

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 07-06**

**(Parent Education Pilot Program)**

**WHEREAS**, in 2005 the Family Court of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia received 1305 complaints for custody, as well as 1692 complaints for contested divorce and legal separation, many of which involved contested custody issues; and approximately 70% of cases involving contested custody issues proceeded without the assistance of counsel;

**WHEREAS**, a national model for educating parents on the impact on children of high conflict custody proceedings has been developed which provides parents and other caretakers involved in contested custody litigation with education, skills, and mediation services to: (1) understand the harm their conflict causes children, (2) understand the importance of insulating children from the conflict, (3) help the parties develop conflict-free ways to communicate with each other, (4) generally help the children cope with the emotional stress and practical consequences of a separated family and (5) foster healthy co-parenting relationships; and

**WHEREAS**, the Domestic Relations, Paternity and Support Subcommittee of the Family Court Implementation Committee has created a pilot project known as the Program for Agreement and Cooperation in Contested Custody Cases (PAC) that includes educational seminars for parents and other caregivers and, at an age appropriate level, for children based on the national model:

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is, by the Court,

**ORDERED**, that a pilot program known as the Program for Agreement and Cooperation in Contested Custody Cases (PAC) is hereby established in the manner set forth below:

- The PAC program will be instituted as a pilot program on one of the six Domestic Relations Calendars that handle divorce, custody, and legal separation cases in the Family Court;
- The PAC program will apply to all litigants involved in cases that have custody or visitation as a contested issue on that calendar. In cases involving domestic violence, parents and other caretakers will be screened to determine the manner of participation in the PAC program;
- Whenever litigation is commenced that includes an issue of contested child custody, the case will be assigned to the PAC program docket and a Notice of Hearing and Order to Appear ("NOHOTA") will be issued that includes a scheduled date for a parenting education seminar and a scheduled appointment for mediation at the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division;

