

NOTICE TO LITIGANTS

The filing of your divorce or legal separation case in this Court means either you or your spouse has chosen to have a Judge or Magistrate make some of the most important decisions in your life, such as parenting of your children, dividing your property, and who should pay how much support. Emotions such as anger, sadness, resentment, and uncertainty often run high during a divorce. Parents often feel they should not agree with their spouse on these important issues. Sometimes well-meaning family members and friends urge parties to “fight” for everything and not “give in”. Ongoing conflict is likely to hurt you and your children for a long time. Also, the financial cost of litigation can be devastating as well. While you have the right to a court hearing and decision by a Judge, going to court is not the only way to resolve family disputes.

Other options are available to you to work out your differences: mediation, collaborative divorce, or cooperative negotiation. These other processes have several advantages: 1) You will directly participate in finding solutions; 2) You probably will be able to resolve your dispute sooner; 3) It may be less expensive, 4) You may end the process with a better relationship with your former spouse; and 5) You will likely find it less stressful than court hearings. You should talk to your attorney, if you have one, about all of these methods of resolving your case so the two of you can decide which method may be best for you.

Whether you have an Attorney or not, one option available to you is “mediation.” In mediation, you and your spouse meet with a neutral third party who has special training designed to bring the two of you to an agreement on some or all issues in your divorce case. Many Attorneys and Social Workers serve as Mediators. This Court’s Mediation Services Department, while limited to parenting issues, can help you decide your children’s physical living arrangements, health care, schooling, and day-to-day activities as a result of living in two separate households. With a Mediator’s help you can tailor agreements to your specific situation, maintain more confidentiality, and develop agreements faster. The process should also be less stressful for you and your family and may even result in improved communication with your spouse.

Please take time to familiarize yourself with this website where you will find useful information about the divorce process. Under the “Parenting” heading you can link to other resources including “Ohio’s Guide for Parents Living Apart” – a valuable tool for parents developed by the Supreme Court of Ohio. You can also find many other divorce resources on the internet, including www.uptoparents.org, the Center for Principled Family Advocacy (www.famad.com), and the Mediation Association of Northeast Ohio (www.manomEDIATE.org).

Please do your part by educating yourself, by being prepared and focused on the issues, and by choosing to work together toward a positive future for you and your children.