

The Benefits of Child Support Mediation Versus Litigation

It takes a village to raise a child; a saying that holds true whether you are married or divorced. The trouble is that the process of divorcing, and particularly navigating child support issues, can be so acrimonious it can put the entire village - you, your ex, grandparents, extended family and even your children - at odds. Mediation offers an alternative that can help you preserve those relationships while determining the best child support solution. Here's how.

The Facts on Child Support



First let's talk about child support itself. In the United States each state is required by federal law to establish guidelines under which to calculate child support due from parents. Yet, individual states have quite a bit of discretion in determining those guidelines which is why you'll find that the payments required vary wildly between states. Here's what courts typically consider in determining payment:

- Child's standard of living prior to divorce
- Child's specific needs
- Income and expenses of the custodial parent
- Non-custodial parent's income/expenses and ability to pay

Keep in mind that child support typically lasts until a child is no longer a minor, becomes active duty in the military, parental rights are terminated or a child is declared legally emancipated by a court. It can also cover more than basic

expenses including entertainment, medical, schooling (and extracurricular activities), childcare, transportation and more.

Benefits of Child Support Mediation

In child support mediation, you and your ex will work with a trained mediator who acts as a neutral third party to help you negotiate a mutual agreement on the issue. While a mediator does not decide on a child support for you, they can help you understand your state's guidelines and will use communication and negotiation techniques that guide the mediation process constructively as you work toward child support solutions together. The benefits of this approach include:

More Collaboration - Court litigation is by nature adversarial, where mediation is collaborative. Not only does the mediator create a more comfortable environment than a courtroom, the focus is on improved communication and understanding. And by crafting the child support solution yourselves, each party is more likely to carry it out than an order arbitrarily decided upon by a court.

More Flexibility - Although there are guidelines set by the state, no family is alike which means that leaving these decisions in the hands of a judge with limited knowledge of your situation is a risk. Child support mediation gives you much more flexibility in working towards a solution that's truly in the best interests of the child(ren), even if it deviates from those cookie cutter guidelines.

Save Time, Money and Privacy - Courts are notoriously slow, often require multiple appearances and outcomes and incomes - meaning your income tax returns - are discussed in public courtrooms. Not to mention lawyers can be expensive! Child support mediation can save you the stress and hassle because it streamlines the process, saving you precious time, lawyer fees and your privacy which can be invaluable.

Preserving Relationships - Back to our village analogy; a long drawn out (and adversarial) litigation process isn't good for anyone. It only amplifies resentments and adds considerable stress, not just for you and your ex, but also your family as they may feel they need to pick sides. While child support will ultimately be settled, child rearing will continue. The collaborative spirit of mediation can help preserve those relationships, and even show you how to improve communication going forward!

Interested in child support mediation? Learn more about our online mediation services by [contacting our experienced team](#) today!

