

## Parenting Consultants

### What is a Parenting Consultant?

A Parenting Consultant (PC) is a neutral third-party professional who helps divorced or separated parents in Minnesota resolve ongoing parenting disputes. The PC works to assist with parenting plans, improve communication between co-parents, and resolve conflicts in a way that prioritizes the well-being of children. Parenting Consultants offer parents a practical way to resolve disagreements without returning to court. By focusing on timely, cost-effective, and child-centered solutions, PCs can foster a healthier co-parenting relationship.

---

### What Does a Parenting Consultant Do?

PCs handle a variety of issues, including but not limited to:

- **Parenting Time:** Resolving disputes over regular schedules, holiday time, and vacation plans.
- **Activities and Schooling:** Making decisions about extracurricular activities or school enrollment when parents disagree.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** Addressing conflicts related to pick-up/drop-off arrangements.

If parents are unable to reach an agreement through discussion, the PC can make a binding decision on the matter.

---

### How is a Parenting Consultant Appointed?

- **Voluntary Agreement:** Both parents must agree to work with a Parenting Consultant.
- **Formal Court Order:** Once the parents agree, the court will issue an order formalizing the PC's appointment.

Importantly, a PC cannot be imposed on parents without mutual consent.

---

### What is the Scope of a PC's Authority?

- PCs cannot alter custody or court-ordered parenting plans but can make decisions on specific disputes.
  - Their authority is outlined in the agreement between the parents and is formalized in the court order.
- 

### Benefits of Working with a Parenting Consultant

1. **Reduces Parental Conflict:**
    - PCs provide timely solutions to disputes, reducing the stress of ongoing arguments.
    - Minimizing parental conflict is vital for the emotional and psychological well-being of children.
  2. **Saves Time and Money:**
    - PCs can resolve issues more quickly than court proceedings, avoiding the delays and expenses of litigation.
    - This process is often more cost-effective than involving attorneys for every dispute.
  3. **Child-Focused Decisions:**
    - PCs prioritize the best interests of the children while helping parents find practical solutions.
- 

### What are the Qualifications of a Parenting Consultant?

Parenting Consultants typically have advanced training in areas such as child development and psychology, dealing with parental alienation and interpersonal conflict, addressing issues like physical abuse, substance abuse, and other family challenges. Their expertise enables them to effectively handle the complexities of co-parenting conflicts.

---

### How is a PC Different from a Mediator?

- **Mediation:** A mediator facilitates discussion between parents but does not have the authority to make decisions. Mediation is confidential.
  - **Parenting Consultant:** A PC can make binding decisions if parents cannot agree. This process is not confidential, and information gathered by the PC can be shared with the court if a decision is challenged.
- 

### Who pays for a Parenting Consultant?

Generally, the parties pay equally for the parenting consultant's services, although the parents may agree to allocate the fees differently based on their respective financial situations. The court order usually also provides that the parenting consultant may allocate fees differently if one person has abused the process.

---