



Parenting coordination in family law matters

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Parenting coordination is a collaborative dispute resolution process in which parents engage the assistance of a 'parenting coordinator' to assist them in resolving the day-to-day issues that can arise when co-parenting.

Parenting coordinators can help parents to communicate more effectively and save time and money by refraining from using lawyers to work out the smaller issues.

Who are parenting coordinators?

Parenting coordinators are professionals who have worked in the family law sector for quite some time and have further qualifications and training as required under the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC).

Parenting coordinators will often come from one of the following professional backgrounds:

- Family report writers;
- Psychologists;
- Social workers;
- Family lawyers;
- Mediators;
- Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners; and/or

•[Independent Children's Lawyers](#).

For more information about the qualifications of parenting coordinators, you can read the [Guidelines for Parenting Coordination published on the AFCC website](#).

Who is parenting coordination suitable for?

Parenting coordination is a child-focused process for separated and separating parents looking for assistance with co-parenting. Co-parenting can be tricky, and a lot of parents need some help to navigate the new circumstances of parenting while separated.

You can read our "Top 10 tips for co-parenting" here.

Parenting coordination is a type of case management and dispute resolution that can assist parents on an ongoing basis. This includes before, during and after parents agree on parenting arrangements and when court orders are being made.

By using a parenting coordinator to assist in resolving smaller disputes, parents can avoid having to attend a more formal mediation or spend time and money negotiating through lawyers every time there is a bump in the road.

Ultimately, the main goal of parenting coordination is ensuring that parents are equipped to offer their children a stable arrangement with as little conflict as possible. Over time, parents should be equipped with the tools to be able to work through these issues without the assistance of a parenting coordinator.

What types of issues can a parenting coordinator help me with?

Parenting coordination can help parents improve their communication and reduce conflict regarding the day-to-day issues that can arise when co-parenting.

This can include things like:

- working through the barriers to communication;
- drop-off and pick-up times;
- changeover locations;
- time arrangements;
- help to implement and [comply with their parenting plan or Court Order](#); and
- most other disputes that need resolving.

A parenting coordinator acts as a neutral third party to assist you and your former spouse to come to a resolution while keeping the [children's best interests](#) as the focal point.

How can I engage with a parenting coordinator?

Outside of Court

You can engage with a parenting coordinator just by getting in contact with them. You do not need a referral or a court order to engage with a parenting coordinator. Each parenting coordinator will have their own intake processes that you will need to meet in order to start the process.

At the beginning of any engagement, the parents and the parenting coordinator will usually sign an agreement noting the terms of the engagement, the process, and the expectations of each person involved (including the parenting coordinator).

In most circumstances, both parents will equally share the costs of all communications/attendance with the parenting coordinator. The cost of the engagement will differ between each individual parenting coordinator.

Either parent can contact the parenting coordinator with an issue or concern, though the parenting coordinator will also assist the parents to develop dispute resolution techniques so that, in the future, they can manage the issues independently.

During the Court process

The Court can also order the parties to meet with a parenting coordinator under sections [13C](#) and [60CC\(l\)](#) of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth). In most cases, parenting coordination is non-confidential and it is reportable at the request of the Court, or by one or both parties.

Find a parenting coordinator

If you are currently engaged in the [mediation process](#) or have a family lawyer, you can ask them to provide some recommended parenting coordinators to assist you. They may also be able to help you propose the idea of using a parenting coordinator to the other parent or their lawyer.

Otherwise, [Parenting Coordination Australia](#) and [Parenting Coordination Victoria](#) have lists of parenting coordinators who may be able to assist.

How a family lawyer can help

We can help determine whether parenting coordination is appropriate for your circumstances and, where necessary, recommend a family coordinator for you to engage with.

Where parenting coordination may not be appropriate for the specific issue that you are dealing with, we can help provide legal advice and other options so that you can properly consider your options and next steps.

Contacting Smith Family Law

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