BY MADELEINE MACCAR

Your Divorce Matters

Advanced Mediation Solutions offers customized solutions for your unique situation, ranging from divorce to workplace conflicts.

Every circumstance that brings a separating couple to mediation is different, as is any conflict requiring the intercession of an unbiased third party to arrive at a mutually beneficial resolution.

That's why turning to experts in the field with a proven track record of delivering customizable, thoughtfully considered solutions for divorce is crucial when it comes to selecting who you'll trust with your mediation process—and its outcome—as the experienced professionals of Advanced Mediation Solutions (AMS) can attest to.

"The premise of mediation in general is where parties come together to be able to come to agreement by the use of a professional mediator who is a neutral third party," explains Roseann Vanella who, along with Carmela DeNicola, is one of AMS's two professional mediators and owners. "Unlike when they hire an attorney and the attorney represents them, the mediator is really acting like a facilitator. ... But couples need to understand that it is a process."

"Part of our role, which is very key, as the facilitator, is to ensure that both parties are able to make an informed decision," DeNicola says. "When they come to mediation, somebody, for example, may have more knowledge of the finances than the other, but as we go through the process, we educate and review all of the financial components and make sure that all parties are on a level playing field in terms of making decisions—they may not have come to us on a level playing field, but we level out the playing field because that's very important in mediation."

Getting to know everyone's perspectives, goals and best-case outcomes helps Vanella and DeNicola ensure they're fully assessing the bigger picture for both parties' benefit and delivering solutions that make sense.

"We offer creativity," says Vanella. "Sometimes the rule of law, as it relates to spousal support, which is state by state, does play a role where it can be used as kind of a reference, but the customized solution is understanding what each party wants to accomplish through their mediation and where it's going to come to a point where they're each going to feel that they have a fair settlement."

"Every couple that comes into mediation has their own unique set of circumstances and issues," DeNicola adds. "The law is not created or customized for anybody's particular circumstances."

With family courts' lingering backlog of cases, AMS has noticed an uptick in questions about mediation's path to resolution for divorcing couples, as the absence of trials and judges' understanding that mediation inherently suggests a voluntary willingness to come together means those cases do get approved quicker.

"Typically, when couples hire attorneys and attorneys negotiate for them, they're understanding separately what each party wants, so to speak, but they're not really considering what is the reality of what is going to work as a settlement, not only for now in the short-term but into the future," says Vanella. "That's really where working together with a mediator acts also as a tool for planning far into the future. We take a much broader view. When it comes to having experience, especially for couples who are business owners, that's a whole totally different picture."

Divorce mediation means considering variables such as high-income marital dissolutions, ages of both the separating parties and their children, spousal and child support, Social Security and more.

And while mediating a divorce may address either parties' entrepreneurial ownerships, AMS also handles business and partnership mediation, partnership disputes, employee conflicts and operating agreements. The full-service mediation practice not only benefits from Vanella's and DeNicola's own firsthand experiences and insight that come from decades of working in the business world, but also offers its owners' extensive expertise in helping a variety of disputes arrive at a completely customized compromise that's in everyone's best interest equally.

Business disputes and employee conflicts aren't facing that same delay that divorces are, but a shifting mindset has driven more professionally based cases to consider mediation.

"We have seen an increase in requests for employee conflict mediations," Vanella says. "A lot of larger organizations are moving toward the culture of using mediation."

"Often, those larger organizations have HR professionals that are mediation-trained, but they realize there's a time and a place for a third-party mediator because HR is not a neutral party in that process," adds DeNicola. "The third-party aspect brings neutrality, which contributes to finding resolutions."

And those resolutions, in the hands of a forward-thinking and compassionate mediator, are always mutually beneficial to parties in conflict, both today and well into their future.

"I think mediation is a mindset," DeNicola observes. "We're looking at the short-term, the mid-term and the long-term."

Mediation isn't the right choice for everyone, though, which is why AMS speaks to every prospective client beforehand to ensure that the services Vanella and DeNicola offer are the parties' best fit. But they both recommend the route for any couple who can communicate respectfully and are coming at the divorce equally informed about their circumstances.

"We are unique in what we do and we're very specialized—we only do mediation," says Vanella. "We take a very customized approach and we're very dedicated to what we do, and we're extremely successful in settling disputes." ◆

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