

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
County of Marin**



SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Competency Guidelines for participation of Mental Health Professionals

The Superior Court of Marin County is appointing mental health professionals (MHP) to serve as volunteers on interdisciplinary panels in contested child custody/access settlement conferences. The appointed MHP is expected to have specialized training, knowledge, and experience as outlined below. It is expected that the MHP would have competency in assessing issues and disputes that typically arise in child custody disputes, knowledge and experience to develop and articulate age-appropriate parenting plans, and skills to participate actively in a directed, problem-solving and educational format.

I. Competencies/Experience:

- A. Mental Health Professional licensed in California with a minimum of 5 years of clinical experience.
- B. Extensive experience working with divorcing families, as well as experience in providing services to parents and children in high conflict families.
- C. Mediation training and/or experience and negotiation skills.
- D. Consulting and parent education skills, including the ability to work as part of an interdisciplinary team and provide direct and timely feedback and interventions in a time-sensitive venue.
- E. Experience as a forensic psychologist and/or child custody evaluator will be helpful to the Court in formulating child custody recommendations but not required for appointment.

II. Clinical and research-based knowledge in the following areas:

- A. Developmental psychology, including normative psychosocial, emotional, and cognitive development and developmental delays and psychopathology.
- B. The range of age-appropriate time-share and parenting arrangements for divorced families.
- C. Impact of separation and divorce on parents, children, parent-child relationships and quality of parenting, and family dynamics.
- D. Dynamics and typical behaviors of high conflict parents, and specific impacts of entrenched parental conflict on child adjustment.
- E. Indicators of child abuse and neglect and knowledge of related reporting laws.
- F. Familiarity with the range of child-related disputes, issues, and problems of parents who use the services of the court to settle these disputes.
- G. Basic knowledge of Family Law and the Family Law Court system, including relevant statutes of the California family code and how they intersect with mental health issues.
- H. Familiarity with domestic violence and alcohol and substance abuse and potential impacts on appropriate post-divorce arrangements.