



## **What Is a Parenting Coordinator**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Many times parents go through a divorce and then have ongoing problems because of their strong emotions, inability to plan together or poor communication skills. They might repeatedly return to lawyers and Court hoping that the underlying issues that cause their problems will be resolved. Unfortunately, appearing before a judge might not give them the results that they desire.

A judge does not have much time to review the necessary history and is not usually trained in the issues that may have to do with personalities or entrenched patterns of behaviours. A decision might be made but the relationship issues will likely continue because learning new ways has not occurred.

Parenting Coordinators are professionals who have considerable training and experience in helping people to identify the things that lead to conflict and then learn new ways to handle them. Judges and lawyers can work together to prepare a Consent Order that specifies future involvement of a Parenting Coordinator or the couple can set up an Agreement between them to seek the services of a Parenting Coordinator. They then meet with that person and outline topics that will be covered and specify a time which usually runs from six months to two years in duration.

The hope is that a mediation process can be used to help the individuals reach agreements but, the initial plan states that if they reach a stage where they are "stuck", the Parenting Coordinator can make the necessary decisions for them through arbitration. This process includes having witnesses swear an oath and present evidence using natural justice.

The Parenting Coordinator then writes an Award that not only provides background information, individual interests and a review of the evidence given but also the Parenting Coordinator's decisions along with an explanation of how these were made. The couple can then ask the legal system to make the mediated agreement or award into an enforceable Order.

Fees for services are usually shared by the parents who might be able to use them for insurance coverage or tax deductions if the Parenting Coordinator is a mental health professional.

There are several reasons why parents prefer to work this way rather than repeatedly go to Court. They are able to build a relationship with the Parenting Coordinator which prevents them from having to tell their story over to different sitting judges. Appointments can be more flexible than Court dockets and hourly fees can be significantly less than litigation costs. Probably the most important benefit, however is the fact that the parents learn how to communicate and work together in healthier ways and, in the long run, the children benefit.

If you are interested in enhancing your business model and learning how to help families using the unique and healthy role as Parenting Coordinator, you can begin acquiring the specific training and experience that is necessary to begin.