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MEDIATION SERVICES FOR DIVORCING COUPLES

Advantages of Mediation

If a couple has decided to divorce, mediation is the wise choice. Divorce Mediation is the least adversarial and least expensive method of separation and divorce. Couples meet and work together with their mediator to develop a settlement that is fair and agreeable to both of them. When a settlement is reached the mediator prepares a written settlement agreement which can be processed by the court without filing a contested divorce action.

How Mediation Works

Mediation is often used prior to filing for divorce in an effort to avoid the emotional and financial costs associated with lengthy litigation. Once a law suit has been filed, mediation can still assist the parties in identifying, in resolving their disputes, and mediation is often required by the court prior to scheduling a final hearing.

Role of the Mediator

A mediator's primary role during mediation is to facilitate discussions of the various issues related to the couples' separation and divorce, to offer possible solutions, and to otherwise assist the couple in reaching a full settlement on all issues. Once a settlement has been reached the mediator prepares a formal written Marital Agreement for the parties.

Cost of Mediation

A. Mediation Conference. The Supreme Court requires that detailed financial affidavits be completed and filed by each party as well as child support guideline worksheets when there are children of the marriage. These requirements cannot be waived even when there has been complete agreement between the parties. For \$200 an hour couples receive up to two hours of conference time to arrive at a settlement and assistance in preparing these forms. Most cases are resolved within the allotted time. If additional time is required, the attorney/mediator's time is charged at a flat rate of \$250 per hour.

B. Stipulation/Agreement. When an agreement is reached, the mediator prepares the stipulation documents necessary for the couple to file an uncontested divorce process. A lawyer or legal service will prepare the Petition, and Answer and Final Judgment of Dissolution of Marriage (Divorce). A list of recommended lawyers is available upon request. The time required to prepare the parties' Marital Settlement Agreement will vary depending on its' complexity. Time spent preparing the Marital Agreement is charged at a rate of \$200 per hour.

Location:

Mediations can held at any neutral location in Hillsborough, Pasco, or Pinellas County, Florida; or at Carter and Evans Marriage and Family Therapy, located at 2111 W. Swann Avenue, Suite 104, Tampa, Florida 33606.