

# EARLY NEUTRAL EVALUATIONS (ENE)

CARVER COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

*An efficient, compassionate and effective way  
to work through your family court case.*

## **What is Early Neutral Evaluation or ENE?**

This program connects parties with judges and neutral evaluators early in the court process to provide the opportunity to resolve issues surrounding their family court case. Parties can choose to participate in a Financial ENE (“FENE”) to resolve their financial disputes, a Social ENE (SENE) to resolve custody and parenting time disputes regarding their children, or both.

## **What are the benefits of ENE?**

Statistics show that parties who participate in ENE have many benefits:

- Focus is kept on the children if children are involved
- Working through issues they are more satisfied with the final decision
- Parties will spend less time in court
- Parties spend less money on their case
- Dramatically reduces the amount of time to complete the case

## **How does the process work?**

When Papers are filed with the court, the parties (or their attorneys) will receive a notice to attend an Initial Case Management Conference (ICMC) where the process of ENE will be discussed to see if the parties wish to proceed. This conference will be set about 2 weeks from the case being opened with the court.

## **What happens at the ICMC?**

The parties will hear options about different ways their family court case can proceed, either through traditional litigation and trial or through ENE. If the parties choose to use the ENE process, they will select neutrals to help them resolve the issues. If the parties choose to litigate, the case will be set on for a pretrial, parenting classes (if the case involves children) and mediation may be required.

## **What do I need to bring to the initial conference (ICMC)?**

You will receive a form from the court with information to submit before the first meeting. This will assist the judge and the parties in determining if ENE is appropriate for your case. It will also allow the court to determine what issues the party may need to work through and what the cost will be.

## **Who are the Neutrals?**

For cases involving custody or parenting matters, the parties may choose from a list of neutrals who are a male-female team. For cases involving financial issues, one neutral is chosen. All neutrals are experienced in family court. The neutrals will evaluate the case and encourage the parties to find common ground.

## **What is the cost?**

At the time of the first Conference (ICMC) the cost will be determined based upon the party's income.

## **Do I need an attorney?**

You are not required to have an attorney for the ENE process. As with any legal situation you may want to consult with an attorney for legal advice. Please note the court staff is limited to helping with procedures and cannot give you legal advice.

## **Other resources:**

Judicial Branch web site:  
[www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov)

Self Help Center web site:  
[www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp](http://www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp)

Court Forms web site:  
[www.mncourts.gov/forms](http://www.mncourts.gov/forms)

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