



Early Communication

by Scott D. Abel

It is difficult for married parents to effectively communicate and plan in relation to their children. That difficulty is even greater when parents are separated. Simply because the parents are no longer living together does not end the need for effective communication and planning.

The need for communication is required in all facets of parenting – from the mundane to the important. Parents should communicate and discuss what activities they wish to have their children enrolled in for the upcoming year. Each spring, the parents should talk about the anticipated fall schedule for their children.

The discussions should involve what nights the activities will be on, and whether they conflict with any access rights. The parents should discuss who is going to pay for the activities, and who will be able to claim any such expenses for tax purposes.

At the same time, the parents should attempt to discuss issues relating to summer care and control, so that each parent can make plans and book their holidays. Again, this should be done in an effort to avoid any conflicts of holiday times between parents.

If either of the parents wishes to take a trip with

the children, discussions should take place as to when the trip will be and whether the trip will interfere with any periods of care of the children. If so, how will that time be made up or adjusted.

While these discussions may not be the most important topics in the world to you or me, at that moment, for those parents and children, there is nothing more important. That is why open and respectful communication is the key to effective parenting, when those parents have separated.

The need for early and effective communication is especially important when issues of mobility are

involved. The sooner one parent decides to communicate to the other parent of their intention to move, the better.

For the parent that is moving, they want to know as soon as possible whether or not there is going to be disagreement regarding the move. If there is disagreement, this gives the parent wishing to move sufficient time to obtain an order from the court to permit the move.

The parent wishing to move does not wish to accept a job, and move with the children, only to be ordered to return the

children by the Court.

For the parent that is not moving, they require time to consider whether they do wish to oppose the move, and if so, have the matter heard by the Court. Often times these issues require a trial in order for a judge to make a decision, and it takes time for the parties to be ready to proceed to a trial.

Mediation services are also available to assist the parties in communicating effectively. The mediator is there to ensure that the communication is respectful, and focused on the issues, rather than

focusing on the parties. Once people learn how to communicate effectively in mediation, it is hoped that those skills can be used outside of the mediation setting.

While the wheels of justice grind surely, they often grind slowly. The earlier discussions take place, regardless of the topic, the more time there is available for the parties to attempt to resolve matters, or for the Court to impose an answer.