

What is Parenting Coordination?

I. Purpose of Parenting Coordination

- shield children from parental conflict,
- assist co-parents to develop or implement an existing co-parenting plan,
- monitor compliance with the details of the plan and hold parents accountable for non-compliance
- resolve conflicts regarding the child(ren) and the co-parenting plan in a timely manner
- protect and sustain safe, healthy, meaningful parent-child relationships.

The parenting coordinator (PC) is not the ally of either co-parent or a neutral mediator. The parent coordinator's role is active, directive and specifically focused on helping co-parents work together for the benefit of the child(ren). The parenting coordinator's fundamental role is to minimize the conflict to which the child(ren) are exposed by the parents.

There are three ways that parents come to work with a parenting coordinator:

1. **By Court Order** – This occurs when parents are involved with the court. The judge appoints the PC and does not require the parents to consent. The appointment of the PC becomes part of the order and is signed off by the judge.

2. **By Consent Order**– This also occurs when the parents are involved with the court. However, the parents agree to appoint the PC, the appointment becomes part of the order and is signed off by the judge. .

3.– **By Stipulation Contract** - This occurs when the parents are not involved with the court or do not want to seek legal counsel to create a consent order. The parents voluntarily agree to the appointment of a PC, contract directly with the PC and is signed off the parents and the PC.

II. Process of Parenting Coordination. The parent coordinator:

- may meet with the parties or the child(ren) jointly or separately. The parenting coordinator shall determine whether appointments will be joint or separate, by telephone or in person. The duration, frequency, location and persons in attendance for each session with the parenting coordinator shall be left to the discretion of the parenting coordinator, who is specifically authorized to notify the attorneys of record if any party is failing to comply with the spirit or letter of this order or other orders of the Court.
- shall determine if the joint sessions are to be preserved through any audio or visual recordings. The recordings may be reviewed by either or both co-parents during or after their

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 1 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

appointments, but may not leave the office. The parties shall not record the joint sessions, either by telephone or in person, in any audio or visual manner.

- shall work in cooperation with the Guardian ad Litem, where appointed, for the best interest of the child(ren). Where possible, the parenting coordinator shall coordinate with the Guardian ad Litem to avoid a duplication of service.
- The parties shall direct any disagreements regarding the child(ren) to the parent coordinator before seeking action, unless a child's safety is in jeopardy. The parent coordinator will work with the co-parents to resolve the conflict and, if necessary, will recommend an appropriate resolution to the parties and attorneys of record.
- Co-parents will contact the parent coordinator only during regular business hours or at other times scheduled by the parent coordinator unless arrangements have been made for crisis management or other arrangements have been made with the parenting coordinator;

III. Parent Coordinator's Role and Responsibilities

The parent coordinator shall assist the parties in *reducing harmful conflict and in promoting the best interests of the child(ren)* consistent with the roles and functions of a parent coordinator. The parent coordinator shall have the authority to take such steps as necessary to carry out these roles and functions.

- The parent coordinator *shall not directly address significant financial matters*. The parent coordinator may attend sessions with both co-parents and a financial mediator in order to address significant financial matters that impact the child(ren).
- The parent coordinator *shall not offer legal advice*.
- The parent coordinator shall serve an *assessment function* and shall analyze the impasses and issues as brought forth by the parties.
- Where applicable, the parent coordinator shall review, if any,:
 - The custody evaluation, psychological evaluation, other relevant records, interim or final court orders,
 - Information from interviews with co-parents, child(ren) and other collateral sources,
 - Domestic violence protection orders,
 - Any other applicable cases involving criminal assault, substance abuse, domestic violence or child maltreatment,
 - Educational records and medical records, and
 - Mental health records.

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 2 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

The parent coordinator shall serve an ***educational function***. The parenting coordinator shall determine the format and configuration of the educational component and shall educate the parties to effectively:

- Co-parent in a manner that minimizes conflicts,
- Communicate with each other and the child(ren),
- Use conflict management techniques,
- Develop and apply appropriate co-parenting skills,
- Understand principles of child development and issues facing child(ren) when co-parents no longer live together,
- Disengage from the other co-parent when engagement leads to conflict and non-cooperation,
- Develop and promote a joint family history for the child(ren) to adopt,
- Identify the sources of the conflict with each other and work jointly to minimize its deleterious effects on the child(ren), and
- Allow the child(ren) to grow up free from the threat of being caught in the middle of the co-parents' disputes. When a loyalty bind is occurring, the parent coordinator shall assist both co-parents to stop the behavior leading to the dilemma for the child(ren).

The parent coordinator shall serve a ***coordination, monitoring and case management function***. The parent coordinator shall work with the professionals and systems involved with the family (e.g. mental health, health care, social services, education, legal) as well as with extended family, stepparents, and others who significantly influence the development or well-being of the child(ren) to:

- Monitor the implementation of a voluntary or court-ordered co-parenting plan or co-parenting schedule,
- Maintain communication among the parties by serving, if necessary, as a conduit of information,
- Monitor the co-parenting needs of the child(ren) and the functioning of the co-parent partnership,
- Recommend strategies for implementing the co-parenting plan, clarifying priorities, decreasing inter-parental conflict, addressing contributory behavioral patterns or resolving other co-parenting issues. Such recommendations may include that one or both co-parents avail themselves of accessible and appropriate community resources, including, but not limited to, random drug screens, parenting classes, individual psychotherapy or family counseling, if there is a history of evidence that such referrals are appropriate;
- Facilitate the periodic refinement or updating of the co-parenting plan as the child(ren)'s developmental and circumstantial needs change.

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 3 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

When appropriate and when the function of monitoring necessitates, ***performing an independent, balanced and impartial investigation*** that may include, but not be limited to:

- Obtaining and reviewing relevant documents,
- Individual and joint sessions with the child(ren),
- Visiting the home or site of co-parents,
- Verbal or written interviewing of co-parents, caregivers, school officials, law enforcement, social services and others with knowledge relevant to the case;
- Communicating with healthcare providers, psychological providers, teachers and any other third parties deemed necessary by the parenting coordinator,

The parent coordinator shall serve a ***conflict management function***. The parent coordinator shall assist the parties to work out disagreements regarding the child(ren) to minimize conflict. The parent coordinator may:

- ***Utilize dispute resolution skills*** from principles and practices of negotiation and mediation skills.
- ***Monitor*** the faxed, emailed, or written exchanges of parent communications and suggest more productive forms of communication that limit conflict between the co-parents,
- ***Facilitate or mediate the resolution of disputes*** regarding the implementation of the co-parenting plan, the schedule, or co-parenting issues.
- ***Recommend co-parent strategies*** for minimizing conflict, loyalty binds and unnecessary stress for the child(ren) and facilitating ongoing and consistent contact and relationships with both co-parents;
- ***Recommend temporary modification*** of the co-parenting plan when agreement or consensus cannot be reached, as a means of reducing conflict and promoting the best interest of the child(ren).

IV. **Limits on Confidentiality**

- ***Parenting coordination is not a confidential process.*** No information gathered by the parent coordinator, including any conversation between the parent coordinator and any party, child, evaluator, investigator, attorney or collateral source, is confidential or protected by any privilege. Information provided by the parties may be shared with others involved in the parenting coordination, including where necessary and appropriate, children and collateral sources, so that verification of information provided can be sought and so that others are afforded the opportunity to respond to issues raised. The parent coordinator shall inform any party, child, attorney or collateral source that any information received shall not be confidential or protected by any privilege or discovery.

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 4 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

- The parties shall cooperate with the parent coordinator and shall execute any necessary authorizations to enable the parent coordinator to obtain information about the children or the parties or other caretakers.

V. Communications and Written Reports

- Any recommended modification or required adjustment to the co-parenting plan shall be in writing and submitted to the co-parents, attorneys of record and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem.
- Any recommendation regarding supervised or unsupervised visitation shall be in writing and submitted to the co-parents, attorneys of record and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem.
- The parent coordinator shall submit a written report regarding the status of this case to the co-parents, attorneys of record, and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem at least every sixty (60) days, starting from the date of this order.
- At the completion of the process, the parent coordinator shall submit a final report to the co-parents, the attorneys of record and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem describing unresolved conflicts, the parent coordinator's concerns and the parent coordinator's recommended resolutions. The parent coordinator may also report on parental compliance and parental attitudes regarding the co-parenting partnership and any element of the co-parenting plan as amended by agreement of the parties or as determined by the parent coordinator.

VI. Court Testimony

- The parent coordinator may testify at the final hearing or other hearing in this case, at the written request of any attorney of record.
- The parent who requests or subpoenas the parent coordinator shall be solely responsible for the parent coordinator's customary and usual fees for testifying and said fees shall be paid in advance prior to the hearing and payment of said fees shall be a condition precedent to the parenting coordinator's required testimony.
- The parent who requests or subpoenas the parent coordinator shall also be responsible for the cost of transferring the case to the next parenting coordinator, unless the Court rules otherwise. Transfer costs shall include the copying of the family file and providing a one hour consultation with the next parent coordinator. These fees shall also be paid in advance prior to the hearing and payment of said fees shall be a condition precedent to the parenting coordinator's required testimony.
- Any testimony given by the parent coordinator shall be solely for the benefit of the child(ren).

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 5 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

VII. Term of Appointment

- The appointment of the parent coordinator is for ***twenty-four (24) months***. If the parties are unable to make progress and return to the Court, they may request that the appointment be terminated. The parent coordinator may be discharged by the Court.
- The parent coordinator may also be ***discharged by written agreement*** of both co-parents. One co-parent cannot unilaterally withdraw from the process. Both co-parents must submit in writing their agreement that the parent coordinator should be discharged.
- Parent coordinators may only be ***discharged and replaced one time*** during the course of the parent coordination process. Serial parent coordinators are detrimental to the continuity of care necessary for effective parenting coordination.
- The former parent coordinator shall ***select the next parent coordinator*** from a list of trained coordinators.
- The parent coordinator has a ***right to withdraw*** from the role of parent coordinator should he/she feel that effective change is no longer occurring after five joint sessions. The co-parents and the attorneys of record shall be given two (2) week notice of the decision to withdraw. The parent coordinator shall continue to act as parent coordinator for up to two weeks to provide a smooth transition between parent coordinators .

VIII. Grievance Procedure

- If a party believes the parent coordinator is biased, then the parent will write a one page summary of the complaint and email or hand-deliver it to the parent coordinator. The parent coordinator and the party shall meet at least one time in an attempt to resolve the matter prior to the party requesting a change in the parenting coordinator.
- If a complaint shall be lodged against the Court's appointed parent coordinator by either party, the complaint shall be presented to the appropriate licensing board only if the complainant was a party to the action; and:
 - The allegations were submitted to the Court; and
 - The court-appointed parent coordinator received an opportunity to present a defense against the allegations in the Court; and
 - The Court issued an order or judgment containing an express finding that the court-appointed parent coordinator did not perform services to the satisfaction of the Court.

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 6 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

IX. Expenses Shared

- If the Court determines that the parties have financial abilities to pay the fees of the parent coordinator, and unless otherwise ordered, the parents share the cost of the parent coordinator
- The fees and costs shall be paid directly to the parent coordinator as and when requested by the parent coordinator.
- Depending on the parties financial abilities to pay, the following two options are available:

1. _____ A retainer equivalent to 20 hours (\$3000.00) will be required at the pro rata share (if applicable). The parties agree to pay their respective portion of the initial retainer within seven (7) days of the signing the contract with the PC. At no time shall the retainer be less than the amount equivalent to five (5) hours.

2. _____ A retainer is not practical at this time, therefore, a \$1000 joint deposit will be required at the pro rata share (if applicable). The parties agree to pay their respective portion of the initial retainer within (7) days of the signing of the contract with the PC. Payment is due at the time services are rendered. The parties shall at all times keep a zero balance.

- The Court reserves jurisdiction to reallocate the parties' responsibilities for fees and costs based upon the parties' ability to pay or if there is inequitable usage or abuse of the parent coordination process as substantiated by the parent coordinator.
- The fees and costs shall be paid directly to the parenting coordinator as and when requested by the parent coordinator.
- The Court reserves jurisdiction to reallocate the parties' responsibilities for fees and costs based upon the parties' ability to pay or if there is inequitable usage or abuse of the parent coordination process has substantiated by the parenting coordinator.
- The parent coordinator shall have the discretion to charge either party separately for individual contacts with that party, time expended for that party or joint contact made necessary by that party's behavior.
- Activities for which the parent coordinator may charge include, but are not limited to,
 - time spent interviewing parents, children and collateral sources of information,
 - review of records and correspondence,
 - telephone and electronic conversation,
 - preparation of agreements,
 - correspondence,
 - decisions and reports,
 - travel,

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 7 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

- court preparation
- appearance at hearings, depositions and meetings.
- The parent coordinator shall not proceed until he/she is satisfied with the terms and conditions of the payment for his/her services and unless all of his/her fees and costs are paid by the parties in a timely manner as ordered.
- The Court shall enforce payment for any amounts owed to the parent coordinator by either party through contempt proceedings, if necessary.

Optional Functions of Parent Coordinator: **Decision Making, Crisis Management, Sanctioning**

Decision Making

The parent coordinator may serve a decision-making function. The parenting coordinator shall attempt to facilitate agreement between the parties in a timely manner on all disputes regarding the child(ren) that arise. When the co-parents are unable to reach an agreement, the parent coordinator might be given the responsibility to decide the disputed issue(s).

- _____ Minor changes or clarification of parenting time schedules or conditions including vacations, holidays, and temporary variations from the existing co-parenting plan
- _____ Modification of time sharing arrangements provided the modification does not increase or decrease either co-parents' time with the child(ren) more than five hours per week as measured by the court order.
- _____ Recommendation or modification of supervised visitation to include the designation of the supervisor and terms of supervised visitation to include but not limited to frequency, duration and location.
- _____ Transitions or exchanges of the child(ren) including date, time and place of exchange, means of transportation and the transporter,
- _____ Health care management including mental, dental, orthodontic, and vision care, and diet, medication, arrangement of appointments, personal and dental hygiene, and immunizations,
- _____ Child-rearing issues including but not limited to discipline and bedtime routines,
- _____ Psychotherapy or other mental health care for the child(ren),
- _____ Psychological testing or other assessment of the child(ren) and co-parents,
- _____ Mental health treatment including psychotherapy, psycho-education and domestic violence programs for either or both co-parents,
- _____ Substance abuse assessment, treatment and testing for the co-parents and the child(ren), including access to the results,
- _____ Parenting classes for either or both co-parents,
- _____ Education or daycare including school choice, tutoring, summer school, participation in special

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 8 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

- _____ education testing and programs or other major educational decisions,
- _____ Enrichment and extracurricular activities including sports, camps, movie ratings, dating and jobs,
- _____ Alteration of appearance of the child(ren) including haircuts, tattoos, ear and body piercings,
- _____ Role of and contact with significant others and extended families,
- _____ Religious observances, routine attendance and education,
- _____ Children's travel and passport arrangements
- _____ Equipment and personal possessions of the child(ren),
- _____ Communication between co-parents about their child(ren) including telephone, cell phone, page, fax and email,
- _____ Communication between the child(ren) and the parent including the method such as telephone, cell phone, page, fax and email, the contact time, and the length of contact when the child(ren) is not in that parent's care,
- _____ Exchange of the child(ren)'s clothing, responsibility of laundering clothing and other related issues regarding clothing with the exception of financial obligation,
- _____ Physical safety of the child(ren) by determining appropriate safety equipment such as helmets, knee and arm pads, safety belts, car and booster seats and seating positions in motor vehicles.
- _____ The restriction of alcohol and drugs in the presence of the child,
- _____ The restriction of violence or physical aggression in the presence of the child.

The parent coordinator shall not have the authority to change legal or physical custody.

- Each issue under consideration shall be discussed for no more than two sessions unless the nature or circumstance warrants immediate solution. Each co-parent shall be given an opportunity to be heard in the joint sessions. The parent coordinator shall notify the parties of the intent to proceed to an arbitration phase if the parties do not reach agreement on their own or with the assistance of the parent coordinator. Notice shall be given as to what is expected from the participation of the parties and the consequences of non-participation. If one party refuses to cooperate after notice, then the parent coordinator may continue to resolve the dispute.
- The parent coordinator may gather and use written and verbal statements of the dispute from each party, as well as other relevant sources.
- Under emergency circumstances, the parent coordinator shall have the right to render a decision without parental input.
- Decisions will be made in the best interest of the child(ren). The methodology used by the parent coordinator shall be fair and transparent to both parties.
- The decision of the parent coordinator shall be effective when rendered by the parenting coordinator. Once the parenting coordinator has rendered a decision, the decision shall remain in

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 9 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

effect and be binding until such time that the decision is modified by the parenting coordinator or the Court.

- The parent coordinator may make temporary changes in the co-parenting plan if a co-parent is impaired in his or her functioning and incapable of fulfilling the court-ordered parenting functions until further information and assessment is obtained and the Court has assumed decision-making responsibility.
- Any required adjustment to the co-parenting plan shall be in writing and submitted to the co-parents, attorneys of record, and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem.

Crisis Management The parent coordinator may serve a contextual crisis management function. When a crisis occurs that involves the co-parenting partnership, co-parenting plan or the parent-child relationship, the parent coordinator or designated staff will be available on an urgency basis to provide contextual crisis management.

The purpose of contextual crisis management is to respond in a timely manner within the context of the crisis to:

- ***Prevent escalation*** of conflict,
- Prevent or ***mitigate the harmful effects*** of conflict and emotional stress to the co-parents, child(ren) and other involved persons,
- ***Prevent disruption*** of the co-parenting plan,
- ***Teach skills*** for effective crisis management, and
- ***Preserve*** the co-parenting partnership.

The parenting coordinator or designated staff will provide contextual crisis management in three phases:

1. **During pre-crisis planning and rehearsal**, the parent coordinator will work with the co-parents to:
 - ***Identify possible situations***, circumstances or events that are likely to trigger a crisis,
 - ***Implement*** an early warning system for early identification and response,
 - ***Develop a crisis action plan*** to include the prevention of escalation, response for de-escalation, safety planning and crisis recovery,
 - ***Identify barriers*** to implementing a crisis action plan
 - ***Teach skills*** needed for conflict de-escalation during a crisis,
 - ***Rehearse the plan***, and
 - ***Continue to test*** and update the plan.
2. **During the crisis**, the parent coordinator or designated staff will be available to work with the co-parents to implement the crisis action plan by:

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 10 of 11

What is Parenting Coordination?

- ***Being available*** by phone or in-person for support and coaching,
 - ***Facilitating communication*** and problem-solving between the co-parents and, where appropriate, the child(ren),
 - ***Coordinating*** with other agencies as needed,
 - ***Helping to evaluate*** and mitigate risk,
 - ***Documenting*** the circumstance, trigger, and context of the crisis, and
 - ***Evaluating*** the adequacy of crisis management skills.
3. **After the crisis**, the parent coordinator or designated staff will work with the co-parents and, when appropriate, the child(ren) to provide debriefing and evaluation by:
- ***Interviewing*** the co-parents and other involved parties,
 - ***Providing coaching*** and support,
 - ***Reassessing*** the triggers for conflict and crisis,
 - ***Reassessing*** the barriers to effective crisis management,
 - ***Modifying*** the co-parenting plan as needed to prevent or more effectively address triggering issues and barriers,
 - ***Improving*** and rehearsing crisis management skills,
 - ***Evaluating*** and improving crisis action plan,
 - ***Coordinating*** information sharing with co-parents, attorneys of record, when appointed the Guardian ad Litem and involved agencies.
- A report detailing the contextual crisis response shall be in writing and submitted to the co-parents, attorneys of record, and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem.
 - Fees for crisis management will vary depending on the required response, but will not exceed 110% of the hourly rate for standard parenting coordination services. A fee schedule will be given to all parties at the first intake session.

Sanctioning. The parenting coordinator may serve a sanctioning function. The parent coordinator may sanction the parent that chooses not to abide by the recommendations of the Court or the decisions of the parent coordinator.

- Sanctions shall include, but not limited to, monetary fines, inconvenience, modification of time sharing arrangements and court appearances. Any sanction shall be in writing and submitted to the co-parents, attorneys of record and, when appointed, the Guardian ad Litem.

Parenting Coordination is commonly used in many different states, however it's a relatively new practice in South Carolina. Your attorney or Guardian Ad Litem may not be familiar with the practice of parenting coordination. For more information, please be sure to visit the following website for more information: www.parentingcoordinationcentral.com.

The explanation of the role of a Parent Coordinator **Anne Spearman, M.A. LPC**

Resolve Counseling (864) 249-7033

admin@greenvillesctherapist.com;

Page 11 of 11