



## ADR Methods: Mediation and Collaborative Law

### Mediation and Collaborative Family Law

When couples decide to divorce, taking the matter to court is not the only way to end a marriage. Because litigation can be lengthy and contentious, many clients seek a more amicable way to settle their issues without resorting to the court system. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods such as mediation and collaborative law tend to offer a quicker, more flexible and less combative process. The attorneys in our Family Law Group are experienced in using mediation and collaborative law to help parties resolve routine and challenging family law matters.

#### Mediation

Mediation is a confidential, informal process whereby the disputing parties meet with a neutral third party, known as a “mediator.” Unlike a judge, the mediator does not render a decision in favor of one party or the other. Rather, the mediator works with both parties to reach a mutually agreeable resolution which is then submitted to the court for approval.

The attorneys in our Family Law Group frequently serve as mediators in family law matters. When we mediate a case, our role is to help both parties come to an agreement on the terms of their divorce or other family law-related matters. It is important to understand that when we serve as mediator, we do not provide legal advice to either party. Instead, we use our training and experience to help facilitate an amicable settlement of the disputed issues. In these situations, we encourage each party to obtain their own independent legal counsel during the mediation process to help understand their legal rights and before signing any final agreements. When we are not acting as the mediator in a case, our attorneys do serve as independent counsel, guiding and advising our clients throughout the course of the mediation process.

#### Collaborative Law

Collaborative law is a dispute resolution process whereby the divorcing parties commit to resolving their divorce and all related issues cooperatively without litigation. The parties use specially-trained lawyers and meet in four-way meetings (both spouses with their legal counsel and often jointly-retained financial experts and other professionals) to reach a marriage settlement agreement that meets the needs of each spouse.

The attorneys in our Family Law Group are trained in collaborative family law and John N. Demas is a certified collaborative law attorney. We draw upon our knowledge and experience in the field to help our clients resolve a wide array of issues related to divorce, including child custody, visitation, property division, and support obligations.

For further information on the capabilities of the Family Law Group, contact **Effie G. Alexander** at 412-392-5590 or [ealexander@dmclaw.com](mailto:ealexander@dmclaw.com).