

Parenting Coordination Training Standards

In order to attain the goal of ensuring a high level of proficiency in the performance of parenting coordinators, the following training standards have been developed. These standards contain two components, the first is how the training should be conducted and the second are the learning objectives.

PART I

TRAINING PROCEDURES

1. Training parameters (length of complete training program required is at least 28 hours which cover the modules as described below, span of training program, breaks for participants, student-faculty ratio)

(a) Length of Training.

(1) The total amount of instruction required for a complete parent coordination training shall be 28 hours of parenting coordination training, including four hours of domestic violence training.

A minimum of 24 instructional hours shall be dedicated to parenting coordination concepts and ethics, family systems theory and application, family dynamics in separation and divorce, child and adolescent development, the parenting coordination process, parenting coordination techniques and Florida family law and procedure. A minimum of four hours of instruction on domestic violence relating to the parenting coordination process shall be offered in addition to and as a compliment to the 24 hour parent coordination training.

(2) An instructional hour is defined as 50 minutes.

(b) Trainers should provide appropriate breaks during their training sessions which should be in addition to the number of required hours for training.

(c) Class size should be limited to 50 participants.

2. Training methodology (lecture, group discussion, written exercises including development of a parenting plan, parenting coordination simulations and role plays)

(a) Pedagogy. A complete parenting coordination training program should include, but is not limited to, the following: lecture, group discussion, written exercises, simulations and role plays. In addition, readings should be provided by the trainer to supplement the training.

(b) Role Play Requirements.

(1) At a minimum, every participant should participate in a role play of a parenting coordination session for no less than 50 minutes. The role play should be practical in time and scope.

(2) At the conclusion of each role play, time should be allocated for oral or written feedback to the participants.

(c) Written Exercises. A participant should be required to write a parenting plan based upon a fact pattern and material presented in the course. Prior to the conclusion of the training, course participants should receive feedback either individually or via group discussion of the written exercises.

(d) Simulation. A complete parenting coordination training should present a role play simulation of a parenting coordination session (either live or by video) prior to the participant's role play experience.

(e) Ethics.

(1) A complete parenting coordination training program should review parenting coordination ethics for at least two hours which should include application of Rules for Qualified and Court Appointed Parenting Coordinators.

(2) In addition, parenting coordinator ethics should be woven throughout the program.

3. Primary trainer qualifications

(a) Primary Trainer. A primary trainer should demonstrate the following qualifications:

(1) Parent Coordination Training Received: Successful completion of a complete parenting coordination training that is the equivalent of a parenting coordination training taught in accordance with Florida standards for a complete parenting coordination training.

(2) Parent Coordinator Qualifications: Be a qualified parenting coordinator in accordance with section 61.125, Florida Statutes, be licensed as a mental health professional under chapter 490 or chapter 491 or be licensed as a physician under chapter 458, with certification by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology or be a member in good standing of The Florida Bar.

(3) Parent Coordination Experience: Participation in a minimum of five parent coordination cases, of at least six months duration, with a minimum of two active cases within the last two years.

(4) Continuing Education: A parenting coordination trainer should complete a sufficient amount of continuing education in order to be current with rules, statutes and research applicable to parenting coordination.

(b) A primary trainer should be present throughout the entire course.

4. Use of guest lecturers (such as attorneys, judges, mediators, mental health professionals, and guardians ad litem, including qualifications of presenters)

(a) A guest lecturer should have a substantial part of his or her professional practice in the area about which the specialist is lecturing and should have the ability to connect his or her area of expertise with the parenting coordination process.

(b) Lectures on Florida family law should be presented by a member of The Florida Bar with family law experience.

(c) Lectures on family dynamics in separation and divorce and child and adolescent development should be presented by a mental health professionals licensed pursuant to chapters 490, 491, 458, Florida Statutes.

5. Completion of training and evaluation of students

(a) Participants should complete the 28 hour parenting coordination training requirement by physically attending one entire live training program.

(b) The primary trainer is responsible for ensuring that the integrity of each portion of the program is not compromised.

(c) A training program should provide, at the conclusion of the training, written documentation of completion to participants who successfully complete the program.

6. Records retention policy

The primary trainer should be responsible for maintaining records of those who completed the program for no less than five years.

7. Program evaluation

At the completion of the course, each participant should complete a course evaluation which should be reviewed by the trainer as part of quality assurance.

8. Course content requirements

(a) Learning Objectives. A complete parenting coordination training should incorporate the learning objectives contained in Part II.

(b) Required Training Materials. At a minimum, trainers should provide each of the participants with the following written materials:

(1) An agenda annotated with the learning objectives to be covered in each section;

(2) Trainers should provide a training manual that includes the following required readings in their current forms:

- (A) Section 61.125, Florida Statutes;
- (B) Section 61.13001, Florida Statutes;
- (C) Sections 741.28-30, Florida Statutes;
- (D) Section 39.201-206, Florida Statutes;
- (E) Section 415.1034, Florida Statutes;
- (F) Any Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure currently identified as 12.742;
- (G) All approved Florida Family Law Forms relevant to parenting coordination;
- (H) An exercise for creating or modifying a parenting plan or intervention strategy;
- (I) Role play simulation materials;
- (J) Rules for Qualified and Court Appointed Parenting Coordinators; and
- (K) Most recent Parenting Coordinator Qualifications Administrative Order adopted by the chief justice.

(3) Required Readings. Time spent on reading required materials should not count toward the required number of hours of training. Trainers should incorporate some method of ensuring that the required readings are completed.

PART II

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Parenting Coordination Concepts and Ethics

- (a) Define parenting coordination as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process and potential benefits for families and courts.
- (b) Identify the statutory definition for parent coordination in chapter 61, Florida Statutes and the applicable Family Law Rules of Procedure.
- (c) Discuss the source of authority and appropriate activities for a parenting coordinator.
- (d) Identify statutory qualifications for parenting coordinators.
- (e) Identify the three core knowledge bases from which parenting coordination draws: legal, mental health, and conflict resolution.
- (f) Explain how to integrate the three core knowledge bases with the five applicable skill sets: mediator, therapist/counselor, evaluator, educator, and case manager.
- (g) Describe the roles and functions of a parenting coordinator.
- (h) Identify how the role of a parenting coordinator differs from other types of professional services that may be utilized by parents in conflict, such as legal services, mediation, custody evaluation, divorce coaching, marriage and family counseling, couples' therapy, or parenting education.
- (i) Describe potential ethical dilemmas that may confront a parenting coordinator and how to avoid or resolve them.
- (j) Describe a parenting coordinator's responsibilities to the participants.
- (k) Identify the professional guidelines and standards that direct the practice of parenting coordination.

(1) Discuss the interplay between parenting coordination guidelines and other professional practice guidelines relevant to the practice of parenting coordination.

2. The Parenting Coordination Process

(a) Identify elements that need to be included in a written agreement between the parties and the parenting coordinator that describe the parenting coordinator's services.

(b) Explain how to structure the parenting coordination process including, but not limited to:

(1) Conducting an orientation for the purpose of reviewing the order of referral, explaining the process and in person explaining the concepts which must be disclosed in writing to the parties;

(2) A written acknowledgment by the parties that the parenting coordinator, in person, reviewed the terms of the Order of Referral, described the process and the role of the parenting coordinator, and informed the participants in writing of the concepts which must be disclosed in writing to the parties;

(3) Scheduling, duration, format, and frequency of subsequent sessions;

(4) Setting and maintaining rules of engagement during the process;

(5) Reviewing how communication will take place;

(6) Discussing record and document maintenance;

(7) Reviewing the typical interactions of a parent coordinator with others involved in the parent coordination process;

(8) Discussing if a child will be interviewed as a part of the parent coordination process;

(9) Reviewing how the parenting coordinator will interface with the court;

(10) Discussing the process by which the services of a parent coordinator are terminated or concluded; and

(11) Discuss the involvement of other professionals.

(c) Describe characteristics that may enhance or undermine the effectiveness of the parenting coordination process including, but not limited to: building rapport, establishing trust, setting a cooperative tone, objective listening and questioning, empowering the parties, remaining neutral in all interactions, modeling a non-judgmental attitude, and increasing parenting competence.

(d) Explain socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, language, age, gender, religious, sexual orientation, and disability issues in which may arise and affect the parties' negotiation styles, ability and/or willingness to engage in the parenting coordination process.

(e) Identify the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and describe strategies for handling situations when faced with disability issues or special needs.

(f) Explain the prohibition against unfair influence, sexual harassment and the unique influence the parenting coordinator has over the parties given their role and the length of time he or she may be involved in the case.

3. Family Dynamics in Separation and Divorce

(a) Describe the stages of post-separation and divorce adjustment on families and how these stages apply to parents who were never married.

(b) Explain the psychological issues in separation and divorce and the impact on parenting abilities.

(c) List impasse styles of co-parent interaction patterns that hinder conflict resolution.

(d) Compare conflict management styles of co-parents and appropriate interventions to reduce conflict.

- (e) Identify parenting styles and the impact those styles have on outcomes for a child and adolescent.
- (f) Identify characteristics of high conflict parents and interventions to reduce conflict.
- (g) List the effects of extended family members and significant others on the family systems and the parenting coordination process.

4. Family Systems Theory and Application

- (a) Explain relevant psychological theories and social science research applicable to professional interventions for a family.
- (b) Define family systems theory and illustrate application to the parenting coordination process.
- (c) Identify patterns of interaction and communication among high conflict parents and appropriate interventions.
- (d) Identify the type of parenting disputes that arise and require resolution.
- (e) Demonstrate competence in facilitating discussion between parents about a child's needs and parenting priorities.
- (f) Develop methods to improve communication between parents.
- (g) Explain process for obtaining information to facilitate resolution of disputes as they arise.
- (h) Describe methods to encourage compliance with court orders.

5. Child and Adolescent Development

- (a) Identify and explain a child's developmental needs and the impact on time-sharing arrangements and parental responsibilities.
- (b) Identify and explain an adolescent's developmental needs and the impact on time-sharing arrangements and parental responsibilities.

(c) Create and/or modify a parenting plan taking into consideration parenting abilities, a child's and adolescent's needs, and the ideal integration of these elements to meet the best interests of children.

(d) Select parenting plan elements that address different family circumstances including, but not limited to: geographic distance, safety focused parameters, high conflict elements, and special needs of family members.

6. Parenting Coordination Techniques

(a) Identify characteristics of individuals who may not be appropriate to participate in the parenting coordination process.

(b) Review procedures to identify high risk factors in parents including, but not limited to:

(1) Screening for substance abuse, dependence, addiction and impact on parenting;

(2) Screening for domestic violence and child abuse/neglect;

(3) Screening for mental illness or impairment that may impact parenting ability; and

(4) Screening for any other factors which may place parents or children at risk for harm.

(c) Discuss the risk factors and implications of different types of abuse (i.e. domestic violence, substance abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse).

(d) Discuss appropriate safety interventions when confronted with domestic, substance, child and/or sexual abuse.

(e) Describe concepts of co-parenting and shared parental responsibilities.

(f) Develop strategies for intervention with parents including goals and time frames.

- (g) List different types of co-parenting arrangements (i.e. parallel, disengaged, mixed model, etc.) and their applicability based on co-parenting factors.
- (h) Explain the concept of a support team for parents (professional and/or non-professional) including when and how to use outside experts and support resources effectively.
- (i) Identify the concept of intractable conflict and discuss how to transform it into a framework more suitable for resolution of conflicts.
- (j) Explain parenting plan agreements and how to memorialize agreements between the parties.
- (k) Explain procedure for having agreements ratified and incorporated as an order of the court.

7. Florida Family Law and Procedure

- (a) Describe a parent coordinator's responsibilities to the court.
- (b) Demonstrate knowledge of Florida Statutes and Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure as it pertains to the parenting coordination process.
- (c) Explain confidentiality as it applies to the parenting coordination process as well as be able to identify the exceptions to confidentiality.
- (d) Explain how the concepts of confidentiality and privilege differ between adults and children.
- (e) Explain under what circumstances a parenting coordinator can make recommendations to either the parties or the court and what kind of recommendations may be made.
- (f) Describe the legal concepts that relate to the parenting coordination process including, but not limited to: due process, ex parte communications, equitable distribution, child support, modification, parental responsibilities, relocation, and privilege.

- (g) Explain the statutory constraints of parenting coordination where domestic violence exists and/or protective orders have been issued by the court.
- (h) Describe when and how the parenting coordinator should interface with the court system.
- (i) Identify and describe available sample forms and local court procedures pertaining to referral and use of parenting coordination by Florida's trial courts.
- (j) Describe process and procedure for working with legal, mental health and other professional disciplines to promote cooperation and professionalism.
- (k) List the procedures to follow when requested to provide testimony or evidence.
- (l) Understand the grievance procedures contained in the local/state statutes or rules and responsibilities of the parenting coordinator.

8. Domestic Violence and Child Abuse related to Parenting Coordination (minimum of 4 hours)

- (a) Identify procedures for on-going screening for domestic violence and appropriate courses of action when safety parameters are needed.
- (b) Discuss the legal and non-legal definition of domestic violence.
- (c) Discuss the effects of domestic violence on the co-parenting relationship and family dynamics.
- (d) Describe the psychological impact of domestic violence on child and adolescent development.
- (e) List and describe the empirically based types of domestic violence, including conflict-instigated violence, coercive-controlling violence, separation instigated violence, and undifferentiated type including marital predictors of high risks for violence post-separation.

- (f) Explain the importance of understanding the history of the relationship and family dynamics in recognizing coercive, controlling behavior.
- (g) Explain the dynamics of perpetrators of abuse and the impact on parenting abilities.
- (h) Describe the unique problems and inherent dangers presented by domestic violence of all types in terms of parental contacts, and the need for safety in the parent coordination process.
- (i) Explain the importance of monitoring compliance with the parenting plan.
- (j) Explain the importance of reporting to a judicial officer any non-confidential infractions of existing court orders, including the need to modify a parenting plan to include safety parameters and the available forms for communicating to the court.
- (k) Explain the process for terminating the parenting coordination process when continuing with the process would endanger the safety of those involved.
- (l) Explain when the parenting coordinator is required to report emergencies to the court and the procedure to follow.