

GLOSSARY OF HELPFUL TERMS IN FAMILY LAW MATTERS

1. Legal Custody-the ability to make decisions regarding a child's health, education, welfare and/or religion. The presumption in Connecticut is "joint" legal custody.
2. Physical Custody-where the child actually resides. If the child primarily resides with one parent, this is called "primary physical custody"; if there is a shared parenting plan, where a child spends approximately equal time residing with each parent, this is referred to as "shared physical custody" or "joint physical custody."
3. Guardian ad Litem (GAL) – a person, usually an attorney, who is appointed in a matter to represent a minor child's best interest.
4. Attorney for the Minor Child (AMC) –an attorney who is appointed to represent the desires and/or position of a child. AMCs are usually appointed for children age 12 or older.
5. Parenting Time- a term used for visitation of one parent with the minor child.
6. Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) – a restraining order may only be sought when someone is in immediate physical danger and/or threatened of such and when that person has a certain relationship (usually familial or romantic) with the aggressor in the situation.
7. Connecticut Child Support Guidelines- a formula used to determine the amount which one parent may be obligated to pay the other for child support. Child support is a general phrase and such funds may be used to pay for the child's food, clothing, help with household bills, etc. Daycare expenses, unreimbursed medical expenses and often tuition are excluded from child support and are separate concerns.
8. Parenting Education Program- the State of Connecticut requires every parent in a dissolution or custody matter to participate in a Parenting Education Program. The fee for this is \$125, but one may apply for a fee waiver if necessary. This should be completed within sixty (60) days of initiating a matter.
9. Pendente Lite- "before judgment"; this phrase indicates that it is a temporary motion, agreement, or order that occurs before the final judgment of a matter.
10. Modification – once an Order or Agreement is entered, such may only be modified if a substantial change in circumstances exists.
11. Contempt-if one is in violation of a Court Order, the other party may request that the offending party be held in "contempt" of court for violating the underlying order.
12. Mediation- a process by which a neutral third party assists the parties of the matter in coming to a mutually beneficial agreement. Each party may still have their own attorney during this process to represent his or her best interest
13. Family Relations Services-a court-offered service where Family Relations Officers weigh in on a dissolution or custody matter. Matters may be referred to Family Relations for mediation, a full evaluation, an issue-specific evaluation or a conflict resolution conference to assist in resolving outstanding issues.