

**Roles and Services of Licensed Psychologists in
Child Custody/Parent Time, Co-Parenting, and Child Protection Matters**

These role descriptions are not endorsed by any organization or institution. Some of the roles tend to overlap and not all roles have legal definitions in Utah. There are professionals other than licensed psychologists, such as other licensed mental health professionals and attorneys, who may provide some of these services. Not all service providers necessarily adhere to these guidelines. Persons seeking services should ask for clarification of the service provider's perception of roles and limitations.

ROLE	SERVICES AND LIMITATIONS
Mediator	<p>The purpose is to help parties resolve conflicts and devise a parent plan. The mediator meets with both parties to facilitate decision making. Attorneys may or may not be present. Some mediators provide child-focused mediation which emphasizes the importance of making decisions that are in the child's best interest. Decisions are made by the parties themselves. The mediator does not make decisions. Proceedings are confidential. Mediators may not be called upon to give written or oral testimony. Mediators may be mental health professionals or attorneys or they may be mediators by profession. <i>See Utah Code 30-3-39.</i></p>
Custody/ Parent Time Evaluator	<p>The purpose is to investigate the needs of the child and the ability of each party to meet those needs. Findings are presented to the parties and their attorneys during a settlement conference. Recommendations may be provided upon request. Findings and recommendations are not confidential. A written report may be submitted to the court and the custody evaluator may be subpoenaed to testify. Custody/parent time evaluators are mental health professionals. <i>See Utah Court Rule 4-903.</i></p>
Special Master	<p>The purpose is to manage conflict between parties and reduce related litigation. The special master makes decisions that are consistent with existing orders or the spirit of existing orders when the parents cannot agree. This work is not confidential. The court can be made aware of issues that have arisen and decisions that have been made. Special masters may be attorneys or mental health professionals. <i>See "The Appointment of Special Masters in High Conflict Divorces," Utah State Bar Journal, Vol. 15, No. 6, pgs. 16-21. See Utah Code 58-39a-2(1)(b).</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Parent Coordinator</p>	<p>In some states, the term <i>parent coordinator</i> and <i>special master</i> are used interchangeably. In Utah, parent coordinators are typically more highly and personally involved with parties than special masters might be. Parent coordinators help parties resolve conflicts about all aspects of co-parenting. They consult with and advise the parents about how the children’s needs can best be served. The role is not primarily investigative. The parent coordinator may meet and support the children during the course of the consultation process. Recommendations are not binding unless the parent coordinator is given decision making authority by the court. Parent coordinators are mental health professionals. The work of parent coordinators is not confidential. They may report to the court and their reports may influence future court orders. <i>See Utah Court Rule 4-509.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Co-Parenting Counselor</p>	<p>The work is similar to or the same as the work provided by a parent coordinator, but the work is not court-ordered. It is undertaken voluntarily by parents/guardians who desire help with any and all aspect of parenting and co-parenting. The work is similar to the work of a mediator in that parties agree not to subpoena the counselor to testify. This work is not intended for high-conflict cases.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Therapist</p>	<p>The purpose is to provide confidential mental health treatment to a child or adult. Confidentiality may be waived so the therapist can share information with other involved professionals. However, therapists working with individuals who are, or who become, court-involved may not offer an opinion about custody or parent time. The role of therapist should not be used as a means of helping parents who are having co-parenting difficulties. It should not be used as the primary method of assisting children whose parents are in conflict. “Safe haven” therapy is totally confidential; parties and their attorneys agree in advance not to subpoena the therapist. Therapy, especially safe haven therapy, might be used in concert with a Parent Coordinator but should not be used in place of a Parent Coordinator.</p>

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