



Utah State Courts

UTAH'S THIRD DISTRICT CO-PARENTING MEDIATION PROGRAM

REPORT TO THE UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE

Prepared: September 4, 2012



PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

- **Senate Bill 116** initiated the program in 1997.
- **House Bill 22** converted the Expedited Parent-Time Enforcement Program from a pilot program to a permanent program (Co-Parenting Mediation Program) in the Third Judicial District in 2008.
- The program was developed to restore or increase the amount of time non-custodial parents spend with their children. It is based on the idea that children's best interests are met when they can have healthy, meaningful contact with both parents.
- The program currently provides subsidized, sliding scale and no-cost mediation to parents with parent-time (visitation) disputes.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- The program is administered through a collaborative effort between the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Third District Court.
- Since January 1998 the program has mediated **3,661** cases, and provided information and referral services to thousands more (see Program Statistics and Evaluation).

FUNDING

- Federal Access and Visitation Grant of \$100,000 per year
- State Court match funds of \$25,000 per year

Funds are used to pay for one full-time and one part-time staff member and subsidized or no-cost mediation services for all mediation parties.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

- When a motion is filed in Third District Court alleging a violation of court-ordered parent-time rights, a referral is made to the Co-Parenting Mediation Program.
- The case is screened and, if appropriate, scheduled for mediation within 15 calendar days of referral.
- A mediator is assigned from a program roster of private mediators with specific co-parenting mediation experience.
- One follow-up mediation session is offered at no cost to parties at the parties' request.

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PROGRAM STATISTICS

Cases Statistics (since January 1, 1998)

• Total number of cases referred to the program	5,734
• Cases mediated *	3,661
• Cases resolved in whole or in part in mediation	2,685
• Percentage of agreements reached in mediation	73%

Cases Statistics for State Fiscal Year 2012

• Total number of cases referred to the program	427
• Cases mediated *	257
• Cases resolved in whole or in part in mediation	189
• Percentage of agreements reached in mediation	73%

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Parameter July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012

- The program uses CORIS to track cases that have been mediated through the Co-Parenting Mediation Program. In State Fiscal Year 2012, 65% of the cases mediated in the program did not proceed to a court hearing regarding parent-time. **
- Parents are asked to fill out and return a written survey following mediation.
- 81% of survey respondents reported a good experience in mediation.
- Co-Parenting Mediation program mediators are observed and evaluated at regular intervals by AOC/ADR staff.

* some cases referred to the program are not mediated due to various reasons, including: the case does not meet the parameters of the program, the parents have a history of extreme domestic violence, the original motion was dismissed by the moving party prior to mediation or one or both parties failed to appear for the scheduled mediation.

** Cases are tracked for 6 months following mediation.