

SOCIAL EARLY NEUTRAL EVALUATION ("SENE")

SENE:

- Is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) that may be recommended and ordered by the Court at any time between the Initial Case Conference ("ICC") and the pretrial settlement conference.
- Is an expedited and confidential evaluative process designed to facilitate and encourage prompt dispute resolution in Family Court custody and parenting time cases.
- Allows each parent to present their case, in an abbreviated form, to experienced family law professionals (attorneys, counselors, evaluators, etc.) who serve as neutral evaluators.
- Offers the evaluative impressions of the family law professionals to the parents.

BENEFITS OF SENE:

- Both parents will hear knowledgeable, neutral opinions as to the likelihood of each parent's respective requests about custody and parenting time being successful at a trial.
- Your case can be resolved quickly and fairly.
- It is paid for by you and your spouse using a sliding fee scale based upon your total income, which can further reduce the cost.
- You can save money, time and heartache.

THE SENE PROCESS:

- The evaluation will be conducted by a male/female ENE team. Each member will be an experienced family law professional. The two parties will be allowed to pick their own ENE team members.
- The first meeting with the team typically occurs within 7 days from appointment by the Court and is typically completed within 30 days.
- Attorneys and parties meet with the team, and each is asked to present the important issues in the case.
- Unless more information is needed, the team provides immediate feedback about each party's case. Settlement possibilities are then discussed.
- The team may gather additional information, as necessary, and may re-interview the parties, interview the child/ren and/or gather limited collateral data. If so, a second meeting with the team may be held for the team to provide its' assessment and recommendations.
- The team may communicate with the Court during the ENE for the limited purpose of facilitating case management, and obtaining direction from the Court on how to address an issue that needs further assessment.
- If a full or partial settlement is reached, it will be reduced to writing and forwarded to the Court.
- If the case does not settle through the ENE process, the team may identify important issues that need additional study. The team will inform the Court that the case did not settle, but *will not* report the content of the ENE to the Court. With the parties' written consent, the team may suggest another ADR process to the Court, such as mediation, that may be helpful in reaching settlement.
- The Court may consult with the parties and their attorneys to decide the next step, which may be mediation and/or expedited evaluation of the certain issues, or a full custody evaluation.
- ENE team members may not be called as witnesses. The recommendations of the team and any statements of settlement or compromise made in the process are confidential, and not communicated to the Court or admitted into court (except as part of an agreed settlement).