Published on 17 November 2026

PARENTING COORDINATION PROGRAMME 101

Support Co-parenting One Conversation at a Time

[2026] SAL Prac 33

Parenting continues well after the conclusion of divorce proceedings. Court orders cannot provide for every scenario involving a child's care that could arise within a family unit. Whilst court orders are made with the child's welfare in mind and ought to be executed with a commonsensical approach, parents often disagree on the interpretation of such orders, particularly if they contain gaps or ambiguities. This article discusses the Parenting Coordination Programme as a means to help parents resolve such issues without having to resort to litigation.

Raymond **YEO**[1]
Accredited Mediator (Family Panel), Collaborative Family Practitioner, Principal Mediator (Singapore Mediation Centre);
MiKK Trained Cross-Border Family Mediator;
Accredited Mediator (Regent's University London, School of Psychotherapy & Psychology);
Child Representative, Parenting Coordinator (Family Justice Courts);
Advocate & Solicitor; Barrister-At-Law (Lincoln's Inn).

I. Introduction – post-divorce parenting disputes

1 "Dad Fails in Bid for Court Order Compelling Ex-wife to Take Their 2 Kids to Church Camp". This was a headline in a local

---

1 This article sets out the author's personal views and thoughts as a practising family lawyer and as a Parenting Coordinator in Singapore. These are not intended to reflect the positions and views of the Family Justice Courts, other members of the Bar, and specifically fellow practising family lawyers or the other Parenting Coordinators in Singapore. The author thanks Ms Lim Hui Min, Director of Legal Aid (Legal Aid Bureau, Ministry of Law) as well as Ms Tricia Ho, Lecturer (School of Law, Singapore University of Social Sciences) for their guidance and support for this article. However, any errors and omissions are entirely the author's.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

newspaper in May 2026.[2] In this case involving divorced parties, the father sought a court order compelling his ex-wife (the care and control parent) to ensure that their two children attended a four-day camp, transport them to and from the camp daily, and also bear half the registration fees and camp costs. The ex-wife objected, on the basis that it would interfere with the children's schedule, amongst other reasons. The judge in this case declined to make the order sought by the father and commented that it was not appropriate for a parent to use the coercive powers of the court to compel his children's participation in a religious activity over the other parent's objections. The judge also stated that in family disputes touching on religion, identity and conscience, judicial restraint is often the wiser choice.[3]

2 This case illustrates how parenting disputes can arise even after the divorce is over and the custody, care and control and access orders have been made. Not every parenting disagreement over child related issues requires court intervention to break the impasse, as this might descend into judicial micromanagement of the child's and the parents' lives. The court is not intended to function as a day-to-day surrogate parent tasked with resolving every ordinary parenting disagreement. This is not an optimal use of state resources. The child's own parents should be the ones making decisions for the child.

3 The question that arises is how parents could resolve such issues between themselves without turning to the court for a determination at the first instance. Some divorced parties continue to be mired in conflict over seemingly routine issues concerning the children. These include issues such as:

> (a) when exactly school holidays are considered to start (*eg*, whether it is the evening before the first day that the child does not have to attend school, or only on that first day, or the last school day (usually a Friday), or

2 Lydia Lam, "Dad Fails in Bid for Court Order Compelling Ex-wife to Take Their 2 Kids to Church Camp", *CNA* (26 May 2026) <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/father-court-order-children-church-camp-6141896> (accessed 29 September 2026).

3 *YDQ v YDR* [2026] SGFC 74, *per* District Judge Kow Keng Siong.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

the Saturday morning if the last school day was a Friday, or according to the Ministry of Education's schedule);

(b) where the pick-up should be when one parent moves to another home;

(c) what happens to an after-school access arrangement when a child is sick and is not in school that day; and

(d) what happens when a public holiday falls on a day when the other parent also has an entitlement to the child under a different provision.

4 Acrimony and bitterness often arise when one parent has moved on with a new family set-up, requiring routines to be adjusted. Parents having different ideals, goals and objectives often disagree over the child's schedule and activities. Disputes may also arise as to the choice of medical professionals when a child is taken ill. Court proceedings would be an expensive and time-consuming way for the parents to deal with these disputes – without any guaranteed outcomes.

II. Parenting Coordination Programme

5 To help such parents resolve such parenting disputes, the Family Justice Courts created the Parenting Coordination Programme. The Programme was introduced by Sundaresh Menon CJ at the Family Justice Courts Work Plan 2016. At that point in time, 24 lawyers had been trained as Parenting Coordinators and went on to participate in the launch of the pilot of the Programme in the second half of 2016.[4] Fast forward ten years, the Programme is no longer in its pilot phase but is a permanent Programme,[5] with legislation governing its framework and procedure. At present, there is an existing WhatsApp chat thread with about 29 Parenting Coordinators,

4 Amir Hussain, "Family Justice Courts to Introduce Programme to Protect Children of Divorcing Couples", *The Straits Times* (6 April 2016).

5 See paras 10–12 below.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

comprising both family law practitioners as well as mental health professionals.

6 It should be noted that the Parenting Coordinator does not play the same role as a Child Representative. A Child Representative interviews the parents and their children to prepare a report to assist the court in making orders in relation to custody care and control as well as access. A Parenting Coordinator is a neutral third-party professional appointed by the court to help parents address or resolve disagreements or disputes relating to their children after orders are made in relation to the care arrangements of the children.

7 The Parenting Coordinator helps parties build an effective co-operative parenting arrangement for the children. This requires the Parenting Coordinator to take on multiple roles: (a) an educator for the parents; (b) a case manager who monitors and guides them through the various developments in their co-parenting journey; (c) a facilitator to help the parents communicate with each other; and (d) a conflict manager who helps mediate their differences. However, in Singapore, unlike other jurisdictions such as the US,[6] the Parenting Coordinator is not a decision maker for the parents' disputes.

8 The primary role of the Parenting Coordinator is not to replace the court but to assist in the implementation of existing court orders in the best interests of the children. The author has encountered disputing parents who view the Parenting Coordinator as their newly appointed lawyer and expect the Parenting Coordinator to deal with all outstanding ancillary matter issues, including the division of assets and a party's refusal to comply with the sale process. Some parents also use the opportunity to complain about their lawyers or their spouses' lawyers. The Parenting Coordinator must draw a firm boundary, in order not to be drawn into such issues. On occasion, sessions

6 In the US, the Parenting Coordinator's roles are described to include educator, case manager, facilitator, conflict manager, and if within the scope of the court order, decision-maker; see Wilma J Henry, Linda Fieldstone & Kelly Bohac "Parenting Coordination and Court Relitigation: a Case Study" (2009) 47(4) *Family Court Review* 682.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

with the parents would inevitably transform into a platform for one or both parents to complain about the other. A parent may also take the opportunity to try and "vary" the existing court orders so as to get a second bite at getting the orders they had tried and failed to obtain during the ancillary matters or appeal hearing. Parenting Coordinators must be mindful that their role is to assist the parents to communicate with each other and to comply with court orders already made. They should not be drawn into any attempt by either parent to rewrite the court orders, even if they have their own views on how the court orders could be improved. The Parenting Coordinator cannot and should not take the role of the court by influencing or guiding parents to an outcome that overrides or supersedes what has already been ordered.

9 In Singapore, the role of the Parenting Coordinator is carried out by trained family lawyers as well as mental health professionals with expertise in the psychology and counselling fields dealing with family disputes. As to which type of professional might be more beneficial and effective in a particular case depends very much on the facts and circumstances of that case – and perhaps on the particular issues arising in that case[7].

III. Relevant legislation and legal framework

10 The Parenting Coordination Programme's legislative foundation is found in Pt 10A, Div 4 of the Women's Charter 1961,[8] specifically ss 139I and 139J, which empower the court to advise parties and/or their children to attend mediation or counselling or a family support programme if the court is of the view that doing so would be in the interest of the parties and/or their children.

7 See the case detailed in para 23 below, for an example of where a professional trained in psychology or counselling might possibly have achieved a different and better outcome than a legally trained professional, for the specific issue involved.

8 2020 Rev Ed.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

11 Part 13 r 1 of the Family Justice (General) Rules 2024 provides further guidance with its statutory definition of the Parenting Coordination Programme as a family support programme set up for the purpose of addressing or resolving any dispute about any parenting matter between spouses or former spouses, arising from any relationship issue or relationship problem between the spouses or former spouses, or between a parent and a child.

12 Pursuant to the same set of Rules, P 13 r 3(1) empowers the court to appoint a Parenting Coordinator to carry out the Parenting Coordination Programme for the parties. In short, the Family Justice Courts may make an order for the appointment of a Parenting Coordinator in cases involving orders made under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934[9] or the provisions of the Women's Charter 1961.[10] However, it is to be noted that the Programme does not apply to cases where the parties involved in the proceedings are not married to each other or if one party is a family member other than the spouse or former spouse.

13 A parenting matter can include any matter relating to the custody care and control of a child, the right of access to a child or any issues concerning the welfare of the child.

14 The Family Justice Courts' website[11] states that the court will make an order for a Parenting Coordinator to be appointed if all the following conditions are met:

(a) The participation by the parties in the Programme is necessary for the welfare of a child.

(b) The parties will benefit from the Parenting Coordinator's assistance.

(c) Either or both parties are financially able to afford the Parenting Coordinator's fees.

9 2020 Rev Ed.
10 2020 Rev Ed.
11 Singapore Courts, "Parenting Coordinators" <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/legal-help-support/parenting-coordinators> (accessed 29 September 2026).

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

15 The Parenting Coordinator must have the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration. This is entrenched in P 13 r 4 of the Family Justice (General) Rules 2024.

III. Process and procedure

16 The process of appointing a Parenting Coordinator is set out in para 99 of the Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024:

> (a) Upon the making of an Order for the parties to participate in a Parenting Coordination Programme, the Registrar will select a Parenting Coordinator from the court's panel.[12]
>
> (b) The court will issue a notice of acceptance/non-acceptance to the selected member by e-mail together with a copy of the court orders. The member can elect to either accept or decline such an appointment.[13]
>
> (c) Upon acceptance of the appointment, the Parenting Coordinator will receive a notification e-mail from the Registrar providing the names and contact details of the parties and their respective solicitors. The e-mail would also include a Parenting Coordinator's Checklist and a Co-Parenting Questionnaire.[14]
>
> (d) The Parenting Coordinator is tasked to contact the parties to arrange the first parenting coordination session within ten days of receipt of the notification. The parties are then required to complete the Co-Parenting Questionnaire prior to the first Parenting Coordination Programme session.[15]
>
> (e) It is also provided that the Parenting Coordinator is to contact the parties directly and *vice versa*,

12 Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024 para 99(1).
13 Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024 para 99(1).
14 Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024 para 99(3).
15 Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024 para 99(4).

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

notwithstanding that parties may be represented by solicitors.[16]

17 The Co-Parenting Questionnaires to be completed by the parties will give the Parenting Coordinator a better insight into their thought processes and provide essential information and a summary of the children's activities. In the author's practice as a Parenting Coordinator, once the Questionnaires are received from both parties, he will convene a joint session with both parties with the purpose of sharing with them the role of a Parenting Coordinator and what the author hopes to achieve for both of them in this role. Thereafter, arrangements are made for separate sessions for the Parenting Coordinator to spend time with the children and the parties individually. If there is more than one child, and depending on the age of the children, arrangements can be made to speak with the children individually or jointly subject to their comfort level.

18 Depending on the scope of the court order for the appointment of a Parenting Coordinator, the court may also request that the Parenting Coordinator provide a progress summary which is confidential and made available only to the court. It will not be shared with the parties and/or their lawyers.

19 The Parenting Coordination Programme ends after the period stipulated in the Court Order. The appointment can also be terminated by the parties, or earlier by the Parenting Coordinator via an application with reasons which will be considered by the court.[17]

IV. Advantages

20 In high-conflict cases, a Parenting Coordinator, being a neutral third party, and hopefully having built a good rapport with each parent, can act as an intermediary and buffer between

16 Family Justice Courts Practice Directions 2024 para 99(4).

17 Singapore Courts, "Parenting Coordinators" <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/legal-help-support/parenting-coordinators> (accessed 29 September 2026).

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

the parents, helping to convey their concerns and requests to each other in a constructive manner. He or she can tailor and generate possible options and solutions premised on the differing needs of each family and guide the parents to a resolution of the dispute. This is important, given that every family unit is dynamic and subject to changes and fresh challenges and issues as the children grow. If both parties are able to reach an agreement on the issues in dispute with the help of a Parenting Coordinator, either party may then elect to file an application to vary the existing orders to record the consent settlement terms, or to simply abide by their agreement in good faith.

21 This would reduce repeated applications to court for minor issues which should not require judicial intervention. This not only saves the state resources, but it also means that the parents do not need to spend time and effort writing affidavits, wait for the applications to be heard, or incur the costs of engaging counsel for the litigation. This would also avoid any disruptions to the child's routine and the exacerbation of tensions in the family.

22 As an example of a successful case in this regard was one case handled by the author where the parents squabbled over a pending overseas trip with the child, including the timing and venue for handover of the child's passport. It was the very first overseas trip for the father and the child on their own and both parents were anxious. The father was fearful that the mother would not hand over the passport in time for the trip and the mother was fearful that the passport would not be returned after the trip. The author spoke to both parents at length and managed their concerns and expectations. Following this, the child's passport was handed over in time for the trip and returned in a timely fashion after the trip. Most importantly, the child had an enjoyable holiday.

23 In another case handled by the author, the mother had a new partner, and the biological father disapproved of how his child addressed the mother's new partner as "daddy", while he called the biological father "papa". The biological father was unhappy with the "daddy" term despite the mother's assurance to

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

the child as well as the biological father that the biological father would always be the child's father and that the two different terms were how the child differentiated the two father figures in his life. This issue remained a sticking point between the parents until, after various sessions with the author, the mother told the child to address the mother's partner as "uncle". It was a legally acceptable and very practical compromise, and all parties could move on with their lives. The author wonders whether a Parenting Coordinator trained in the psychological and counselling field might have been better able to assist the parents to come to a compromise, given that the matter appeared to involve deeper psychological issues about identity and self-esteem and the role of relationships in determining these issues.

V. Disadvantages

24 Not everyone can afford to take part in the Parenting Coordination Programme, due to the costs involved. The court will take into account the financial ability of each parent before ordering the Programme. From the author's own experience, quite a number of clients have declined to take part in the Programme because of its costs.

25 If the court orders the Programme, it will be mindful of the parents' financial situation in determining the rate as well as the proportion each parent should bear. The fees for a court-appointed Parenting Coordinator could be as much as $400 per hour (ranges from $250 per hour to $400 per hour, depending on the seniority of the Parenting Coordinator).

26 In the case of *VEV v VEW*[18] involving two young children (daughter aged four and son aged two), the court ordered the fees for the Parenting Coordinator (being $400 per hour) to be apportioned 80:20 between the parties. In this case, the Parenting Coordinator was appointed for a duration of one year.

18 [2020] SGFC 6.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

27 In the case of *UDT v UDU*[19] involving three children (aged 13, 15 and 18), the court ordered that the fees for the Parenting Coordinator (being $400 per hour) be apportioned 25:75 between the parties. In this case, the Parenting Coordinator was appointed for a duration of 12 months.

28 In a specific case that the author handled as a Parenting Coordinator, although the fees were not stipulated, it was provided for in the court order that the fees were to be borne equally between the parties and the appointment was for a period of six months, which could be extended by agreement between the parties. The author wonders if the Family Justice Courts or other organisation could set up a means-tested scheme where the less financially privileged could benefit from the services of a Parenting Coordinator, acting on a low *bono* or *pro bono* basis?

29 The costs issue aside, Parenting Coordinators in Singapore do not have any authority or power to make decisions between the parents no matter how minor the issue in dispute may be. They must resolve all issues through consensus and agreement between the parents, which can be very challenging with especially high-conflict parents. If no agreement can be arrived at, then the parents would have to file a court application to resolve the dispute.

30 A final disadvantage, or rather, constraint, is that not all cases are appropriate for the engagement of a Parenting Coordinator, *eg*, if there is a history of domestic violence, as this creates a power imbalance between the parties. Particularly high-conflict cases might also not be suitable, as the success of a Parenting Coordinator resolving disputes in such cases is completely reliant on parental co-operation. This will not be easily achieved when there is entrenched hostility and when one or both parents remain intentionally uncooperative during the process.

19 [2017] SGFC 85.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

VII. Reforms

31 On this issue of decision-making by the Parenting Coordinator, in certain states in the US, the Parenting Coordinator has the power and authority to make binding decisions. This is covered in their Parenting Coordinator Guidelines.[20] For example, in the Superior Court of Monterey, the powers of a Parenting Coordinator and the scope of his or her authority is categorised into two levels. The first level confers authority on the Parenting Coordinator to make binding decisions on matters relating to daily routines, management of services provided by third parties and minor alterations in the visitation schedule. The second level confers authority to make recommendations to the court on issues that have longer term impact on the child's best interests, short of changes in physical or legal custody, or that substantially limit parents' access to their children.

32 At present, Singapore adopts a conservative approach in that Parenting Coordinators do not have decision-making authority. Unless both parties are prepared to resolve matters amicably, this restriction means that persistent disputes may remain unresolved with a need for re-litigation. Whilst this preserves judicial authority to decide over disputes, it reduces the practical objective of the Parenting Coordination Programme. This is especially so with high-conflict cases where an agreement is not likely to be reached.

33 A potential reform may be to consider allowing Parenting Coordinators to have the decision-making authority on parental disputes relating to day-to-day routines and on minor issues without departing from the substantive existing orders. This will allow the Parenting Coordinator to carry out the work effectively without having to depend on the parties' voluntary compliance and agreement. Alternatively, the parents may reach a consensus to have the Parenting Coordinator decide on the issue, and both parents would be bound by the decision.

20 See Chapter 11: Parenting Coordinator Guidelines (Child Custody and Visitation) in Monterey County Superior Court, *Local Rules of Court* <https://www.monterey.courts.ca.gov/system/files/local-rules/local-rules-court_7126.pdf#page=132> (accessed 29 September 2026).

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

However, a further issue arises as to the parties' entitlement to have the Family Court review the decision of the Parenting Coordinator. If this is allowed, it may once again result in a court decision that comes too late. On balance, the author is of the view that the review mechanism is a positive thing. If a dispute can be resolved with the assistance of the Parenting Coordinator, parental conflict can be minimised and this goes a long way to support the children's emotional well-being. At the same time, parties' entitlement to a court review of the Parenting Coordinator's decision promotes accountability and encourages Parenting Coordinators to provide well-reasoned, impartial and evidence-based decisions. Parents might be more willing to accept a Parenting Coordinator's authority when they know there is an independent mechanism to review decisions if necessary.

VIII. Conclusion and moving forward

34 The Parenting Coordination Programme is reflective of the Family Justice Courts' commitment towards therapeutic justice which emphasises healing, problem solving and the well-being of all members of the family.[21]

35 This is predicated on the parents ultimately being able to co-operate after receiving good advice and intervention. In this regard, counsel should also play their part. If both parents' counsel can work as a team to solve their clients' parenting matters, rather than too readily facilitating their clients to bring their disputes to court, they would have played a critical role in the delivery of therapeutic justice in the family justice system.

36 An example of a case which the parents, their counsel, and as the next resort, a Parenting Coordinator, could and should have solved without going to court is *VDX v VDY*.[22] In this case, the feuding parents had filed cross appeals in respect of just

21 Singapore Courts, "Family Justice Courts Therapeutic Justice Model (TJ Model)" <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/who-we-are/therapeutic-justice> (accessed 29 September 2026).

22 [2021] SGHCF 2.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.

two narrow issues, namely, which parent was to have care and control of their 13-year-old child during dinner time on Chinese New Year's Eve, and when exactly the father should return the child to the care and control of the mother after the end-of-year school holidays. The judge in the case stated that these were issues that the parents could and should have decided on their own, and exhorted the parents to try their best to do so, for the sake of the children:[23]

> Parental responsibility is a personal responsibility. The Court is the last resort for the resolution of parenting matters, for parents should intentionally endeavour to make these decisions for their children themselves. They should strive hard not to mire the family, including the children, in litigation, nor should their resources and the Court's resources be spent on litigation to deal with an emotionally-driven conflict. This will involve some measure of compromise; it may involve being bigger, wiser and kinder – which must be very difficult when relationships have broken down, yet this is the legal responsibility placed on all parents. Parenting is not perpetual, and such sacrifices, painful as they may be, are not demanded of parents indefinitely for children do grow up to be adults – their chance to have a normal childhood should not be lost due to their parents' conflict.

37 It is indeed a tough task to be bigger, wiser and kinder when trying to resolve a parenting dispute with one's ex-spouse. This article reminds us that the parents are not alone – after their therapeutic justice-trained lawyers have exhausted all efforts to resolve the matter and failed – there is still hope in the form of the Parenting Coordinator!

23 *VDX v VDY* [2021] SGHCF 2 at [42], *per* Debbie Ong J.

© 2026 Contributor(s) and Singapore Academy of Law.
No part of this document may be reproduced without permission from the copyright holders.