

Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC) Eldercaring Coordination Initiative

Eight Florida Circuits are currently piloting Eldercaring Coordination: a dispute resolution option specifically for those high conflict cases involving issues related to the care and needs of elders. Eldercaring Coordination is to compliment, not replace, other services such as provision of legal information or legal representation, individual/family therapy, medical, psychological or psychiatric evaluation or mediation. Eldercaring Coordination will concentrate on reducing the level of conflict in Florida cases so that family members are able to focus more productively on the issues at hand and work with others in their support system to provide personal care, health treatment, legal advice, advance directives, guidance and planning.

***The FLAFCC Guidelines for Eldercaring Coordinators can be found at [FLAFCC.org](http://www.flafcc.org/Documents/FLAFCC-Guidelines-for-Eldercaring-Coordination-11-26-14.pdf) or:
<http://www.flafcc.org/Documents/FLAFCC-Guidelines-for-Eldercaring-Coordination-11-26-14.pdf>***

***The concept of Eldercaring Coordination has also been endorsed by the
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts and the Association for Conflict Resolution.***

The Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC) Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination developed Guidelines for Eldercaring Coordination in collaboration with the Association for Conflict Resolution, and in July 2015 trained Florida's first 24 eldercaring coordinators to service the first eight Pilot Project Sites. The FLAFCC Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination was comprised of representatives of the following organizations/entities:

- Department of Children and Families Adult Protective Services
- Elder Justice Center
- Florida Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
- Florida Attorney General's Office
- Florida Bar Elder Section
- Florida Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts
- Florida Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers
- Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Florida Dispute Resolution Center
- Florida Health Care Association
- Florida Legal Services
- Florida Psychological Association
- Florida State Guardianship Association
- Florida State Ombudsman
- National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
- National Patient Advocate, Inc.
- Mediation Training Group
- Office of the Public Guardian
- Stetson University College of Law Center for Excellence in Elder Law
- University of South Florida Conflict Resolution Collaborative

Definition of Eldercaring Coordination. Eldercaring coordination is a dispute resolution process during which an eldercaring coordinator assists elders, legally authorized decision-makers, and others who participate by court order or invitation to resolve disputes with high conflict levels in a manner that respects the elder's need for autonomy and safety by:

- Facilitating more effective communication, negotiation, and problem-solving skills;
- Offering education about elder care resources;
- Facilitating the creation, modification, or implementation of an elder care plan if such a plan is necessary to reach a resolution;
- Making recommendations for resolutions; and
- Making decisions within the scope of a court order or with the parties' prior approval.

VISION FOR ELDERCARING COORDINATION:

- help manage high conflict family dynamics so that the elder, family and stakeholders can address their non-legal issues independently from the court, eliminating the need for the court to make the decisions that should be made by the family;
- ready the elder and family to work with collaterals to address medical /or financial issues, avoiding delays and resulting in better decisions for the elder;
- promote the self-determination of the elder to the extent of his or her ability as fully as possible;
- promote safety by monitoring situations at high risk for abuse or neglect;
- provide a support system for the elder and family during times of transition;
- free precious judicial time by addressing matters for which dispute resolution processes have been unavailable or have been ineffective;
- promote interdivisional court collaborations to conserve court and community resources
- enhance the definition and perception of “family” within the court to include older families with aging parents;
- expand the use of “coordination” as a dispute resolution method to address high conflict cases involving various situations and issues.

CURRENT TASK FORCE GOALS INCLUDE:

1. Addition of more Pilot Sites and trained qualified eldercaring coordinators
2. Development of Speakers Bureau and Consultants List
3. Identification and cultivation of funding for research, education, development, and scholarships for indigent families
4. Dissemination of assessment outcomes by nationally recognized independent research team through use of pre- and post-surveys to inform continued improvements to the process

ON THE NATIONAL FRONT:

Pilot Sites are also located in Idaho, Indiana, Ohio and Minnesota. The Association for Conflict Resolution Task Force, composed of 20 US/Canadian organizations, has launched The Elder Justice Initiative on Eldercaring Coordination which continues to provide support and guidance to all project sites, who are working jointly, striving to improve the lives of elders and their families.

FLORIDA ELDERCARING COORDINATION PILOT PROJECT SITES:

Eight Florida Circuits (5th, 7th, 9th, 13th, 15th, 17th and 18th) are currently leading this effort. The FLAFCC Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination invites others in Florida who are interested in participating as a Project Site: one judge, or judges, in a specific circuit or county with the goal of referring at least 6 families who participate in eldercaring coordination OR a group of attorneys who will refer at least six cases to eldercaring coordination through agreed order. Additionally, please contact the Co-Chairs if you are interested in becoming an Eldercaring Coordinator in your area.

More information can be found on: www.EldercaringCoordinationFL.org

For assistance and inquiries, please contact FLAFCC Task Force on Eldercaring Coordination Co-Chairs:

Linda Fieldstone, M.Ed.
Family Resolutions, LLC
Tel.: 305-206-8445
LindaFieldstone@Outlook.com

The Honorable Michelle Morley
Circuit Judge
Tel.: 352-569-6960
Mmorley@circuit5.org