

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination

ACR is a professional organization enhancing the practice and public understanding of conflict resolution.

ELDERCARING JUSTICE INITIATIVE ON ELDERCARING COORDINATION

In a ground breaking effort to improve the lives of elders and families involved in high conflict litigation, the ACR Task Force, composed of twenty US/Canadian organizations, collaborated the twenty statewide organizations in the Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC) to develop **ELDERCARING COORDINATION**: "...a dispute resolution option specifically for those high conflict cases involving issues related to the care and needs of elders. Eldercaring Coordination is to compliment, not replace, other services such as provision of legal information or legal representation, individual/family therapy, medical, psychological or psychiatric evaluation or mediation."

More information can be found at:

www.EldercaringCoordinationFL.org

Definition of Eldercaring Coordination: a dispute resolution process during which an Eldercaring Coordinator assists elders, legally authorized decision-makers, and others who participate by court order or invitation, to resolve disputes with high conflict levels that impact the elder's autonomy and safety by:

- Enabling more effective communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills;
- Offering education about elder care resources;
- Facilitating the creation and implementation of an elder care plan;
- Making recommendations for resolutions; and
- Making decisions within the scope of a court order or with the parties' prior approval.

Five states are participating as Pilot Projects in Eldercaring Coordination including Florida, Indiana, Idaho, Ohio and Minnesota, and are leading this effort to:

- help manage high conflict family dynamics so that the elder, family and stakeholders can address their non-legal issues independently from the court, eliminating the need for the court to micromanage their family decision-making and freeing precious judicial time;
- ready the elder and family to work with collaterals to address medical and financial issues, avoiding delays and resulting in better decisions for the elder;
- promote as fully as possible the self-determination of the elder;
- promote safety by monitoring situations at high risk for abuse or neglect;
- provide a support system for the elder and family during times of transition while encouraging positive intergenerational influences;
- addressing matters for which dispute resolution processes have been unavailable or have been ineffective;
- enhance the definition and perception of "family" within the court to include older families with aging parents;
- promote collaborations to conserve court and community resources;

An independent research team lead by Pamela Teaster, Ph.D., Director Center for Gerontology, and Megan Dolbin-MacNab, Ph.D., Director of Doctoral Program in Marriage and Family Therapy of Virginia Tech University are studying the process to enhance eldercaring coordination as it progresses.

**The ACR Guidelines for Eldercaring Coordination can be found at
ACRnet.org and at AFCCnet.org**

Qualifications of Eldercaring Coordinators (“ECs”). The ACR and FLAFCC Task Forces on Eldercaring Coordination held the Inaugural Trainings for Eldercaring Coordinators, hosted by the Ohio Supreme Court and the Florida Chapter of AFCC, based upon the consensus that professional credentials, experience and training were paramount to the success of this project:

1. An Eldercaring Coordinator shall be licensed or certified by a regulatory body of a jurisdiction, state or province, with at least a master’s degree and all of the following:
 - a. Completion of family mediation training certified or approved by the circuit, state or province or commensurate with the objectives established by the Association for Conflict Resolution; and
 - b. Completion of elder mediation training certified or approved by the circuit, state or province or commensurate with the objectives established by the Association for Conflict Resolution; and
 - c. Completion of eldercaring coordination training certified or approved by the circuit, state or province or commensurate with the objectives established by the Association for Conflict Resolution; and
 - d. Extensive practical experience in a profession relating to high conflict within families.

2. An Eldercaring Coordinator shall be psychologically and cognitively able to perform the requirements of the Eldercaring Coordinator role; and have no situation, condition, impairment, or disorder that prevents the ethical, responsible and effective exercise of the Eldercaring Coordinator role.

3. An Eldercaring Coordinator must decline a case, discontinue service and immediately report to the court and the parties if any disqualifying circumstances as noted above occur, or if he or she no longer meets the minimum qualifications.

The following organizations/entities composed the ACR Task Force instrumental in the development of eldercaring coordination, the support for the initial Pilot Sites and the Inaugural Training for Eldercaring Coordination:

Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Canada	National Adult Protective Services Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	National Aging Life Care Association
American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging	National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section	National Association of Social Workers
American Psychological Association	National Center for State Courts
Association of American Retired Persons	National Committee on the Prevention of Elder Abuse
Association of Conflict Resolution	National College of Probate Judges
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts	National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
Elder Justice Coalition	National Guardianship Association
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys	National Guardianship Network

Additional Pilot Project Sites Invited! The ACR Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination invites others who are interested in participating as a Project Site: one judge, or judges, in a specific circuit or county with the goal of referring at least 6 families who participate in eldercaring coordination OR a group of attorneys who will refer at least six cases to eldercaring coordination through agreed order. Please contact the Co-Chairs:

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