of everyone involved, especially the children.”

Parenting coordination is a non-confrontational, conflict-resolution process that helps families implement and comply with custody orders, reduce struggles between parents which harm their children, and minimize custody-related litigation.

After being appointed by a court either acting on its own or upon request by a family after a final custody order is in place, parenting coordinators meet with both parties to discuss disagreements and develop possible resolutions. As a custody order is implemented, parenting coordinators work with families to settle issues such as:

- Places and conditions for custodial transitions between households;
- Child care arrangements;
- Information exchanges between parties and communication with or about the children; and
- School issues and participation in extracurricular activities, including travel.

Should the parties be unable to resolve identified issues or disagree with the recommendations of the parenting coordinator, under the new rules, a hearing could be ordered by the supervising judge.

The new rules require judicial districts to maintain a list of qualified parenting coordinators. These individuals must be licensed attorneys or mental health professionals, with experience in counseling, family therapy or psychology, and must have specialized training involving family mediation and domestic violence.

For more information on the parent coordination program or the Domestic Relations Procedural Rules Committee, visit <http://www.pacourts.us/courts/supreme-court/committees/rules-committees/domestic-relations-procedural-rules-committee>.

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