

# coParenter Technology and Parenting Time Services Project

## Evaluation Report

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## Executive Summary

The coParenter Technology and Parenting Time Services Project sought to help parents in the Colorado child support program establish parenting time plans that could be added to their child support orders by extending to them free access to a telephone app designed for that purpose. The app/platform that was used in the pilot project is known as coParenter, which was developed by Hyphenus, Inc. (Hyphenus), and is used by the general public (and some courts) to reduce parental conflict and facilitate coparenting following separation and divorce. An evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research (CPR) assessed referral activity by child support workers in participating Colorado counties, utilization of the coParenter app by parents in the child support system, client and worker experiences with the app, and lessons learned.

Conducted in eight Colorado counties, the coParenter pilot project targeted biological parents with legally straightforward, non-contested cases who were eligible to establish child support orders using an expedited Administrative Process Action (APA) rather than a judicial proceeding. Project procedures called for child support workers to introduce the app to eligible clients as early as possible in the process of establishing a child support order using a variety of outreach methods, track client use of the app on a Professional Tool (ProTool) developed for them by Hyphenus, and send parents repeat invitations and reminders. Parents had the opportunity to meet individually with a coach, or together with a mediator, to resolve any outstanding issues dealing with their parenting time plan using a written communication tool similar to texting. If parents developed a parenting plan, it was added to the child support case and filed by the county Child Support Services unit on behalf of the parties. Cases which did not result in a parenting time agreement were handled in the normal manner according to APA process. In cases with parenting time agreements, the order addressing child support and parenting time was filed as a Domestic Relations (DR) court action rather than the Juvenile (JV) court action normally used for unmarried parents who obtain a child support order only.

Client enrollment in the coParenter pilot project began in late February 2021 and ended at the end of December 2021 when the coParenter app was unexpectedly sold by Hyphenus to Completecase.com. An extract of data maintained by Hyphenus on invitations by workers, acceptances by parents, and app usage by parents during the eight-month pilot project revealed extremely low levels of usage by both workers and parents. Thus, during the eight-month pilot project, only 21 child support workers of the 58 who agreed to participate in the pilot project and for whom Hyphenus created a ProTool, sent invitations about coParenter to parents in the child support caseload with only nine workers making more than two referrals. Parent response was also sparse. Of the 139 invitations that workers sent to parents, a total of 81 acceptances (“connections”) were recorded. Of the parents who accepted the invitation to use coParenter, 69 indicated they had a coParent connection (were couples consisting of a custodial parent (CP) and a noncustodial parent (NCP) in the same case). Once enrolled on the coParenter app, relatively few parents participated and supplied the requested information, accessed mediation services, and/or generated a parenting plan. Indeed, only 17 parents who “connected” with the app completed the requested information about the parents and children. Outcomes for parents who utilized the app were more favorable. A total of 38 parents participated in free mediation services and 23 generated a parenting plan. This translates into a 61% agreement rate.

The biggest reason that workers cited for the limited use of the coParenter by parents in the child support caseload was the disinterest of CPs. In their view, nearly all NCPs want parenting time plans, but many CPs do not want NCPs to have a relationship with the children and are uninterested in parenting time

plans. The absence of any mechanism in child support cases to compel CPs to consider parenting time and try the app made it difficult to get the coParenter initiative to work.

Other reasons workers gave for their limited referral activity and/or lack of app use by parents were:

- The short timeframes for establishing child support orders were incompatible with the mission of enticing parents to use the coParenter app and develop parenting plans.
- There was confusion about how to file a parenting plan with a negotiated child support agreement. Judges in some jurisdictions required hearings to review agreed-upon parenting plans which added an additional step to the order establishment process. Workers wanted more clarification and streamlining of the judicial process.
- The app was complicated and technologically challenging for parents. Workers wanted more feedback from the app about client status and experiences. They also wanted to be able to see the parenting plan on the app when it was completed. Finally, they wanted the coParenter mediator to reach out to both parents directly if one wanted help with parenting time.
- Referrals about the coParenter app would carry more weight if they came from the court rather than a child support worker. Child support clients need in-person help to create a parenting plan.
- The coParenter pilot project ended prematurely, just when the “kinks” were finally worked out. The project was conducted during COVID when there was almost no in-person contact between workers and clients.
- Parenting time and mediation are not well understood by parents and workers in the child support system and a better marketing effort about these issues and the app was needed.

Despite these challenges, some workers felt that the coParenter app was a “fabulous concept,” appreciated having a resource dealing with parenting time, and were gratified when parents were receptive and used it.

Asked to rate the usefulness of a variety of other interventions that might help child support clients with parenting time, more than half of child support workers rated the following as “very useful:” A waiver from the court filing fee for a parenting time filing (76%); free mediation and free legal services (71%); a marketing effort to make parents and professionals better aware of the importance of a parenting time plan and the resources that exist to help child support clients (67%); a regularly scheduled legal clinic parents could attend (67%); a staff person at court to help (65%); a staff person at the child support agency to help (57%); and a telephone hotline parents could call for help (52%).

Low referral activity by child support workers and take up rates by parents for the coParenter app are consistent with findings in previous Colorado evaluations of free mediation services, online parenting plans using interactive A2J software, virtual access and visitation clinics, and virtual mediation services. Parents targeted for parenting time resources are typically unaware of them and do not access or use them, although the high agreement rate among those who used the coParenter app indicates that it can be effective with child support clients. Workers are confused about allowable parenting time activity, the boundaries between providing information and legal advice to parents, and how to add parenting time issues to the tight timeframes they have for establishing a child support order. Finally, all parenting time evaluations find that CPs are frequently uninterested in participating in parenting-time interventions and cannot be readily coaxed to change their mind since they typically get an isolated child support order with parenting time addressed in a separate legal filing or not at all. Resolving these issues will require making structural, procedural, training, and service changes to the process of establishing safe access arrangements for never-married parents in the child support system.

## Introduction

The coParenter Technology and Parenting Time Services Project aimed to help parents in the Colorado child support program establish parenting time plans using a telephone app designed for that purpose. The pilot was conducted by the Colorado Judicial Department, Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) with funding from the federal Access and Visitation (AV) Grant Program which seeks to support and facilitate noncustodial parents' (NCPs') access to and visitation of their children. The app/platform that was used in the pilot project is known as coParenter, which was developed in 2016 by Hyphenus, Inc (Hyphenus), and operated by that company until December 2021, after it was unexpectedly sold to Completecase.com, a web-based divorce preparation service. Although coParenter had been the subject of several demonstration projects with courts in the U.S. and Canada to provide remote services to divorcing parents, it had not been used with parents in the child support system who typically obtain child support orders during their interactions with that agency without attention being paid to access and visitation or parenting time.

This evaluation seeks to assess utilization of the coParenter app by child support workers and the parents they attempted to engage in its use, client and worker experiences with the coParenter app and their reactions to it, and lessons learned from the pilot.

## Design and Implementation of the coParenter Pilot Project

The pilot project involved customization and implementation of the coParenter app to assist targeted parents in the child support system in eight Colorado counties with the development of parenting time plans and their seamless promulgation as court orders. The coParenter app/platform is designed to reduce conflict between coparents and help them resolve coparenting disputes by guiding parents through the development of a comprehensive, customized, parenting time plan by using an online tool that includes a shared calendar and a library of videos and written material on coparenting as well as integrated, on-demand coaching and mediation. With the exception of technical questions about the app, which were answered by Hyphenus personnel using email and/or telephone, all communication between the parents, mediators, and coaches on coParenter was done via a written communication module that is similar to text messaging. The text messaging approach has economic advantages for the company since it allows mediators and coaches to work with multiple couples simultaneously. According to Hyphenus personnel, it also reduces conflict and facilitates settlement since it eliminates voice intonation and visual exchanges between the parents that might be provocative. For the Colorado pilot, Hyphenus simplified the coParenter platform to focus exclusively on access and visitation issues and all app features pertaining to child support and other finances were removed.

The goal of the pilot was to offer cost-free access to the app to parents in the child support program to help them create a customized parenting time schedule and agreement that could be printed, uploaded, and submitted for promulgation by the court as an enforceable order. The simple parenting plan template included check-a-box terms regarding decision-making responsibilities and how future disagreements about parenting time would be addressed. It also included easy-to-select options regarding a regular parenting time calendar, holiday and weekend swaps, and a summer parenting time schedule. Other features of the app included a safe, dedicated place for parents to access their children's health and education records, emergency contact information and other important documents, the ability to

communicate with the other parent through the app using text messaging, and the capacity to maintain a written or oral journal tracking coparenting experiences, milestones, and incidents. In addition to having access to the tool, parents could use free, professional, on-demand mediators and coaches (facilitators who worked with a single parent rather than a couple) to assist them with the development of their parenting time plans and resolve any disagreements. Couples engaged with mediators using three-way texting formats, while individuals engaged with coaches using two-party text conversations. Once parenting time agreements were developed and signed, the pilot plan called for them to be uploaded and automatically filed with the court, without the need to do a separate court filing for parenting time, pay the normal court filing fee of \$222, and/or schedule and attend a court hearing.

The Colorado pilot targeted parents in the child support program who were establishing a new child support order in one of the eight county child support offices that agreed to participate in the project: Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Garfield, Jefferson, Larimer, Mesa, and Montrose. Participant eligibility was limited to biological parents who were eligible to establish child support orders using an expedited Administrative Process Action (APA) rather than a judicial proceeding. The heart of this procedure is the conduct of an in-person or virtual negotiation conference between parents and a child support worker in an agency-based setting to establish a child support order in a consensual fashion. APAs are used in non-contested cases that are legally straight forward. Ineligible cases included those with minor-aged parents, cases in which paternity was contested, cases in which the child resided with a non-parent caretaker, interstate cases where one parent lived outside of Colorado, cases with a non-disclosure indicator or current restraining order between the parents or the parents and children suggesting domestic violence was an issue, cases in which the child welfare agency was involved, and cases that did not involve establishment of a current child support order but only the negotiation of a monthly payment for past-due child support or child support debt. Since the coParenter app was only available in English, workers were told to instruct Spanish-speaking clients to contact ODR at the Colorado Judicial Department for referral to free mediation services with a Spanish-speaking mediator.

Planning for the pilot project began in September 2020. Hyphenus agreed to modify the app and limit it to access and visitation issues. They also created a customized checklist that parents in the Colorado pilot would need to complete to efficiently create a parenting plan and developed a brief training video for parents in the child support program on how to use the checklist. Hyphenus agreed to conduct multiple training sessions with child support workers in the eight counties participating in the pilot project, participate in monthly status calls with state project architects and county referral personnel, and provide discounted, pre-paid annual licenses for 250 couples to use the coParenter tool free of charge.

During the ensuing months, the process of identifying suitable cases and enrolling them in the coParenter app was mapped and training materials were developed. Hyphenus developed a 7-minute video that was posted on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOVW3xl50tc&t=2s>) which was ultimately viewed by only 26 people. On February 12, 2021, 86 individuals were invited to a procedural training on the coParenter pilot project. Invitees included all child support workers in the eight participating counties who were responsible for establishing new orders using negotiation conferences and instructed by county child support administrators to offer the coParenter app to eligible parents in their caseload. See [Appendix A](#) for a copy of the coParenter Training slides used at this procedural training. On February 22, 2021, the consumer app for IOS and Android users was readied, and service delivery was launched. On February 26, 2021, parents in Arapahoe, one of the participating counties, generated the first parenting plan via the coParenter app. The project ended in December 2021 after Hyphenus disclosed that it had sold coParenter

to Completecase.com, a company that wished to work directly with consumers and did not want to participate in a pilot project with a government agency and its customers.

Child support workers who handled cases involving the establishment of child support orders using APA were instructed to introduce the app to eligible clients as early as possible in the process of establishing a child support order. This might occur during regular outreach with a child support client via telephone calls, text messages, emails, and/or face-to-face conversations. They were also encouraged to include a flyer about the app in routine mailings to clients with child support documents in the order establishment process such as the Notice of Financial Responsibility (NFR) and the notification of a scheduled Negotiation Conference. Workers were urged to reiterate information about the app and re-send the invitation to use it in subsequent reminders to clients about the scheduled negotiation conference date and time.

The project flyer emphasized the availability of free parenting time help and on-demand help from professional mediators with savings of up to \$120/year for access to the coParenter app, avoidance of up to \$388 in court filing fees, and free attorney and mediator services. The flyer also highlighted the ability to generate customized parenting time plans with a built-in parenting time calendar, holiday and weekend exchanges, secure sharing of school and medical records, and additional parenting tools. Finally, the flyer noted the benefits of children having positive relationships with both parents. The flyer included a QR code to facilitate download of the coParenter app; a link was provided for free cell phone service for those who needed it. See [Appendix B](#) for a copy of the project flyer.

Child support workers were responsible for reviewing the project flyer with clients and educating them about the app, its features, and benefits. In its training with establishment workers that participated in the pilot project, the Colorado DCSS instructed workers to explain the elements of a parenting plan and its importance to targeted parents. Workers were also asked to help clients download and use the app or pursue technical help by calling Hyphenus. They were urged to instruct parents to complete their parenting plan by the date of the negotiation conference which would be scheduled according to DCSS's rule, and to grant a standard continuation for those parents who were working on an agreement and needed more time to complete it.

The worker's record-keeping duties entailed creating an account on the coParenter app's Professional Tool (ProTool) and using it to enter information about the clients they invited to participate in the pilot project and their disposition. Thus, on the coParenter app, workers listed the names of the parents they invited to use coParenter and their child support case number. Two days prior to the scheduled negotiation conference, workers were instructed to review ProTool to check on the status of the parenting plan agreement. If parents failed to accept the original invite, workers were asked to resend the invitation. If parents had accepted the invitation but neglected to complete it, workers were asked to contact both parents via ProTool direct messaging, phone call, or text message and remind them to complete a parenting plan prior to their upcoming conference. Parents who didn't try to develop a parenting plan or failed to produce one were handled following normal APA procedures and the negotiation conference was conducted and the child support order was developed. Those with a parenting plan needed to take additional steps. Since Colorado adjusts its child support guidelines to take into account the direct expenses of the payer parent who has the children for at least 93 days per year, the parenting plan schedule was plugged into the guidelines at the negotiation conference to generate a child support order amount. Next, workers were asked to manually file all paperwork including the APA documents and the parenting time agreement into a Juvenile (JV) court action. After the parenting time agreement had been

approved by the judicial officer, the court would transfer the child support and parenting time orders to a new Domestic Relations (DR) court action. This last step was intended to (1) maintain the confidentiality of the juvenile case, (2) provide the court, parties and counsel the benefit of electronic filing (at the time only available in DR actions) and (3) specify that the Colorado Rules of Civil Procedure, and specifically Rule 16.2 would apply to all post-permanent orders. Additional documentation duties for child support workers included noting the APA negotiation conference outcomes in the narrative section of Colorado's automated child support system (ACSES) and entering notes about coParenter actions on ACSES. The documentation process culminated in the filing of a manual DR court action, closure of the JV court action, and filing of the APA and parenting plan on ACSES.

As the pilot project evolved, participation was extended to interested parents at later stages of the child support process, specifically those who were involved with actions to modify and/or enforce their child support orders. However, unlike new establishment cases, any parenting plan that was developed was not automatically sent to the court to become an order and it was up to the parents to file their parenting plan with the court on their own.

In addition to conducting a kick-off training session, DCSS hosted monthly meetings with workers who participated in the pilot project. This provided an opportunity to track enrollment activity and client responses, identify and address challenges with the coParenter app, and provide peer support.

## Evaluation of the coParenter Pilot Project

The Center for Policy Research (CPR) was engaged to evaluate the coParenter Technology and Parenting Time Services Project. The evaluation included the design and administration of several data collection tools and their analysis and synthesis.

### Interviews With Hyphenus

CPR conducted interviews with personnel at Hyphenus, the company that operated the coParenter platform and was retained by Colorado to help design the pilot and assist with its implementation. Conversations were held with Jake Kornblum, Director of Operations, Hyphenus; Hon. Sherrill Ellsworth, Adjudicative Services, LLC, Hyphenus mediator for project cases during February-June 2021; and Adya Reiss, mediation coordinator for project cases during July-December 2021. These conversations focused on pilot project goals, implementation issues, and lessons learned.

### Surveys With Parents

CPR designed an online survey to be completed by parent users of the coParenter app. The survey elicited information on family composition, parent experiences using various portions of the coParenter app, reasons for not using various app features, the perceived difficulty and helpfulness of the app, outcomes dealing with parenting time and parenting time agreements, and changes (if any) in coparenting relationships and parent-child contact following use of the coParenter app.

Parents were offered a \$30 Walmart gift card incentive for completing the online survey following their use of the coParenter app. Over time, the incentive was increased to \$50. All parents were told about the survey opportunity by child support workers when they were first introduced to coParenter. In addition, every referred parent who accepted the invitation to use coParenter was sent a message through coParenter and well as an email from Hyphenus reminding them about the survey opportunity at multiple timepoints. Ultimately, only five parent users completed the online survey. See [Appendix C](#) for a copy of the survey for parents.

## Surveys With Workers

CPR designed an online survey for distribution to workers in the eight counties that participated in the pilot project. The workers targeted for survey distribution were those designated by their counties to participate in the pilot and offer the app to parents with eligible child support cases. All survey participants were offered a \$15 Amazon gift card incentive to complete the brief, confidential survey. The survey was circulated in May 2022 which was approximately five months after the conclusion of the pilot project. A total of twenty-eight workers completed the survey and returned it for analysis.

The survey elicited limited information on the characteristics of respondents, chiefly the position they held and their years of experience working in child support. Next, respondents were asked about their reactions to the training and support they received on the coParenter app, how often they attempted to use the app with clients and their method of outreach to parents. Workers were asked to gauge the reactions of parents to the app, its perceived appeal to parents, and the app features that were barriers. Workers also discussed the reasons why the pilot project was less successful than architects had hoped it would be. Finally, workers were asked to assess the potential utility of a variety of other services and resources to help parents establish parenting time orders. See [Appendix D](#) for a copy of the survey for workers.

## Focus Groups With Workers

Workers in participating counties who were eligible to refer parents to the coParenter app were offered a \$25 Amazon gift card to participate in a 75-minute focus group conducted in May 2022 which was approximately five months after the conclusion of the pilot project. Two focus groups were conducted with a total of ten child support professionals drawn from seven of the eight counties that participated in the pilot. Participants discussed their experiences trying to engage parents and onboard them on the app, client reactions to the coParenter app, client outcomes, and the strengths and limitations of the coParenter app. Workers also described alternative interventions that ODR and DCSS might consider pursuing to assist parents in the child support system with parenting time plans and orders.

## Extracted Information on Parents

### From Hyphenus

In January 2022, one month after the conclusion of the pilot project, Hyphenus generated an extract that summarized referral activity by child support workers and parent response and use of the coParenter app from project inception in February 2021 to project conclusion in December 2021. The extract contained information on invitations to parents sent by child support workers during that time period, the worker making the invitation and their county location, the identity of the parent to whom the invitation was sent and whether the invitation was accepted (connected) or ignored (invitation only). For parents who responded to the invitation and connected with the app, the extract included information on whether their activity on the app was non-existent, started, or completed. The areas tracked included the provision of personal information about the parents and the children, the development of a parenting plan, the development of a holiday visitation schedule, and the development of a plan to make decisions about the children. The extract also included information on whether the parents had contacted a coParenter mediator for free assistance with the development of a parenting plan.

## From the Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES)

To supplement the limited information available on the coParenter app about parents who were sent an invitation to use the app, DCSS programmers generated information from the automated child support system about invited parents for whom case identification was provided. This included information on parental race, the age of the children on the case, parental marital status, evidence of NCP employment, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) status of the case and its case type, the status of child support payment on the case, attorney representation, the monthly amount of child support due, and the arrears balance as of the date of the extract.

## Merger

Data drawn from the Hyphenus extract and data from the ACSES extract were merged using the child support case number. This resulted in the maximum possible information on the characteristics of parents in the pilot project and their level of participation in and use of the coParenter app. A total of 56 case numbers had data from both the Hyphenus extract and from the ACSES extract that were merged (reflecting 106 of the parents referred to the app). Case identifiers were not available for 33 of the parents referred to the app, so no ACSES information on client and case characteristics was available and no merger was performed.

## Results of the Evaluation

### Key Findings From the Extracted Information on Parents

#### Worker Referrals, Client Enrollment, and Parent Usage of the coParenter App

Client enrollment in the coParenter pilot project began in late February 2021 and ended at the end of December 2021 when the coParenter app was unexpectedly sold to Completecase.com by Hyphenus. An extract of data maintained by Hyphenus on invitations by workers, acceptances by parents, and app usage by parents during the eight-month pilot project revealed extremely low levels of usage by both workers and parents. Thus, during the eight-month pilot project, only 21 child support workers sent referrals (known as “invitations”) to the coParenter app to parents in their caseload. This represented only 36% of the 58 workers who were eligible to participate in the pilot project and 44% of the 48 workers who took the steps needed to be onboarded by Hyphenus and received a ProTool account to enable client referrals. Of the 21 active child support workers who made referrals, only nine made more than two referrals during the pilot project, and one worker made 32 referrals or 23% of the total number of referrals/invitations that were made.

Parent response was also sparse. Of the 139 invitations that workers sent to parents, a total of 81 acceptances (“connections”) were recorded (58%). Of the parents who accepted the invitation to use coParenter, 69 indicated they had a coParent connection and were couples consisting of a custodial parent (CP) and NCP in the same case. Once enrolled on the coParenter app, relatively few parents participated and supplied the requested information, accessed mediation services, and/or generated a parenting plan. Indeed, only 17 parents who “connected” with the app completed the requested information about the parents and children, 38 parents participated in free mediation services, and 23 parents generated a parenting plan (six parents started but did not complete a parenting plan).

[Table 1](#) summarizes client usage (in terms of number of parents) of the coParenter app based on the extract from Hyphenus.

Table 1. coParenter app usage based on the Hyphenus extract

Number of parents who completed the personal information	25
Number of parents who completed adding children	24
Number of parents who completed details on children	23
Number of parents who completed other requirements	24
Number of parents who completed holidays	24
Number of parents who completed decision-making	25
Number of parents who completed the parenting plan	23
Number of parents who completed all the sections on the app	17
Number of parents who completed at least one section on the app	31
Number of parents who contacted a coParenter mediator	38

Far more promising, however, was the effectiveness of the app among actual parent users. While the 23 parents who generated parenting plans comprised only 17% of all parents who were invited to use the coParenter app and 28% of the parents who accepted an invitation to explore it, they comprised 74% of the 31 parents who completed at least one section of the coParenter app (personal information, adding children, details on children, other requirements, holidays, decision-making, and/or parenting plan), and 61% of the 38 that participated in mediation. These are outcomes are more favorable than the 55% agreement rate that Hyphenus has reported with its divorcing population and industry averages for custody and divorce mediation.

#### Demographic and Child Support Case Characteristics of Parents Enrolled in the Pilot

We obtained some limited information, summarized in Table 2 and below, on the demographics and child support case characteristics of parents who were invited to participate in the pilot project. It is based on an extract drawn from ACSES that was matched with Hyphenus records. There were only 56 child support case numbers with merged data from the data extracts generated by Hyphenus and ACSES. The rest of the cases referred by workers to coParenter lacked information on their child support case numbers making it impossible to find them in ACSES. This resulted in sample sizes that were too small to test for statistically significant differences between those who were merely referred to coParenter and those who used the app more fully and produced parenting plans.

The limited ACSES data available showed that most parents referred to the coParenter app were never married (82%) and had one child (79%) with a mean age of 4.41 years. They tended to have child support cases that involved the establishment of new orders (55%) and were not current or former recipients of public assistance (59%). Typically, the NCP was employed (79%) and was paying child support (68%). In all cases the CP was the mother, and 41% of both CPs and NCPs had only one open child support case. The mean age for CPs was 29 years old and the mean age for NCPs was 31 years old. Two CPs and three NCPs had data on the date that they met with an attorney; the rest had no attorney representation.

The majority of cases (82%) had monthly support due which ranged from \$10.00-\$1,1149.00 (Mean = \$409.57, Median = \$427.50). Only three cases had minimum orders of \$50 or below. Half of cases (55%) had monthly arrears due which ranged from \$4.00-\$177.00 (Mean = \$65.06, Median = \$60.00). Overall, 27% of cases had an arrears balance and this ranged from \$8.00-\$6,211.67 (Mean = \$1,763.27, Median = \$1,307.30).

Table 2. Demographics and child support case characteristics for the child support case numbers with merged data (n = 56)

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<i>Demographics</i>	
CP race	
White	38%
Black	11%
Spanish American	9%
Other	3%
Missing	39%
NCP race	
White	23%
Black	14%
Spanish American	7%
Other	4%
Unknown	4%
Missing	48%
Number of kids	
One child	79%
Two children	21%
Parent marital status	
Never married	82%
Married	12%
Divorced	4%
Common law marriage	2%
Paternity	
Presumed by statute	76%
Established	22%
Establishment required	2%
Verified employment for NCP	
Yes	73%
No	27%
<i>Child support case characteristics</i>	
Case status	
Current case	86%
Closed case	11%
Arrears only case	3%
Case classification	
Non-TANF case	59%
TANF case	21%
Non-TANF case with TANF arrears	20%
Case type	
Newly established order	55%
Modified order	32%
Enforcement of an existing order	4%
Missing	9%
Case category	
Paying absent parent	68%
Location and enforcement	14%
Enforcement actions only	9%
Establishing support	5%
Locating and establishing support	2%
Locating and establishing paternity	2%

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## Key Findings From the Interviews With Hyphenus

In their prior coParenter pilot projects with court populations, Hyphenus personnel said that judges were very engaged with the referral process and that court mediators coached parents to use coParenter to facilitate communication. Key project outcomes of these projects included high rates of referral activity, extensive parent use of the coParenter messaging feature, high rates of issue resolution among parents who requested third-party help, high rates of user satisfaction, and low rates of repeat visits to court.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, Hyphenus personnel felt that the Colorado pilot project suffered primarily from a lack of buy-in by child support workers in the eight participating counties. Although state-level child support and court architects of the pilot were enthusiastic about extending app access to parents in the child support system, county child support directors were only minimally involved. Hyphenus personnel felt that Colorado needed to have supervisors who were more directive and said to their staff, ‘you are going to do this.’ Nor were worker concerns about the pilot project identified and addressed prior to its initiation. This included concerns about the ambiguous role of child support in parenting time, the historic limitations on worker engagement in parenting time issues, the difficulty of getting CPs to address parenting time, and how the parenting time plan that the parents developed would translate into a court order. As a result, the first 3-4 months of the pilot project were spent “addressing these concerns.”

Weak training among child support staff in the participating counties was another problem. The 7-minute training video that Hyphenus developed was sparsely used by staff members and not distributed to parents as intended. Indeed, it was viewed only 26 times during the 8-month pilot. As a result, only a few of the 58 child support workers who were expected to make referrals did, and only a handful did so correctly. In the absence of adequate training, many workers and clients were unaware of the checklist that Hyphenus had developed for the Colorado users which was embedded in the app. Failing to click on “checklist” on the mobile app, meant that they did not input information appropriately about themselves, their coparent and their children, and did not automatically obtain access to the parenting time features of the app and/or an appointment with the mediator designated for the project. Instead, they tried to use the normal onboarding approach to the app and consequently did not access the options and features developed by Hyphenus for Colorado to facilitate its use by clients in the child support system.

Finally, the lack of judicial involvement was a challenge. Unlike previous Hyphenus pilot projects with divorcing parents, judges were not engaged with the Colorado pilot project. As the project mediator noted, “Everyone is on the hook in a divorce case when you are required to get a divorce decree. Judicial intervention is built into the process. With unmarried parents, you do not have that incentive and there are many more challenges to getting everyone to the table.”

Once parents were engaged, however, Hyphenus personnel typically found child support clients to be similar to divorcing court users and/or the general public. According to the pilot project mediator, the app enabled most couples to make as many agreements as they could on their own, identify the one or two issues for which they needed help, and use mediation to achieve a resolution. One mediator thought most issues could be addressed in one or two mediation sessions lasting 20-30 minutes; another thought that most mediations took approximately 1-2 hours. Since text-based mediations were often done in bits and

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<sup>1</sup> Hyphenus, Inc. (2017). Johnson County District Court: coParenter pilot data and analysis [Internal documentation].

pieces and not in a single, time-limited appointment, it was challenging to gauge the amount of time they required. The app’s texting feature was characterized as both a strength and limitation. On the positive side, it permitted three-way communication to occur between and among parents and the mediator without provocative facial expressions and angry crosstalk between the parents. As the mediator put it, “I had them respond to me and not engage with one another.” At the same time, some parents are better able to express themselves verbally and find written communication challenging.

Another positive feature of the app was the simple, basic parenting plan that it presented to parents with the opportunity to make quick changes. As the mediator explained, “We had a shared calendar and a form that showed them the basic issues of decision-making and regular visitation days and holidays. We gave them various options that they could pick from and changes that they could make very simply and quickly.” In her view, the app worked well if parents used it properly. As she put it, “If you can get people to the well and they drink, it works. The bigger challenge is getting them to the well.”

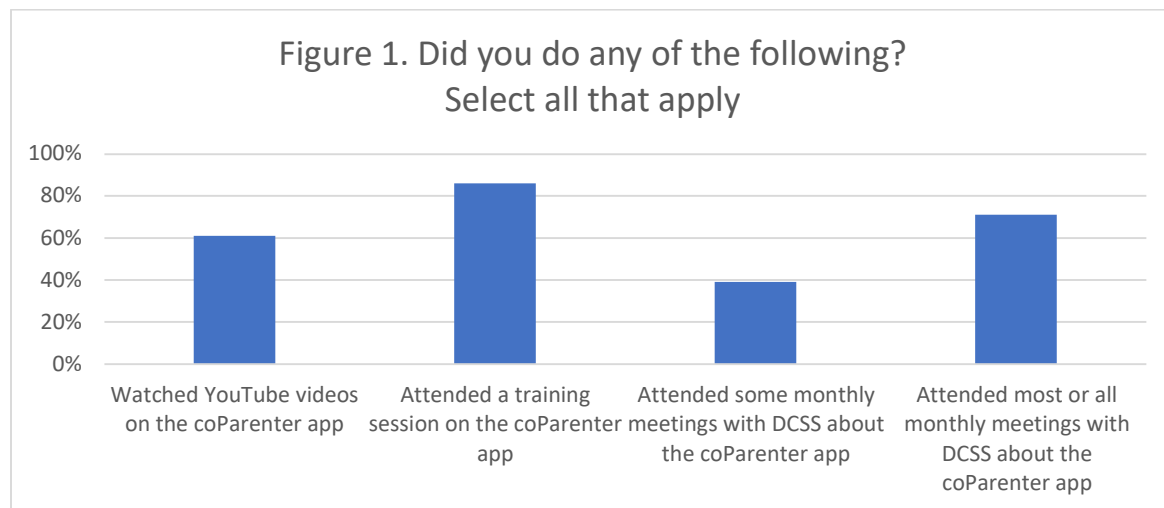
## Key Findings From the Surveys With Workers

### Background Information

Since only five parents completed the online survey about their experiences using the app, we relied on information elicited from surveys with child support workers to gauge parent reactions to the app as well as its perceived effectiveness and limitations. A total of 28 child support workers completed an online survey about the pilot project and the coParenter app that CPR designed and analyzed. Of the 28 respondents, 93% worked in county child support services. Additionally, 64% of the respondents were a caseworker or technician and 82% of the respondents had worked in child support for six or more years.

### Training and Use of the coParenter App

As seen in [Figure 1](#), in terms of training, respondents were most likely to have attended a training session on the coParenter app.

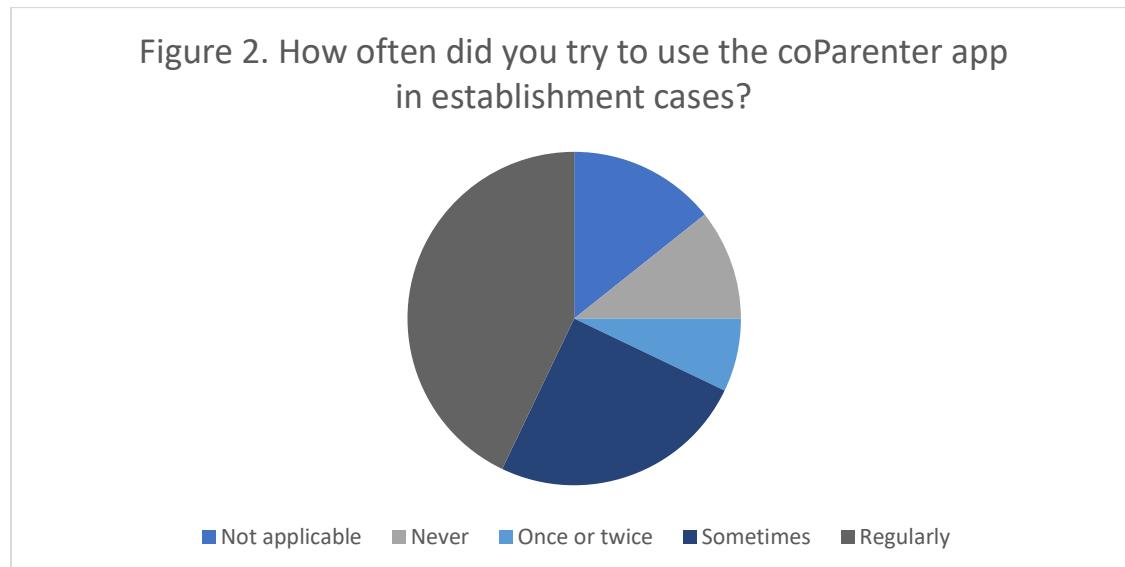


The majority of respondents indicated that the amount of training they had on the coParenter app was “just about right” (68% of respondents) and that the instructions on how and when to use the coParenter app were “pretty clear – a little confusing” (61% of respondents). While 39% of respondents never contacted anyone at DCSS/Hyphenus for help with the coParenter app, 50% contacted them once or twice, and 11% contacted them more often. Respondents provide the following feedback on the support they received from DCSS/Hyphenus:

- DCSS didn't always have the answer themselves
- Issues with Login initially. Compatibility issues on the County side. More information on compatibility would have probably saved time.
- It was hard because I could not see the same screens as the clients.
- Our issues were more judicial process related and we had to map out a lot with the Judicial liaison more than DCSS staff.
- Received a "we are working on it"; Helpful with what they knew. They did not have answers all the time and had to "look into it".
- Some issues such as staff access were resolved. Some issues of client accessibility were never fully resolved.

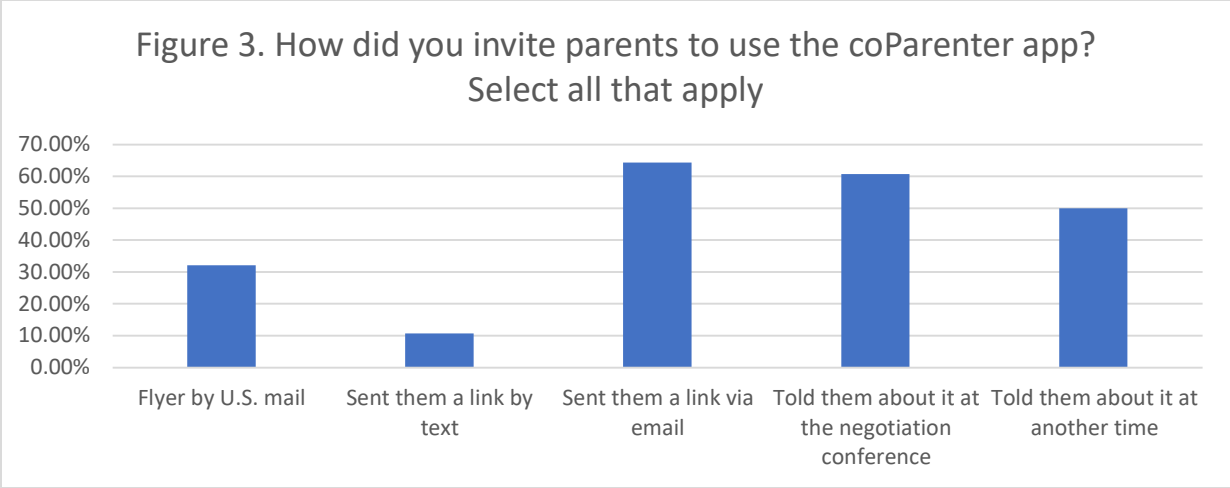
#### Attempts to Use the coParenter App

As seen in [Figure 2](#), the majority of respondents tried to use the coParenter app in establishment cases regularly. There were no noticeable differences between respondents that tried to use the coParenter app regularly and those that did not, and the sample sizes were too small to test for statistically significant differences.



The majority of respondents tried to use the coParenter app with both CPs and NCPs (71% of respondents) and identified their supervisor or administrator as “yes, very supportive” of them spending time explaining the coParenter app to clients (64% of respondents).

As seen in [Figure 3](#), respondents were most likely to invite parents to use the coParenter app by sending them a link via email.



Respondents also indicated telling parents about the coParenter app at the beginning of the early intervention call to the parties; by sending flyers by email; at the initial case interview; over phone calls (for example, phone calls prior to the negotiation conference); and when the case started.

**Experiences With Child Support Clients and the coParenter App**

Table 3 summarizes findings on the percentage of respondents who agree or disagree with the following statements about their experiences with child support clients and the coParenter app. The items that were endorsed by 75% or more of respondents were: 1) NCPs want parenting time; 2) one parent wanted to use the app but the other parent did not; 3) workers wanted more feedback from the app and from parents about their experiences, 4) the mediator should have reached out to parents directly if one parent wanted help; and 5) child support clients need in-person help to create a parenting plan.

Table 3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences with child support clients and the coParenter App?

	Agree	Disagree
In general NCPs want parenting time plans (n = 22)	95%	5%
In general CPs want parenting time plans (n = 22)	46%	54%
I don't have in-person/ telephone contact with NCPs (n = 15)	13%	87%
I don't have in-person/ telephone contact with CPs (n = 16)	13%	87%
I didn't have time to talk about the coParenter app with parents (n = 19)	26%	74%
The timeframes for order establishment are too short to deal with parenting time or the coParenter app (n = 19)	68%	32%
NCPs were uninterested in the coParenter app (n = 21)	48%	52%
CPs were uninterested in the coParenter app (n = 21)	48%	52%
One parent wanted to use the coParenter app, the other parent did not (n = 21)	76%	24%
I sent out coParenter app invites regularly but NCPs didn't accept (n = 18)	50%	50%
I sent out coParenter app invites regularly but CPs didn't accept (n = 18)	56%	44%
One parent was involved with the coParenter app, the other parent wasn't (n = 18)	67%	33%
The coParenter app didn't work in default cases (n = 9)	78%	22%
Parents said they created a parenting plan but couldn't find it on the coParenter app (n = 12)	50%	50%
I wanted more feedback from clients about their experiences using the coParenter app (n = 16)	75%	25%
I wanted feedback from the coParenter app about client experiences using it (n = 17)	82%	18%

The coParenter app only worked if both parents were friendly and cooperative (n = 19)	74%	26%
The mediator through the coParenter app should have reached out to parents directly if one parent wanted help (n = 16)	75%	25%
The coParenter app would work better in modification cases (n = 18)	61%	39%
The coParenter app would work better in enforcement cases (n = 20)	35%	65%
The coParenter app would work better if referrals came from the court (n = 21)	81%	19%
Child support clients need in-person help to create a parenting plan (n = 20)	85%	15%
Parenting plans aren't a big issue for child support clients (n = 21)	5%	95%
The coParenter app was too complicated (n = 19)	32%	68%
I didn't know how to pitch the coParenter app to parents (n = 16)	25%	75%
How to get the parenting plan filed in court was confusing (n = 19)	63%	37%
A better marketing effort around the coParenter app was needed (n = 19)	68%	32%
NCPs don't want a relationship with children (n = 20)	5%	95%
CPs don't want NCPs to have a relationship with children (n = 20)	65%	35%

### Problems for Child Support Clients Regarding the coParenter App

Table 4 summarizes findings on the percentage of respondents who identify the following as a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem for child support clients regarding the coParenter app.

Table 4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences with child support clients and the coParenter App?

	<b>Not a Problem</b>	<b>Minor Problem</b>	<b>Major Problem</b>
It seemed too complicated (n = 19)	11%	63%	26%
They didn't have time to use it (n = 19)	16%	68%	16%
They lacked regular internet access (n = 20)	30%	45%	25%
It required technological knowledge (n = 21)	10%	52%	38%
The other parent would not participate (n = 21)	5%	14%	81%
They weren't interested (n = 21)	4%	48%	48%
Their relationship with the other parents was too tense to use it (n = 21)	9%	29%	62%
They had friendly relationships and didn't need a parenting plan (n = 20)	40%	50%	10%
The referral procedure was challenging (n = 20)	40%	35%	25%
Domestic violence or other safety issues (n = 19)	32%	36%	32%
They had too much other stuff on their mind to use it (n = 19)	11%	68%	21%
The other parent lived in a different state (n = 19)	21%	53%	26%
It was a caretaker case (n = 16)	12%	63%	25%
I couldn't communicate with parents in another language (n = 16)	38%	44%	18%
COVID interfered (n = 17)	53%	29%	18%

When asked to identify the top three problems with the app that clients experienced, workers noted the following: 1) the other parent would not participate; 2) the relationship between the parents was too tense to use it; 3) it required too much technological skill. Other problems that respondents identified were that parents were unwilling to do the work and follow through (that parties were unwilling to make the effort once signed up) and that the app was too small on their phones and hard to read.

## Problems for coParenter App Success

Table 5 summarizes findings on the percentage of respondents who identify the following as a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem in explaining why the coParenter app pilot project was less successful than anticipated.

Table 5. The coParenter App pilot project was less successful than we had hoped. How big a problem was the following in explaining why this was the case?

	<b>Not a Problem</b>	<b>Minor Problem</b>	<b>Major Problem</b>
The pilot program ended too soon (n = 20)	40%	30%	30%
The pilot program was impacted by COVID (n = 19)	48%	26%	26%
Parenting time and mediation aren't well understood by workers (n = 21)	33%	53%	14%
Parenting time and mediation aren't well understood by parents (n = 21)	0%	71%	29%
The process of referring parents to the coParenter app was too complicated (n = 21)	43%	38%	19%
Workers needed to be required to refer parents to the coParenter app (n = 19)	16%	42%	42%
Workers weren't interested in referring parents to the coParenter app (n = 20)	25%	45%	30%
Parents weren't interested in using the coParenter app (n = 21)	4%	48%	48%
The child support system and the courts should figure out parenting time for child support clients - not workers (n = 21)	33%	43%	24%

When asked to identify the top three problems with the pilot, equal numbers of workers noted that: 1) the pilot program ended too soon and that parents weren't interested in using the coParenter app; 2) workers needed to be required to refer parents to the coParenter app and that parents weren't interested in using the coParenter app; and 3) parenting time and mediation aren't well understood by parents.

## Useful Approaches to Help Child Support Clients With Parenting Time

Table 6 summarizes findings on the percentage of respondents who identify the following approaches as very useful, somewhat useful, not useful, or not applicable to help child support clients with parenting time.

Table 6. How useful would the following be to help child support clients with parenting time?

	<b>Very Useful</b>	<b>Somewhat Useful</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
A telephone hotline they could call for help (n = 21)	52%	29%	14%	5%
A staff person at the child support agency to help (n = 21)	57%	24%	14%	5%
A staff person at the court to help (n = 20)	65%	35%	0%	0%
A standard parenting plan giving the NCP terms or things like every other weekend and alternate holidays, etc. that we could just hand out (n = 21)	43%	33%	24%	0%
Automatic parenting time that parents wouldn't have to apply for (n = 21)	24%	19%	52%	5%
Continuing use of the coParenter app (n = 21)	33%	48%	19%	0%
A different type of app to create a parenting plan (n = 21)	29%	43%	19%	9%

A marketing effort to make parents and professionals better aware of the importance of a parenting time plan and the resources that exist to help child support clients with parenting time (n = 21)	67%	23%	5%	5%
A regularly scheduled legal clinic they could attend (n = 21)	67%	33%	0%	0%
A waiver from the court filing fee for a parenting time filing (n = 21)	76%	19%	5%	0%
Free mediation services (n = 21)	71%	24%	5%	0%
Free legal services (n = 21)	71%	24%	5%	0%

When asked to identify the top three approaches that would help child support clients, workers selected: 1) a marketing effort to make parents and professionals better aware of the importance of a parenting time plan and the resources that exist to help child support clients with parenting time; 2) a waiver from the court filing fee for a parenting time filing; and 3) a staff person at the child support agency to help.

### Other Thoughts

The following are additional thoughts that workers provided about the coParenter app or what child support should do facilitate parenting time:

- As a child support worker, we do so much and if we had someone else to help facilitate parenting time it would help us all.
- As you can see, I have indicated many things as "very useful". Selecting a "top three" was difficult. I selected things our county does not currently have access to.
- CO-PARENTER WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA - DONT GIVE UP.
- Dedicated office/employees in the DHS or courts to facilitate parenting time. Child support employees are not trained in the field of mediation, nor do we have the time in order to meet the statute and rule deadlines. Require mediation for anyone applying for child support.
- I believe it really requires engaging in the conversation and spending time educating the public on the importance of parenting time in conjunction with monetary support.
- This was a great resource for our clients to address the parenting time. As an establishment case worker, it would be a good opportunity to educate our clients about parenting plan so that they can learn to co-parent.
- I think child support is the ideal forum to address parenting time but leaving it to the parents to sign up for the co-parenter application was not always productive. We can only do so much. I don't like the idea of a standard parenting plan because I worked with those in another state. That state was sued because a CP was forced to allow the NCP overnight visitation and that father was violent toward the child that resulted in the child's death. Just something to be aware of. Thanks.
- I think it could have been much more successful if Covid didn't impact the roll out.
- I work in parenthood and not establishment. The grants available that provide for free mediation and filing are too narrow. Frequently, parents are antagonistic towards each other. They should be encouraged to participate in evidence-based classes to help facilitate how to co parent (i.e., Nurturing Fathers classes). Frequently fathers in parenthood do not have good

access to technology or knowledge, that hampers their ability to use an app like this. There is a mistrust of the courts and filing into the courts is a challenge.

- It would have been nice to be able to talk to the mediator. I don't think they understood how to create the parenting plan after mediation.
- Mediation training for child support workers if this becomes part of our job. Longer time frames to establish orders if this becomes part of our job. We already have so many duties that we can't meet time frames.
- This was this least prepared project I have ever been involved with that came from the state. I believe it was not ready to launch when it did. Then, my county worked to solve process problems which should have been addressed before launch. Also, the constant changes to how the project was running was difficult to keep up with. Combined with the fact that I offered it to many of my clients who just were not interested.
- Unless the scope of the Federal program changes, giving CSS staff the authority to compel cooperation of establishing or enforcing a parenting plan on both parents....most are going to go on being difficult in wanting to agree on, or stick to a plan. There is little motivation to do so because no one holds the parents accountable.

### Key Themes From the Focus Groups With Workers

Ten child support workers participated in one of two 75-minute focus groups that CPR organized and conducted. They were drawn from seven of the eight counties in which the pilot project was conducted.

### Implementation of the coParenter Pilot Project Differed by County

Counties differed in the manner in which the pilot project was conducted. For example, Larimer County limited the pilot to two child support workers who handle establishment cases who were instructed to offer the coParenter app to their pool of eligible cases. Although leadership was supportive of the pilot, they did not want “too many hands in the pot.” Arapahoe County, on the other hand, viewed the coParenter app as consistent with the county’s longstanding commitment to early intervention and required all its workers to participate in the pilot and offer it to parents in cases that met the eligibility criteria. Workers in Arapahoe County have mixed caseloads comprised of establishment and enforcement cases, so all workers were trained on the coParenter app and told to use it. Workers reported being “reminded all the time by management about the app,” and spending a lot of time on the phone explaining it and checking on the status of parent usage. To contrast, Denver County limited pilot project participation to the worker who served as the fatherhood coordinator and tried to use the app with clients who attended her fatherhood classes. Establishment workers in Denver County did not integrate the app in their case processing practices.

### General Reactions to the coParenter Pilot Project

Workers had positive things to say about the pilot project. They felt that the forms, information, and materials that were developed for the pilot were useful and liked the fact that they could attach something about parenting time to the Notice of Financial Responsibility that they mailed NCPs in new cases. Workers in another county said that “they loved the idea” of the coParenter app, that it was a “fabulous concept,” and that it was very gratifying when parents were receptive to it.

### Challenges Due to the Timing of the Pilot Project

One challenge pertained to the newness of the coParenter app opportunity and the short duration of the pilot project. Thus, it was hard for some workers to remember to refer to the app, introduce it, and explain it. As one observed, “I kept forgetting because it was not part of my routine.” To contrast, another worker did not find it hard to remember because it ultimately simplified her job. Here’s how she explained it: “I sent the invite at scheduling and told them to get the parenting plan on the app done in one week. I checked my invites every day to see if their profile was created. If they hadn’t created one, I sent them a second invite....If they could figure out the number of overnights they wanted, it made my job (of calculating the child support order) easier.” The timing issue that frustrated this worker was the short duration of the pilot project and its premature and abrupt end. As this worker put it, “By November and December of 2021, we had all the kinks worked out, and then the project ended.” Still a third timing issue that affected the pilot project was its conduct during the COVID pandemic. For the duration of the pilot, nearly all child support work was done remotely, with “no hands-on contact.” According to some workers, “not having them in the office was a big limitation,” making it very hard to communicate with parents and engage them in the coParenter app.

### Challenges With Case Requirements

Some workers found the pilot project requirements too limiting and felt constrained by the restriction of the pilot to new child support cases that involved the establishment of orders using APA. For example, one worker was frustrated by her inability to engage parents who were seeking modification of a previously established child support order. Others said many cases were inappropriate because they did not meet some of the pilot requirements such as the absence of a Non-Disclosure Indicator (NDI).

### Technical Challenges With the coParenter App

All workers found the technical aspects of coParenter challenging and cited a variety of “technical hiccups.” Parents “struggled” with the instructions to use it. If an eligible parent was at the child support office, some workers would do the download and onboarding process with them. But since workers did not have direct access to the app and they could not help parents from afar, the app was viewed as overly complicated. “Even young tech savvy people” found it tough to use, and the majority of parents struggled.

Technical features of the coParenter app were frustrating for workers too. Thus, one worker complained about the inability to see the parenting plan after it was done, or if only one parent was willing to sign. Still others reported that they needed to “iron out the process” of using the app and coordinating filings with the court at the beginning of the project. Or that it added additional tasks to the establishment of child support orders which made it more difficult for them to perform within required timeframes. Finally, one worker reported that the coParenter mediator did not cover all the issues that needed to be addressed and that she needed to coach the mediator to deal with holidays, notifying the other parent about out-of-state trips, and tax filing arrangements.

### Challenges Getting Parents to Use the coParenter App

Workers agree that the biggest stumbling block to using the app was getting the CPs to use it. As one worker put it, “The custodial parent had already made up their mind about why he wasn’t good enough to see the child.” In the words of another, “custodial parents just want child support and don’t want to have anything to do with parenting time.” Almost invariably, workers felt that “dads wanted it, but moms did not.” With few exceptions, workers had hoped that the coParenter app intervention had been “more mandatory.” Nevertheless, since parenting and coparenting aren’t mandatory, and mothers have no

incentive to participate in coParenter or other parenting time interventions, workers report getting stiff “push back from moms.” In the words of another worker, “As long as child support can’t compel it, we can’t get this type of initiative off the ground.” Some workers tried to address parental resistance to parenting time. With CPs, they emphasized the benefits of having both parents involved. With NCPs, they asked what they were doing to address the other parent’s concerns about their living situation, the people with whom they associate and their use of alcohol. In at least one case, a mother who used the app and was agreeable about developing a parenting plan, backed out because she felt “bullied.”

#### Transforming Parenting Plans Into Court Orders and Coordinating With the Court

It was rare for clients to use the coParenter app and produce a signed parenting plan, so workers were particularly frustrated with obstacles that their clients encountered when they produced a plan and wanted to turn it into a court order. Some counties required parents to participate in a phone hearing to confirm their signed parenting agreement. In at least one instance, a parent missed the phone hearing, the court would not reschedule, and the parents were left with a signed plan that did not become a court order. Workers and parents were surprised and disappointed by the requirement to participate in a hearing to obtain a court order. No comparable hearing is required before negotiated child support arrangements become court orders. Some workers felt as though this requirement contradicted the purpose of administrative processes and that the delay it introduced allowed more opportunity for conflict to develop and for the plan to fall apart. In the words of one worker:

The court didn’t understand the project and what it was about...The whole reason to do an APA is to avoid going to court. Going forward we need the court process to be easier and to not require them to appear. It needs to happen quickly so that conflict doesn’t happen.

#### Other Challenges to Addressing Parenting Time

Workers are confused about what they are permitted to do with parents regarding parenting time and what is forbidden either because it is an unallowable child support activity and/or because it might be construed to be the unauthorized practice of law. For example, one worker wondered whether telling a father that he could request a hearing to address parenting time as part of his JV filing might be viewed as giving legal advice. In a similar vein, they wondered whether they were at liberty to tell parents about Talking Parents, a free coparenting website and/or distribute the fill-in-the-blank parenting plan that Colorado developed that is on the Colorado Judicial Department website. As one worker put it, “I protect myself by not learning much about this.”

#### Worker Recommendations

Some child support workers want to get trained in mediation techniques (or use the training they already have) to address parenting time themselves in negotiation conferences that they conduct. In their view, it is most convenient and effective to address child support and parenting time all together which they feel can be accomplished within the time limits that their county allots for a negotiation conference. Larimer and Arapahoe Counties allocate 60 minutes for a negotiation conference. According to the Preamble of the 2016 Child Support Modernization Rule, regular child support funds can be used to coordinate child support orders with parenting time agreements as long as the staff time involved is kept to a minimum and the parents agree on the parenting time arrangements. Indeed, just prior to the COVID pandemic shutdown and the start of the coParenter pilot project, Mesa County had developed a draft plan to implement its own pilot project using the eight workers in its office who are certified mediators to

address parenting time during the negotiation conference. Mesa County hopes to revive this initiative in coming months.

Another suggestion was that Colorado use simpler online resources like Talking Parents, a free website and app that parents can use to communicate with one another, store documents and coordinate activities pertaining to coparenting time. Although it currently does not contain a parenting plan tool, they suggested that Colorado explore the feasibility of augmenting it to accommodate this new need and/or linking users to the online Colorado parenting plan tool.

A third suggestion entailed training the Colorado judiciary and other court personnel on the parenting time needs of parents in the child support system and developing a consistent, simple approach to help interested parents obtain a parenting time order. Workers support the idea of mandating the development of a parenting plan and/or the attempt to develop one with a mediator or the Self Represented Litigant Coordinator (SRLC) who is available in each judicial district.

## Summary

The coParenter Technology and Parenting Time Services Project sought to help parents in the Colorado child support program establish parenting time plans that could be added to their child support orders by extending to them free access to a telephone app designed for that purpose. The app/platform that was used in the pilot project is known as coParenter, which was developed by Hyphenus, and is used by the general public to reduce parental conflict and facilitate coparenting following separation and divorce. Although coParenter has been used with court populations in the U.S. and Canada in prior demonstration projects, it had not been used with parents in the child support system who typically obtain child support orders during their interactions with that agency without attention being paid to their issues concerning access and visitation or parenting time.

An evaluation conducted by CPR assessed utilization of the coParenter app by child support workers and the parents they attempted to engage in its use. The evaluation also aimed to gather information on client and worker experiences with the coParenter app and their reactions to it. Finally, the evaluation incorporated information from Hyphenus personnel on lessons learned, and recommendations from child support workers on how to improve the incorporation of parenting time plans into child support orders, and alternative approaches to achieving this objective that Colorado might consider pursuing in the future.

Conducted in eight Colorado counties, the coParenter pilot project targeted biological parents with legally straightforward, non-contested cases who were eligible to establish child support orders using an expedited APA rather than a judicial proceeding. Project procedures called for child support workers to introduce the app to eligible clients as early as possible in the process of establishing a child support order using a variety of outreach methods and to reiterate information about the app and re-send the invitation to use it in subsequent reminders to clients about relevant child support actions including the scheduled negotiation conference date and time. A project flyer was developed highlighting the benefits of the coParenter app. Workers tracked client reactions to the invitation to use the app on a ProTool developed for them by Hyphenus and sent parents repeat invitations and reminders. Parents had the opportunity to meet individually with a coach, or together with a mediator, to resolve any outstanding issues dealing with their parenting time plan using a written communication tool similar to texting. If parents developed a parenting plan it was added to the child support order and filed initially as a JV court action though the child support and parenting time orders were later transferred to a new DR court action. If the parents

who attempted to use the coParenter app did not generate a parenting plan, the child support order was developed following normal procedures associated with the APA and filed as a JV court action.

Client enrollment in the coParenter pilot project began in late February 2021 and ended at the end of December 2021 when the coParenter app was unexpectedly sold by Hyphenus to Completercase.com. An extract of data maintained by Hyphenus on invitations by workers, acceptances by parents, and app usage by parents during the eight-month pilot project revealed extremely low levels of usage by both workers and parents. Thus, during the eight-month pilot project, only 21 child support workers of the 58 who were asked to participate in the pilot project and for whom Hyphenus created a ProTool, sent invitations about coParenter to parents in the child support caseload, and only nine made more than two referrals. Parent response was also sparse. Of the 139 invitations that workers sent to parents, a total of 81 acceptances (“connections”) were recorded. Of the parents who accepted the invitation to use coParenter, 69 indicated they had a coParent connection (were couples consisting of a CP and an NCP in the same case). Once enrolled on the coParenter app, relatively few parents participated and supplied the requested information, accessed mediation services and/or generated a parenting plan. Indeed, only 17 parents who “connected” with the app completed the requested information about the parents and children. Outcomes for parents who utilized the app were more favorable. A total of 38 parents participated in free mediation services, and 23 generated a parenting plan which translates into an agreement rate of 61%.

Since only five parents completed the online survey that CPR developed to gain information on their experiences using the app, we relied on information given by child support workers to gauge parent reactions to the app as well as its perceived effectiveness and limitations. A total of 28 child support workers completed an online survey about the pilot project and the coParenter app that CPR designed and analyzed. Ten child support workers participated in one of two 75-minute focus groups that CPR organized and conducted. In addition, three Hyphenus staff members were interviewed.

The biggest reason that workers cited for the limited use of the coParenter by parents in the child support caseload was the disinterest of CPs. In their view, nearly all NCPs want parenting time plans, but many CPs do not want NCPs to have a relationship with the children and are uninterested in parenting time plans. The absence of any mechanism in child support cases to compel CPs to consider parenting time made it difficult to get the coParenter initiative off the ground.

Other reasons workers gave for their limited referral activity and/or lack of app use by parents were:

- The short timeframes for establishing child support orders were incompatible with the mission of enticing parents to use the coParenter app and develop parenting plans.
- There was confusion about how to file a parenting plan with a negotiated child support agreement. Judges in some jurisdictions required hearings to review agreed-upon parenting plans which added an additional, unexpected step to the order establishment process. Workers wanted more clarification and streamlining of the judicial process.
- The app was complicated and technologically challenging for parents. Workers wanted more feedback from the app about client status and experiences. They also wanted to be able to see the parenting plan on the app when it was completed. Finally, they wanted the coParenter mediator to reach out to both parents directly if one wanted help with parenting time.
- Referrals about the coParenter app would carry more weight if they came from the court rather than a child support worker. Child support clients need in-person help to create a parenting plan.

- The coParenter pilot project ended prematurely, just when the “kinks” were finally worked out. The project was conducted during COVID when there was almost no in-person contact between workers and clients.
- Parenting time and mediation are not well understood by parents and workers in the child support system and a better marketing effort about these issues and the app was needed.

Despite these challenges, some workers felt that the coParenter app was a “fabulous concept,” appreciated having a resource dealing with parenting time, and were gratified when parents were receptive and used it.

Asked on an online survey to rate the usefulness of a variety of other interventions that might help child support clients with parenting time, more than half of child support workers rated the following as “very useful:” A waiver from the court filing fee for a parenting time filing (76%); free mediation and free legal services (71%); a marketing effort to make parents and professionals better aware of the importance of a parenting time plan and the resources that exist to help child support clients (67%); a regularly scheduled legal clinic parents could attend (67%); a staff person at court to help (65%); a staff person at the child support agency to help (57%); and a telephone hotline parents could call for help (52%).

Asked about other interventions that might help child support clients with their parenting time needs, child support workers suggested that Colorado consider the following:

- Adding a parenting plan feature to a simpler online resource like Talking Parents;
- Developing a simple, standard parenting plan and mandating its use across the state;
- Requiring parents to attempt to develop a more customized plan with the assistance of a mediator or the Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator (SRLC) in each judicial district.
- Allowing child support workers who are trained in mediation techniques to help interested parents develop a parenting plan during their scheduled negotiation conference.

All child support workers in the focus groups would welcome clarification about what they are permitted to do with parents regarding parenting time and what is forbidden either because it is an unallowable child support activity, and/or it might be construed to be the unauthorized practice of law.

## Conclusions

Like previous evaluations of free mediation services, online parenting plans using interactive A2J software, virtual access and visitation clinics, and virtual mediation services, this evaluation of the coParenter app finds low rates of referral activity by child support workers and low take-up rates by parents in the child support caseload. Parents targeted for these resources are typically unaware of them and do not access or use them although the high agreement rate among those who used the coParenter app indicates that it can be effective with child support clients. Another finding that is common to all parenting-time interventions in the child support system is worker confusion about allowable parenting time activity, the boundaries between providing information and legal advice to parents, and the timeframes for establishing a child support order. Child support workers have been told for decades that child support and parenting time are legally distinct issues. Not surprisingly, many are confused, reluctant, ill-informed, and/or too busy to provide any type of parenting-time help. Finally, all parenting time evaluations find that CPs are frequently uninterested in participating and resist invitations to engage in the development of parenting time plans. Nor can they be readily coaxed to change their mind. Unlike divorcing parents who must address custody and visitation issues as part of a divorce decree and who are frequently

required to attend parent education classes and/or an orientation to mediation, unmarried parents typically get an isolated child support order and must initiate a separate legal filing in a separate court to get parenting time issues addressed.

Resolving these issues will require making structural, procedural, training, and service changes to the process of establishing safe access arrangements for never-married parents in the child support system. At a minimum, judicial officers who sign off on child support orders must be able to approve agreed-upon parenting time plans that never-married parents develop and incorporate them into a single filing in a streamlined manner without extra cost or effort to the parents. Policymakers will also have to clarify what child support workers can and cannot do regarding parenting time during child support interventions dealing with orders establishment, modification, and enforcement. The Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs final rule allows workers to make *de minimis* interventions dealing with parenting time,<sup>2</sup> but it is unclear what this means in practical terms. It will be critical to train child support and judicial personnel on the importance of parenting time plans, mediation, and the online and face-to-face resources that are available in Colorado to help child support parents with parenting time. Finally, child support and judicial personnel will need to do a better job publicizing these issues and resources to the general public and the parents served in the child support system.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2016). *Final rule: Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs* (AT-16-06). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/policy-guidance/final-rule-flexibility-efficiency-and-modernization-child-support-enforcement>.

Appendix A: Training Slides

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# coParenter Training

Partners:

Colorado Judicial  
Access and Visitation

— Colorado Child Support Services —

coParenter

& Center For Policy Research

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# County Partners

- Arapahoe County
- Boulder County
- Denver County
- Garfield County
- Jefferson County
- Larimer County
- Mesa County
- Montrose County



# Excluded Cases

- Interstate
  - NDI and/or Current Restraining Orders between the parents and/or between the parent and child/ren
  - Child Welfare
  - Caretaker
  - Debt Only
  - Ongoing APR/DR
- 
- ★ Paternity Actions: PROVIDE AFTER PATERNITY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED
  - ★ coParenter is only available in English at this time: If you have Spanish-speaking clients, you can contact the Dispute Resolution Office at 720-625-5940 to be referred to a Spanish-speaking mediator who can schedule mediation at no charge for the client. Customers must mention "Coparenter" to qualify for this free service.

Goal

250

# Your Role


- Introduce the app as it is part of your regular process for establishing an APA order.
- Educate parents about coaching and mediation services.
- Be persistent in reminding parents about the importance of co parenting.
- Follow-up and follow-up again. **Time is running out to get free help with a parenting time plan today!**
  - Use all your tools
    - Call
    - Text
    - Email
    - coParenter Messaging
- Encourage parents to complete the survey about their experience using the app and they will earn a \$20 gift card. (they will receive it 45 days after registration)

# Pro-tool Review

Suggested web browser: Chrome or FireFox

- Email received from: coParenter
- Sign-in Page
- Main Page
- Client Entry Page
- Client Invite List

# Email Invitation

You have been invited to use the Professional Tool  Inbox x



**coParenter** <donotreply@coparenter.com>  
to me ▾



**Dear Sabrina Montoya,**

You have been invited to join the ProTool. From your laptop or desktop, please click the button below. It will open a browser and let you access your new account:

Click on Link 

[Go to Professional Tool](#)

For future sign-ins to the ProTool, please continue to use the same email address and sign-in method.

Hyphenus | [www.hyphenus.com](http://www.hyphenus.com) | [info@coparenter.org](mailto:info@coparenter.org)

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# Sign-in Page



## Welcome to the coParenter ProTool

coParenter is a coParenting Management and Mediation platform that helps parents take a child-centric approach to separation, divorce and coParenting.

Sign-in / Register

 Sign-in With Google

 Sign-in With Email

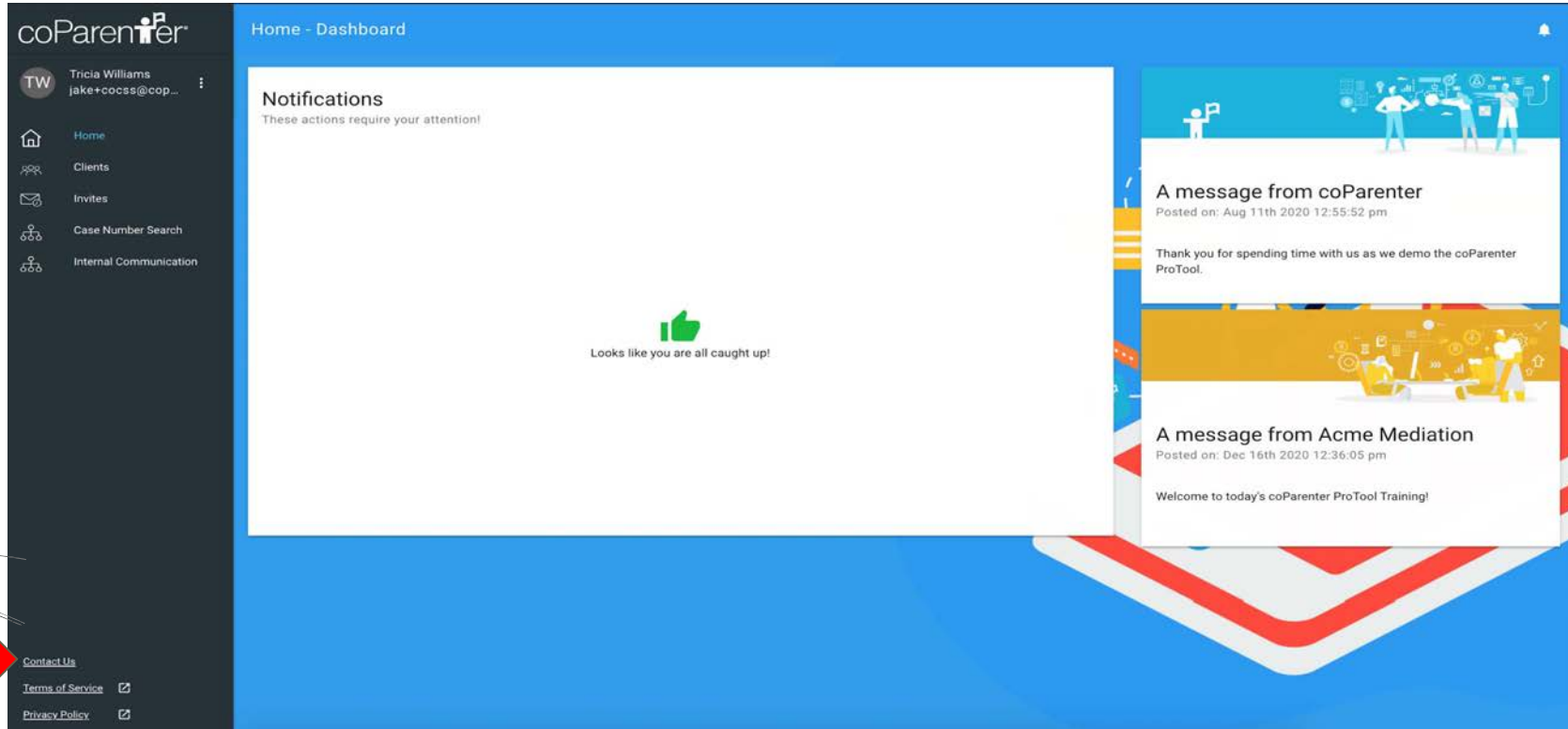
For existing users, please use the same login option you used when you first registered on the coParenter ProTool.

[Terms of Service](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)



# Main Page (Dashboard)



The screenshot displays the coParenter Pro dashboard interface. On the left is a dark sidebar with the user's name 'Tricia Williams' and email 'jake+cocss@cop...'. Below this are navigation icons for Home, Clients, Invites, Case Number Search, and Internal Communication. At the bottom of the sidebar are links for 'Contact Us', 'Terms of Service', and 'Privacy Policy'. The main content area is titled 'Home - Dashboard' and features a 'Notifications' section with the text 'These actions require your attention!'. A large green thumbs-up icon is centered in this area with the message 'Looks like you are all caught up!'. To the right, there are two message cards. The first is from coParenter, dated August 11th, 2020, with the text 'Thank you for spending time with us as we demo the coParenter ProTool.' The second is from Acme Mediation, dated December 16th, 2020, with the text 'Welcome to today's coParenter ProTool Training!'. A cartoon character with a lightbulb above its head is shown on the left, pointing towards the 'Need Help' button.

coParenter Pro

Tricia Williams  
jake+cocss@cop...

Home - Dashboard

Notifications  
These actions require your attention!

Looks like you are all caught up!

A message from coParenter  
Posted on: Aug 11th 2020 12:55:52 pm

Thank you for spending time with us as we demo the coParenter ProTool.

A message from Acme Mediation  
Posted on: Dec 16th 2020 12:36:05 pm

Welcome to today's coParenter ProTool Training!

Need Help

Contact Us  
Terms of Service  
Privacy Policy

# Client Entry Page

× Onboard coParent/Client

First Name *	<input type="text"/>	Last Name *	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number *	<input type="text"/>	Email *	<input type="text"/>

Submit

# Client Invite List

coParenter<sup>™</sup>

TW Tricia Williams  
jake+cocss@cop...

- Home
- Clients
- Invites**
- Case Number Search
- Internal Communication

Contact Us

[Terms of Service](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

## Invites - Acme Mediation

Filter by: Name Search

Reset Table + Invite

Name	Email	Phone Number	Resend	Edit	Delete	Date Created
Rebecca Twissler	jake+rebeccat@coparenter.org	(954) 205-8115				12/16/2020
Rachel Weissman	jake+rachelcss@coparenter.org	(954) 205-8115				12/15/2020
Rebecca Teal	jake+rebecca@coparenter.org	(954) 205-8115				10/22/2020
Eric2 Weiss2	eric+dldemo@coparenter.org	(310) 447-4869				10/20/2020
Felicia Wesley	jake+felicla@coparenter.org	(954) 205-8115				10/14/2020

Rows per page 10 1-5 of 5

# coParenter Tool-Kit

- Pro-tool Review
- Caseworker Guidance and Helpful Hints
  - [How to Link](#)
- Client Flyer



# Guidance & Helpful Hints

## Child Support Technician coParenter Guidance: Introducing coParenter to Clients

**What is Co-Parenting?** Co-parenting happens when parents cooperate, demonstrate mutual support, and put the needs of their children first.

### When should I talk to clients about the coParenter App?

- Introduce co-Parenter to clients at your first opportunity-at intake for **establishment cases only**.
- Give clients the "Client Flyer" highlighting the app.
- Remind parents about coParenter when you remind them of the negotiation conference's date and time. Ask about how it is going using the app in every conversation.

### What key talking points do I need to communicate about coParenter?

- Review the information in the flyer with the client. Explain that using this app is an important step in the child support process (intake, establishment, modification, enforcement). Reassure the parent that you will help them get set up on the app.
- Using the app can help you and your child! Research shows that children thrive when parents cooperate and spend time with their kids.
- Talk about the benefits of a parenting plan: an agreement that describes how much time children spend with each parent and other important decisions. It documents agreements about healthcare, education, activities, religious preferences and anything else meaningful to the parent. Explain:
  - The app guides parents in the process of creating a parenting plan.
  - Professional, free mediators will help you and the co-parent resolve conflicts and reach agreements.
  - When a parenting plan is created (for establishment cases only), the county will file it with the court for FREE. **This is referred as "New case offer" in the flyer. It can save up to \$388 per family.** Filing the plan with the court makes the agreement enforceable.
  - You can receive free individual coaching and parenting education and tips.
  - A scheduling feature makes it easier to plan your child's activities.



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- You can document and share practically everything with the app:
  - A safe, synchronized, dedicated InfoVault lets both parents access their children's health and education records, emergency contact information, and important documents.
  - Communicate through the app at your convenience and export shareable records. Parents can download and print authenticated records of communication. They are securely stored messages, time and date-stamped, and are non-editable.
  - Track progress and document incidents. Use voice-to-text or type entries manually to track emotional milestones, progress, incidents and wellbeing. The journal is private, secure and searchable and each entry can be exported and shared with anyone.
- Tell the parent that he or she should download the app for free today and to start using it. Explain the goal is to create a parenting plan prior to the negotiation conference.
- Let the parent know that the coParenter app and everything on it is FREE and accessible on iOS and Android smartphones.
  - ★ If the parent needs cell phone service, tell them about this free governmental benefit program offering FREE cell phone service: <https://qlinkwireless.com/>
  - ★ By signing up right away the parent receives free lifetime access: Save \$120 per year!
- Ask when the parent will download the app. Offer to help the parent download it right now.
- Point out that technical help with the app is available by calling coParenter at 855-933-3232. Information about the app can be found at: <https://coparenter.com/>



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# Client Flyer (2 options)

## FREE PARENTING TIME HELP!

FREE Lifetime coParenter App Access with:

Save \$120/year  
FREE lifetime access

- Custom parenting time plans just for you
- Free on-demand help from professional mediators
- New case offer for free court filing! Save up to \$388 by completing your parenting time plan today
- Built in parenting time calendar
- Schedule smooth holiday and weekend swaps
- Secure sharing of school and medical records
- Easy and quick expense tracking
- Additional parenting tools (Details on the other side)

Save up to \$388  
NEW CASE OFFER!  
FREE court filing

### Compare the benefits:

#### Court

Filing fees (\$350 and up)  
Attorney and mediator fees  
6-8 weeks for a hearing  
Fixed schedule

#### coParenter App

Free filing of agreements  
Free mediators  
On demand  
Make schedule changes



Need cell phone service?  
Get FREE service: <https://qlinkwireless.com/>



Need help with the app?  
Call 855-933-3232

Download & Start Now

Research shows that children who have positive relationships with **both** parents have the best outcomes!

Want to help your children succeed?  
Want to get a parenting time plan to go with your child support order?  
Want to make it easier to work with your child's other parent?

Use the court-approved coParenter app to:

- **Get to yes** - Unlimited service with mediators to help resolve disputes, discuss parenting time, and reach agreements.
- **Receive support** - Get help from professionals like mediators and coaches to think through problems and offer suggestions.
- **Text and communicate directly through the app** - Easily find non-editable, time and date-stamped secure messages. You can even print and share transcripts with a family member, friend, a lawyer or judge!
- **Achieve on-time child exchanges** - Get a clear record of all drop-off and pick-up times.

Need cell phone service?  
Sign up for a free governmental benefit program offering  
FREE cell phone service: <https://qlinkwireless.com/>



coParenter®

## PARENTING TIME HELP FREE.

SAVE \$120/year  
FREE lifetime access

FREE LIFETIME COPARENTER APP ACCESS COMES WITH:

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- Secure sharing of school and medical records
- Easy and quick expense tracking
- Additional parenting tools

SAVE UP TO \$388

FREE court filing of your parenting plan

Compare the benefits:

coParenter App

Free filing of agreements  
Free mediators  
On demand  
Make schedule changes

Court

Filing fees (\$380 and up)  
Attorney & mediator fees  
6-8 weeks for a hearing  
Fixed schedule

Download to Start Now



Need cell phone service?  
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paid for by a Colorado Department of Human Services  
grant to the Colorado Department of Human Services  
Office of Economic Security and Child Support Services

# APA Early Intervention/Waiver of Service

## Inform & Refer

- Use script and helpful hints to inform both parents about coParenter App.
- Provide Client Flyer (if needed)
- Schedule negotiation conference out at least 15 days according to APA rule.
- Enter both parents into pro-tool.

## Follow-up

- 2 days prior to negotiation conference review pro-tool for status of the parenting plan agreement.
- Resend invitation if parent has not accepted the original invite
- Contact both parents via, pro-tool direct messaging, phone call, or text message as a reminder to complete a parenting plan prior to the upcoming conference
- Allow for standard continuation if parents are working on an agreement.

## File

- Enter IVD Case Number into Client Profile
- No Parenting Plan: continue with negotiation conference and complete APA process.
- With Parenting Plan: continue to next slide

# File APA & Parenting Plan

- Continue negotiation conference with parenting plan information for the guidelines
- Manually file ALL paperwork including APA documents into a DR action (follow your county processes)
- Chron APA negotiation conference Outcomes
- Chron coParenter Actions & Problem Log Request to ACSES Helpdesk
  - (Subject/Title): coParenter Notes & Problem Log
  - (Body): Parties participated in coParenter pilot. Parties agreed and signed a parenting plan which will be filed with the APA (stip/temp) order into a manual DR action. Please close APA screens with (Temp order) or (Stipulated order). (Complete Docket Number). (Filing Date).
  - Once problem log is complete, enter order into ACSES

# APA Service of Process

## Inform & Refer

- Schedule negotiation conference out at least 15 days (According to APA procedures)
- Include client flyer with Notice of Financial Responsibility packet to both parents.
- Enter both parents into pro-tool.

## Follow-up

- 2 days prior to negotiation conference review pro-tool for status of the parenting plan agreement.
- Resend invitation if they parents have not accepted the original invite
- Contact both parents via, pro-tool direct messaging, phone call, or text message as a reminder to complete a parenting plan prior to the upcoming conference
- Allow for standard continuation if parents are working on an agreement.

## File

- Enter IVD Case Number into Client Profile
- No Parenting Plan: continue with negotiation conference and complete APA process.
- With Parenting Plan: continue to next slide

# File APA & Parenting Plan

- Continue negotiation conference with parenting plan information for the guidelines
- Manually file ALL paperwork including APA documents into a DR action (follow your county processes)
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  - (Subject/Title): coParenter Notes & Problem Log
  - (Body): Parties participated in coParenter pilot. Parties agreed and signed a parenting plan which will be filed with the APA (stip/temp) order into a manual DR action. Please close APA screens with (Temp order) or (Stipulated order). (Complete Docket Number). (Filing Date).
- Once problem log is complete, enter order into ACSES

# Cases (Enforcement/Modification)

## Inform & Refer

- Utilize the script and helpful hints to inform both parents about the coParenter App.
- Enter both parents into pro-tool.
- Enter IV-D case number into client profile

## Follow-up

- None

## NO Filing Offered

- The county can print the parenting plan for the parents.
- Filing of the parenting plan would need to be done by the parties.
- [Offer Motion to Waive Filing Fee](#)

\*\*\*If you receive an Alert with a new docket number, follow your county process.

# Other Resources

What kind of tech support is available to parents that need additional help with the app?

- Information and online help about the app can be found at: <https://coparenter.com/>
- Technical help with the app is available by calling coParenter at 855-933-3232.
- Parents [How to Link](#)
- How to submit a problem log: Contact your county ACSES Liaison
- Find their self-help center (or any self-help center): [https://www.courts.state.co.us/Self\\_Help/center.cfm](https://www.courts.state.co.us/Self_Help/center.cfm)
- Filing fee information: [https://www.courts.state.co.us/Forms/Forms\\_List.cfm?Form\\_Type\\_ID=176](https://www.courts.state.co.us/Forms/Forms_List.cfm?Form_Type_ID=176)
- [Motion for Filing Fee Waiver](#)
- [Links to Client Flyers and Caseworker Guidance](#)

# Next Steps

- Go live date: February 16th
- Sign in to your pro-tool.
- Download the flyer and tech guidelines.
- Follow-up meeting 6 weeks out to discuss areas of improvement.
- Evaluation





Appendix B: Project Flyer

# FREE PARENTING TIME HELP!

**FREE Lifetime coParenter App Access with:**

Save  
\$120/year  
FREE  
lifetime access

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- New case offer for free court filing! Save up to \$388 by completing your parenting time plan today
- Built in parenting time calendar
- Schedule smooth holiday and weekend swaps
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6-8 weeks for a hearing  
Fixed schedule

### coParenter App

Free filing of agreements NEW cases  
Free mediators  
On demand  
Make schedule changes



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Start Now**



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Need cell phone service?

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FREE cell phone service: <https://qlinkwireless.com/>



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## Appendix C: Survey for Parents

First, we have a few questions about the children you wanted a parenting time order for.

**Q1.** Are you the mother or father of these children?

- 1 – Mother
- 2 – Father

**Q2.** Were you ever married to the other parent of these children?

- 1 – Yes
- 2 – No

**Q3.** Did you ever live together?

- 1 - Yes
- 2 - No

**Q4.** What are the ages of the children you had together? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q5.** Before using the coParenter app, where did the children live most of the time?

- 1 – Pretty much equal time with both parents
- 2 – With you
- 3 – With the other parent

**Q6.** Before using the coParenter app, did you and the other parent have an agreement about how often each parent would see the children?

- 1 – Yes, we had a written agreement
- 2 – Yes, we had an informal verbal agreement
- 3 – No, we did not have an agreement

**Q7.** If there was a written or informal agreement, how often did the non-custodial parent see the children?

- 1 – More than once a week
- 2 – About once a week
- 3 – Several times a month
- 4 – Several times a year
- 5 – Almost never or never
- 9 – Not applicable, no agreement

**Q8.** Were you at the child support office to:

- 1 – Create a child support order
- 2 – Change a child support order
- 3 – Deal with a payment problem

Next, we have a few questions about your experience with the coParent app.

**Q9.** How did you first learn about the coParenter app?

- 1 – Received a flier in the mail
- 2 – A child support worker sent you a link via text
- 3 – A child support worker sent you a link via email
- 4 – A child support worker told you about it

9 – Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q10. Did you do any of the following?	No, I did not do this	Yes, I did this	If you did this, how helpful was it?		
			Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful
Went to the website and looked at the app	1	2	1	2	3
Filled out some information about my case	1	2	1	2	3
Completed a parenting plan	1	2	1	2	3
Uploaded documents	1	2	1	2	3
Used Messaging	1	2	1	2	3
Went to mediation	1	2	1	2	3
Made a holiday schedule	1	2	1	2	3

**If all answers to Q10 are “no”**

**Q11.** Why didn't you do any of these things?

- 1 – Seemed too complicated
- 2 – Lack of time
- 3 – Lack of regular internet access
- 4 – The other parent would not participate
- 5 – I wasn't interested
- 5 – Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 – Not applicable

**Q12.** Did the other parent work on the app?

- 1 – No
- 2 – Yes, the other parent also looked at the app
- 3 – Don't know

**Q13.** If the other parent did not work on the app, did you talk to the other parent about the app?

- 1 – No, I did not contact the other parent
- 2 – Yes, but the other parent wasn't interested
- 9 – Not applicable

**Q14.** How easy or difficult was it to work on the coParenter app?

- 1 – Very easy
- 2 – Fairly easy
- 3 – Fairly difficult
- 4 – Very difficult
- 5 – Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Q 15.** Did you and the other parent have a mediation session with someone at coParenter?

- 1 – No
- 2 – Yes

**Q 16.** If you did not have a mediation session with someone at coParenter, did you want to try mediation?

- 1 – No
- 2 – Yes
- 9 – Not applicable

**Q17.** If you tried mediation, which best describes what happened in your session?

- 1 – We didn't work out a plan, but at least we started talking about it
- 2 – We came up with parts, but not all of a parenting plan
- 3 – We worked out a parenting plan
- 9 – Not applicable, we did not try mediation

**Q17.** Would you recommend the coParenter app to a friend who wanted to develop a parenting time plan?

- 1 – Definitely would
- 2 – Probably would
- 3 – Probably would not
- 4 – Definitely would not

Now we have a few questions about your current situation.

**Q18.** Since you visited the coParenter site, has your relationship with the other parent changed?

- 1 – Yes, it is better
- 2 – No, it is the same
- 3 – Yes, it is worse

**Q19.** Since you visited the coParenter site, has the amount of time the parent who does not generally live with the youngest child increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

- 1 – Increased
- 2 – Decreased
- 3 – Stayed about the same

**Q20.** What would make the coParenter site more useful? \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Finally, in what county is your child support order?

**Q21.** County

- 1 -Arapahoe
- 2 – Boulder
- 3 – Denver
- 4 – Garfield
- 5 – Jefferson
- 6 – Larimer
- 7 – Mesa
- 8 - Montrose

If you would like to receive a \$20 e-gift card to Walmart, please provide your email address:

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We will be selecting a few individuals to talk with them a little more about their experience with the coParenter app. If you would like to be considered, please provide a name and phone number below.

**If you are selected will receive another \$20 e-gift card to Walmart for taking part in a brief interview.**

**Name:**

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**Phone Number:**

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## Appendix D: Survey for Workers

The Center for Policy Research is interested in learning about your experiences with and thoughts about the coParenter App.

This survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete, and your answers are confidential.

At the end of the survey, you can share your email address to receive a \$15 e-gift card to Amazon for completing the survey.

Thank you!

### **Background Information**

Which best describes your work setting?

1. State Judicial staff
2. State Child Support Services
3. County or District Court Judicial staff
4. County Child Support Services
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

In which county do you work?

1. Arapahoe
2. Boulder
3. Denver
4. Garfield
5. Jefferson
6. Larimer
7. Mesa
8. Montrose

What is your position?

1. Director/Administrator
2. Supervisor
3. Caseworker or Technician
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you worked in child support?

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1-2 years
3. 3-5 years
4. 6-10 years
5. 11 or more years

### **Training and Use of the coParenter App**

Did you do any of the following? Select all that apply

1. Watched YouTube videos on the coParenter App
2. Attended a training session on the coParenter App
3. Attended some monthly meetings with DCSS about the coParenter App
4. Attended most or all monthly meetings with DCSS about the coParenter App
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about the amount of training you had on the coParenter App?

1. Too little
2. Just about right
3. Too much
4. I didn't get any training on the coParenter App

How clear were the instructions about when and how to use the coParenter App?

1. Not clear at all—very confusing
2. Pretty clear—a little confusing
3. Very clear—I knew what to do and how to do it
4. Not applicable

Did you ever contact someone at CDSS or Hyphenus for help with the coParenter App?

1. No
2. Once or twice
3. More often

If your answer was yes, how helpful was the support you received from CDSS or Hyphenus on the coParenter app?

1. Not too helpful-----Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_
2. Somewhat helpful-----Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_
3. Very helpful
4. Not applicable or Don't know

**Attempts to Use the coParenter App**

How often did you try to use the coParenter App in establishment cases?

1. Never
2. Once or twice
3. Sometimes
4. Regularly
5. Not applicable

Who did you try to use it with?

1. Custodial parents (CPs)
2. Noncustodial parents (NCPs)
3. Both CPs and NCPs
4. Didn't try using it
5. Not applicable

Was your supervisor/administrator supportive of you spending time explaining the coParenter App to clients?

1. Yes, very supportive
2. Yes, somewhat supportive
3. Neither supportive, nor unsupportive
4. Not too supportive
5. Don't know
6. Not applicable

How did you invite parents to use the coParenter App? Select all that apply

1. Sent them a flyer by U.S. mail
2. Sent them a link by text
3. Sent them a link via email
4. Told them about it at the negotiation conference
5. Told them about it at another time \_\_\_\_\_

- 6. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Not applicable

**How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences with child support clients and the coParenter App?**

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Not Applicable
In general NCPs want parenting time plans	1	2	3	4	9
In general CPs want parenting time plans	1	2	3	4	9
I don't have in-person/ telephone contact with NCPs	1	2	3	4	9
I don't have in-person/ telephone contact with CPs	1	2	3	4	9
I didn't have time to talk about the coParenter App with parents	1	2	3	4	9
The timeframes for order establishment are too short to deal with parenting time or the coParenter App	1	2	3	4	9
NCPs were uninterested in the coParenter App	1	2	3	4	9
CPs were uninterested in the coParenter App	1	2	3	4	9
One parent wanted to use the coParenter App, the other parent did not	1	2	3	4	9
I sent out coParenter App invites regularly but NCPs didn't accept	1	2	3	4	9
I sent out coParenter App invites regularly but CPs didn't accept	1	2	3	4	9
One parent was involved with the coParenter App, the other parent wasn't	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App didn't work in default cases	1	2	3	4	9
Parents said they created a parenting plan but couldn't find it on the coParenter App	1	2	3	4	9
I wanted more feedback from clients about their experiences using the coParenter App	1	2	3	4	9
I wanted feedback from the coParenter App about client experiences using it	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App only worked if both parents were friendly and cooperative	1	2	3	4	9
The mediator through the coParenter App should have reached out to parents directly if one parent wanted help	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App would work better in modification cases	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App would work better in enforcement cases	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App would work better if referrals came from the court	1	2	3	4	9
Child support clients need in-person help to create a parenting plan	1	2	3	4	9
Parenting plans aren't a big issue for child support clients	1	2	3	4	9
The coParenter App was too complicated	1	2	3	4	9

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Not Applicable
I didn't know how to pitch the coParenter App to parents	1	2	3	4	9
How to get the parenting plan filed in court was confusing	1	2	3	4	9
A better marketing effort around the coParenter App was needed	1	2	3	4	9
NCPs don't want a relationship with children	1	2	3	4	9
CPs don't want NCPs to have a relationship with children	1	2	3	4	9

**How big a problem was the following for child support clients regarding the coParenter App?**

	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Major Problem	Not Applicable
1 It seemed too complicated	1	2	3	9
2 They didn't have time to use it	1	2	3	9
3 They lacked regular internet access	1	2	3	9
4 It required technological knowledge	1	2	3	9
5 The other parent would not participate	1	2	3	9
6 They weren't interested	1	2	3	9
7 Their relationship with the other parents was too tense to use it	1	2	3	9
8 They had friendly relationships and didn't need a parenting plan	1	2	3	9
9 The referral procedure was challenging	1	2	3	9
10 Domestic violence or other safety issues	1	2	3	9
11 They had too much other stuff on their mind to use it	1	2	3	9
12 The other parent lived in a different state	1	2	3	9
13 It was a caretaker case	1	2	3	9
14 I couldn't communicate with parents in another language	1	2	3	9
15 COVID interfered	1	2	3	9
16 Other _____	1	2	3	9

Using the numbers 1-16 above, what are the top three problems child support clients had with the coParenter App?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**The coParenter App pilot project was less successful than we had hoped. How big a problem was the following in explaining why this was the case?**

	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Major Problem	Not Applicable
1 The pilot program ended too soon	1	2	3	9
2 The pilot program was impacted by COVID	1	2	3	9
3 Parenting time and mediation aren't well understood by workers	1	2	3	9
4 Parenting time and mediation aren't well understood by parents	1	2	3	9
5 The process of referring parents to the coParenter App was too complicated	1	2	3	9

	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Major Problem	Not Applicable
6 Workers needed to be required to refer parents to the coParenter App	1	2	3	9
7 Workers weren't interested in referring parents to the coParenter App	1	2	3	9
8 Parents weren't interested in using the coParenter App	1	2	3	9
9 The child support system and the courts should figure out parenting time for child support clients - not workers	1	2	3	9
10 Other _____	1	2	3	9

Using the numbers 1-10 above, what are the top three problems that impacted the coParenter App pilot program?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**How useful would the following be to help child support clients with parenting time?**

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Not Applicable
1 A telephone hotline they could call for help	1	2	3	9
2 A staff person at the child support agency to help	1	2	3	9
3 A staff person at the court to help	1	2	3	9
4 A standard parenting plan giving the NCP terms or things like every other weekend and alternate holidays, etc. that we could just hand out	1	2	3	9
5 Automatic parenting time that parents wouldn't have to apply for	1	2	3	9
6 Continuing use of the coParenter App	1	2	3	9
7 A different type of App to create a parenting plan	1	2	3	9
8 A marketing effort to make parents and professionals better aware of the importance of a parenting time plan and the resources that exist to help child support clients with parenting time	1	2	3	9
9 A regularly scheduled legal clinic they could attend	1	2	3	9
10 A waiver from the court filing fee for a parenting time filing	1	2	3	9
11 Free mediation services	1	2	3	9
12 Free legal services	1	2	3	9
13 Other _____	1	2	3	9

Using the numbers 1-13 above, what are the top three approaches to parenting time for child support clients that you think are best?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything else that you would like to share about the coParenter App or what child support should do to facilitate parenting time?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please share your email address to receive a \$15 e-gift card to Amazon for completing this survey.

\_\_\_\_\_