**Court Appointments in Domestic Relations Cases Involving Children**

Senate Bill 12-056

Senate Sponsorship: Carroll

House Sponsorship: Holbert

**WHAT CHANGES DOES THE BILL MAKE TO THE LAW?**

**(Law effective July 1, 2012)**

* The bill confers the court discretion in determining payment of a retainer by the parties for parental responsibilities evaluations.
* Parenting coordinators are required to be independent, neutral third parties. Permits the courts to consider a claim of domestic violence when addressing the ability of the parties to engage in parent coordination.
* Requires persons serving in any domestic relations court appointment to disclose financial, familial, or social relationships they have with any parties involved in the case within seven days of their appointment. Upon disclosure, the parties in the case may object to an appointment where they believe a conflict of interest exists, or the court, upon its own motion, may terminate the appointment. The court has seven days following an objection by a party to appoint another person or confirm the appointment. If no party objects, the appointment is deemed to be confirmed.

**WHY DO WE NEED THIS?**

***Protect Families as Consumers of Court Services***

* Abused parents often do not have practical access to marital assets at the outset of a case due to the financial control tactics of abusers. Thus, victims of domestic violence often lack access to a parental responsibilities evaluation when unable to deposit the full retainer as the law currently requires.
* It is critical that parenting coordinators are required to be neutral third parties with an independent perspective, especially when working with abusive parents seeking to maintain control over abused parents through manipulation of this role.
* A claim of domestic violence should be sufficient to the courts consideration of the parties’ ability to engage in parent coordination. Through no fault of their own, many victims of domestic violence do not have documented evidence of abuse, which should not result in the appointment of parenting coordinators against their wishes.
* As consumers of court services, families have a right to a transparent process and to be informed of and to object to the appointment of persons to their case due to relationship based conflicts of interest.

***For more information, contact Amy Miller of the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence at 303.962.0933 or*** ***amiller@ccadv.org*** ***or Annmarie Jensen of Jensen Public Affairs at 720.999.4765 or*** ***aj@jensenpublicaffairs.com***