



Communication Services  
5334 South Prince Street  
Littleton, Colorado 80166-0001  
Phone: 303-795-4284  
Fax: 303-738-7894  
[www.co.arapahoe.co.us](http://www.co.arapahoe.co.us)

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Contact:  
**NICHOLE PARMELLY**  
*Communication Services Specialist II*  
Direct: 303-636-1945  
Mobile: 303-710-7893  
E-mail: [nparmelly@co.arapahoe.co.us](mailto:nparmelly@co.arapahoe.co.us)

### **Free mediation services to parents benefits the kids**

Littleton, Colo. --- Through an innovative partnership with the Office of Dispute Resolution, Arapahoe County's Child Support Enforcement can now offer mediation services to their clients at no cost.

"Child Support Enforcement can't get involved with parenting time issues," said Chad Edinger, Child Support Enforcement Division Manager. "But this partnership allows us to help by referring parents to mediation services."

Mom needs dad to send in his child support check so she can pay for after-school child care. Dad won't pay because he wants more time with his child. Both parents are frustrated and need advice and Arapahoe County's Child Support Enforcement can now refer them to a new service called Mediation for Parenting Time.

One of the first couples to use the mediation services found it incredibly helpful. Dad, wanting to spend more time with his child, offered to pick him up from school, thereby eliminating the need for mom to spend money on child care. In turn, dad started making child support payments.

"We've found that through mediation parents are happier and that benefits the child," Edinger added. "This resource will help us build bridges between parents in an effort to have children spend more time with both parents and help us obtain child support payments."

Although the service was attempted years ago, it did not get off the ground. With proponents like Edinger and Trish Elledge, Facilitator for the ODR, the program is now in full swing.

"We've all felt like our hands were tied when clients asked us how they could get more time with their child," said Maureen Alexander, CSE Specialist. "Now we're able to refer them to our mediation service. It's great knowing we can finally offer some support in this arena."

This is an exciting and beneficial service for the low-income, never married population served by Child Support Enforcement as they typically never have the chance to formally address parenting time issues, but are expected to pay child support. It allows the County to offer a much more positive customer service and human services related response to their concerns and ultimately more effectively serve the families who need our help.

Mediation for Parenting Time is offered two days a month and allows for a free two hours session per couple. Both parties must voluntarily agree to meet to resolve the parenting time issues. For more information, please call Child Support Enforcement at 720-874-8700.

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