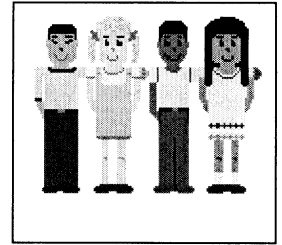




FAMILY MEDIATION SERVICES

STATE OF ILLINOIS – CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY



WHO WE ARE

The Family Mediation Services (FMS) is a department of the Office of the Chief Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County, Domestic Relations Division.

FMS provides mediation for parents who are separating, separated, divorcing or divorced, or who were never married, and are in conflict over issues involving their children including allocation of parental responsibilities and parenting time.

There is no charge for FMS services. When parents are in dispute over their children, Domestic Relations judges issue an order compelling parents to attend mediation. Mediation at FMS only occurs when ordered by the court. We mediate issues related to the allocation of parental responsibilities and parenting time (non-financial parenting issues); not property, financial, or support issues.

FMS follows a thorough protocol that addresses family violence and other power imbalances in order to make sure that every parent is able to participate fully in the process. FMS mediators have professional backgrounds in social work, psychology, law, and other related disciplines. They are trained in family mediation and are employees of the Circuit Court. FMS was established decades ago and has been mediating family cases since 1982.

We interview children (ages 4-18). We do not involve them in the decision making itself; rather we are interested in how they are doing during this conflict. We follow up by providing parents with referrals, if desired.

Mediation content is privileged and confidential; thus, we do not make recommendations to the court as to allocation of parental responsibilities. Agreements are completely voluntary on the part of the parents.

FMS also provides emergency intervention, conciliation, and reconciliation services for parents in our courts. Additionally, we facilitate "Focus on Children" classes, our award-winning parent education program.

OUR MISSION

We seek to have parents determine their own parenting plans; and to have these parenting issues not decided by the court, if possible. We seek to enhance communication between parents and to help parents cope with the demands of post-separation parenting, as well as to help them focus on the needs of their children. If we are successful in those endeavors, agreement tends to be the natural outcome.

We seek to help the parents we serve to move away from adversarial roles in an adversarial system (the court), where "outsiders" may make decisions for their family. Our goal is to empower the parents themselves to make decisions for their own family.

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