



YOUR BRIDGE TO A BETTER FUTURE

“Court battles over divorce and family conflict come with a high cost to you, your children, and your finances. We are passionate about helping families resolve conflict efficiently and respectfully through less-adversarial options.”

—Stephen F. McDonough
Principal Attorney &
Certified Mediator/Parenting Coordinator



Future-Focused Divorce, Family Law, Mediation, and Parenting Coordination

Are you facing divorce or conflicts over issues such as parenting, child support, or alimony? Chances are, you haven't slept well in weeks and you are feeling overwhelmed. Perhaps you are thinking "maybe things will get better," but deep down, you are fairly sure they will not.

We understand the emotions you are experiencing. We have helped hundreds of families resolve their disputes and make the transition to a brighter future. Our firm focuses on helping clients resolve divorce and other family law matters while avoiding the stress, high costs, delays, work disruptions, and negative impact on children inherent in traditional, court-based processes. We accomplish this through mediation, collaboration, and intelligent settlement strategies rather than just leaping headlong into litigation.

Whether you want to learn more about our mediation services, need help managing your parenting plan, or would like to update child support without incurring big legal costs, we invite you to contact us to schedule an informative consultation. You can also arrange a telephone or video consultation with one of our experienced lawyers or mediators.

Let's talk soon

OUR APPROACH



At Next Phase Legal and Dispute Resolution LLC, we avoid the “scorched earth” approach to domestic relations. Simply put, this style is not good for you, your children, or your finances.

If you have children, a high-conflict divorce will make it almost impossible to maintain a reasonable parenting relationship post-divorce. Instead, you will face years of stressful and heated interactions with your former partner, not to mention ongoing legal expenses when frequent modifications are filed or a parenting coordinator is required to keep the peace. Worse, research shows that children exposed to parental conflict suffer in numerous, significant ways.

This continuing cycle is an often-overlooked, negative consequence of the traditional court-based approach to divorce and related issues such as child support, child custody, and parenting.

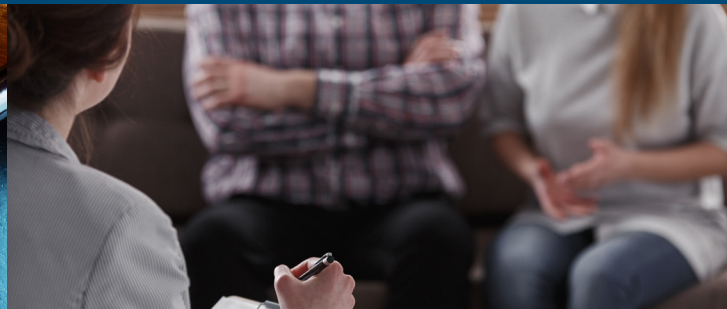
When people are actively involved in resolving their own problems, as opposed to having conflict driven by attorneys, hearings, and the court, there is less likelihood of future conflict.

Well over 90% of court-based Massachusetts divorce cases settle prior to trial. Why not work towards a fair settlement from the beginning so you can move on with your life? Working with a divorce mediator or lawyer that focuses on problem solving instead of fanning the flames makes sense from every angle. For parents, research confirms that children suffer when parents engage in a divorce or other legal battle.

If this approach sounds like a good match for you, we should talk. We are ready to help you reach your goals in the areas of:

- Divorce Mediation
- Child Support
- Child Custody & Parenting Plans
- Alimony/Spousal Support
- Property Division
- Modification and Contempt Complaints
- Parenting Coordination
- Collaborative Divorce
- Conciliation
- Online Mediation

OUR APPROACH



DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Family Law covers a wide-range of legal issues and situations. While much of our work has shifted towards dispute resolution, including divorce mediation, our divorce and family lawyers and mediators have many years of experience in the Probate and Family Courts of Massachusetts. We strive to resolve conflicts collaboratively whenever possible, and have helped hundreds of families arrive at mutually satisfying solutions.

We offer all of the following services in this area of the law. (If you don't see your legal issue mentioned here, simply call us and we'll let you know if we can help... or we'll refer you to someone who can.)

- Prenuptial and Postnuptial Agreements
- Mediation to Stay Married
- Changes to child support and parenting plans
- Assisted Reproductive Technology
- Post-Divorce Issues, including complaints for contempt and modification
- Paternity
- Unmarried Couples & Parents

MEDIATION

When serving as mediators, we are neutral facilitators helping clients solve problems through information sharing, guided conversations, and other supportive techniques. The goal is to resolve issues cooperatively, so each participant in the mediation process benefits from workable and lasting solutions that meet the participants' practical, social, and emotional concerns as much as possible.

Unlike the adversarial court process, mediation is a thoughtful alternative allowing participants to take charge of their own conflicts and solutions, while still working with an experienced professional. That such an approach achieves results in a private setting, and almost always at a lower cost, are additional benefits. In addition, mediators help the parties review alternatives that may have been overlooked, and to identify shared interests and goals.

You should know that only 30 hours of training is required to become a mediator in Massachusetts. Stephen McDonough maintains a much higher level of certification through the Massachusetts Council on Family Mediation. Very few mediators have achieved this level of certification.

Mediation is not therapy, and the goal of mediation, when employed in the divorce context, is not to get a couple back together or to save the marriage. Mediation can be used to help improve a marriage, but that is known as Mediation to Stay Married or Marital Mediation. If you want more details about this service, please get in touch with us.

OUR APPROACH



PARENTING COORDINATION

Even under the best circumstances, parenting can be challenging. When parents have different communication and parenting styles, disagreements may become more frequent and of higher intensity. Add into the mix the potential for additional resentment or anger stemming from divorce or other relationship strain, and parenting is an area ripe for ongoing conflict.

The goal of healthy co-parenting is to support children's needs and keep children away from negative emotions and harmful conflict.

Few things are more important for your children's short and long-term emotional well-being than *not* placing them in the middle of adult parenting issues and conflict. Recent studies show children of divorce are more likely to experience:

- Emotional Problems
- Poorer physical health
- Trouble with problem-solving
- Reduced academic performance
- Increased likelihood of dropping out of school
- Challenges maintaining adult relationships and future employment

Although studies confirm the prevalence of these serious and lasting negative consequences, parents have the opportunity to mitigate these negative effects. If you and the other parent are stuck in a cycle of conflict marked by arguing, inflexibility, toxic communications, and exposing the children either directly or indirectly to stress and conflict, you should consider working with a skilled parenting coordinator.

There is no magical solution however, and positive results require a good faith effort by both parents and a dose of patience as we work together to improve your parenting journey.

You can learn more about our services in this area by visiting www.TheParentingCoordinator.com.





STEPHEN F. MCDONOUGH

*Collaborative Attorney, Mediator, and
Parenting Coordinator*

Attorney and Mediator Stephen McDonough is the founder of Next Phase Legal & Dispute Resolution LLC and works closely with clients facing divorce and other family conflict. Stephen has satisfied the substantial requirements set forth by the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court to be included on the court's list of Category V approved parenting coordinators.

Stephen is a certified mediator through the Massachusetts Council on Family Mediation, a designation that only about 10% of mediators in Massachusetts hold, and a trained collaborative attorney. In addition to providing mediation services, Stephen appears selectively in Massachusetts Probate and Family Courts on behalf of clients involved in court-based cases.

Stephen is a volunteer conciliator through the Norfolk County Probate and Family Court, helping attorneys and their clients settle difficult cases that otherwise may be headed to a trial.



Prior to becoming an attorney, Stephen served as a police officer for 13 years. He also served in the Massachusetts Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves, receiving an honorable discharge.

Stephen is a graduate of Suffolk University Law School in Boston and admitted to practice law in North Carolina and Massachusetts, although he only accepts Massachusetts cases and is on inactive status in North Carolina. Stephen was a featured commentator on Fox news during a segment on domestic violence and has presented to several bar associations and other groups on a range of topics. Stephen has served on the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts ALS Association and as Chairman of the Town of Norfolk Advisory Board, which is similar to the finance committee in other municipalities.





We created this brochure to provide you with an introduction to our firm and how we help individuals and families through difficult situations. You can learn much more about our services, our four attorneys, and our unique approach by visiting www.nextphaselegal.com. Better yet, why not give us a call to discuss your particular needs and goals? We welcome the opportunity to meet you in person.



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**www.NextPhaseLegal.com
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