

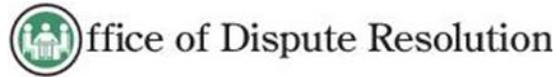


When fathers are able to establish involved and ongoing relationships with their children following birth, they are more likely to stay involved as the children grow.

Children with involved fathers have reduced risk of:

- Substance abuse
- Teenage pregnancy
- School dropout

COLORADO JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT



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A Parent's Guide To Access & Visitation Mediation



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What is Access & Visitation Mediation?

Mediation is an informal process in which a neutral third party (a mediator) assists parties to reach agreements about issues in dispute. Mediation can be an alternative to going to court.

Access & Visitation mediation is a specific program that allows parents the opportunity to create a parenting plan with the assistance of a trained mediator.

Going to mediation often costs less than going to court. It is an informative and confidential process that provides parties with the opportunity to come up with a solution that meets their own needs.

Why Should I Consider Mediation?

Mediation provides parents with the opportunity to create a parenting plan that can be adopted by the court. Having a court-approved parenting plan protects both parents and their children. Without a legally enforceable parenting plan, neither parent has legal rights related to parenting time and decision-making authority.

What Issues Are Addressed in Mediation?

The mediation process is unique for every situation. Parties are welcome to raise any issues they think need to be discussed. In Access & Visitation mediation, the mediator will guide parents through discussions necessary for developing a parenting plan.

Parents should be prepared to discuss any or all of the following:

Parenting Time ("Physical Custody"). Parenting Time is the actual schedule that details when children spend time with each parent. Typically, parents will address a regular day-to-day schedule as well as special times when the regular schedule may change such as holidays or during the summer.

Decision-Making ("Legal Custody"). Decision-making is essentially care and control of the children. Who has the authority to make major decisions, such as medical and education issues, related to the child? Decision-making authority can be "joint" which means that decisions are made by both parents together or "sole" when decisions are made by just one parent.

Child Support. Access & Visitation mediators can complete a Child Support Worksheet during mediation. Any agreements made regarding Child Support should also be approved by the Child Support attorney assigned to the case.

What Should I bring to Mediation?

- Any court records related to the parents or children that could impact parenting issues
- Income documentation - i.e. paystubs, taxes, etc
- Parent's personal calendar
- School calendars if applicable
- Do NOT bring your children to mediation unless you have received approval, in advance, from the mediator