

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTION-FOCUSED PARENTING MEDIATION

by Christopher Hahn, Ph.D.

A Hybrid Mediation Method for Complex and Higher-Conflict Parenting Cases

Divorce? Disputes about parenting?

Collaborative solution-focused mediation, by Dr. Hahn, is intended to save parents' money while helping them preserve their ability to determine their roles and responsibilities.

Based on a simple one-page agreement, the process typically starts with individual parent/mediator meetings. To better understand the issues in some cases, the mediator may also interview collateral contacts, observe children, and/or review documents. Most mediation sessions are conducted jointly with both parents and their attorneys (if represented). Separate-room sessions may also be used.

The mediation process *is* confidential. The mediator does *not* have decision-making authority like a guardian ad litem, nor the

right to disclose mediation discussions or the data gathered in the process (MCA § 26-1-813).

High parental conflict is detrimental to children and court battles can add fuel to the fire. As an alternative, successful collaborative mediations can foster healthier co-parenting relationships.

Dr. Hahn's training and extensive knowledge of peer-reviewed studies allows the presentation of situation-specific research for the parents' consideration. His experience as a guardian ad litem has honed his analytic skills and made him comfortable with tricky cases.

The parent/mediator relationship need not be limited to a single issue. After the parenting plan is completed, Dr. Hahn can work with parents to help resolve future disputes on an as-needed basis.

Building Blocks of Collaborative Solution-Focused Mediation

Child-centered Goals:

- ◇ Create optimal structure for healthy child development
- ◇ Negotiate constructive co-parenting roles

Parent's Commitment:

- ◇ Help mediator understand the true issues
- ◇ Explore creative ideas
- ◇ Work toward healthy, happy, productive children

Solution-Focused Methods:

- ◇ In-depth family knowledge
- ◇ Situational education using results of empirical studies
- ◇ Include parents' attorneys for counsel, as necessary

Mediated solutions can preserve relationships; they are less expensive than litigated court battles, and they frequently result in more satisfying agreements for all parties.

Dr. Hahn works hard to keep the mediation process as stress-free as possible.

Parents, attorneys, and counselors are invited to contact Dr. Hahn for a gratis initial discussion.

Dr. Hahn earned his Ph.D. in Human Services with as much focus as possible on child custody issues. His dissertation research was on successful long-term joint physical custodies. He is a Full Member of the Montana Mediation Association with Family Designation. He is the author of *Doing Qualitative Research Using Your Computer* (Sage Publications). His earlier-in-life MBA and business experience enhances his effectiveness in mediating child support and financial issues when necessary.