

March 23, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of our local La Grande court facilitation program, and specifically in support of the family law services provided by our Family Law Coordinator, Teala Sunderman.

In my role as facilitator for the monthly Helping Children Cope with Divorce Class and facilitator for two parenting classes during the year, I have regular contact with Teala Sunderman and many of the people she helps to navigate the court system. I also work closely with Teala on the Family Law Advisory Committee.

Each month during the Helping Children Cope with Divorce class, several people express gratitude for the service that Teala provides in walking them through the process steps of court and paperwork that goes with it. She is also the first personal and human touch in a very difficult process for folks. Teala provides answers to the questions of legal procedures and helps people know what to expect. They are always willing to contact Teala again for help, if they need it.

She is also the person who registers and checks people in for the Helping Children Cope with Divorce class, and they are always comforted to see someone they know and trust to give them sound information.

Because Teala is nonjudgemental and personable, people are not threatened by her position. She is usually one of their first contacts in navigating the legal family system, and she is invaluable in guiding folks to proceed appropriately and with decreased confusion. This service is very helpful to these people who are often in a crisis mode. It also makes the process smoother for me in my role, and for judges and attorneys dealing with these clients.

In her role as Family Law Coordinator, Teala is also the glue which keeps the Family Law Advisory Committee on track and continually improving and coordinating our services and procedures. She brings new information to the table, facilitates actions being taken, and is invaluable in keeping projects focused. She also coordinates the dissemination of pertinent information to county agencies.

I can't imagine the chaos that would ensue if the position of Family Law Coordinator was not here. Though Teala is a huge part of the effort that makes this an important position in the La Grande court system, the role is invaluable to the clients and others within the system. The title, Coordinator, is perfect, because that is the function of that position, and our Coordinator, Teala Sunderman, exemplifies the role.

Respectfully,

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March 26, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I have been affiliated with the Circuit Court in Union County for almost eight years as a court-connected mediator for Domestic Relations cases. I work with parties to resolve custody and parenting time disputes. I am writing this letter to support the continuation of funds for the family law programs and especially for the role of Family Law Coordinator.

Many of the parents referred to me by the court are very young, and many are low-income. All are very anxious about what is about to happen with their children. Most have very limited understanding of court processes, but are unable to afford legal representation. The Family Law Coordinator is crucial for unrepresented parties. She is the main reason cases go from start to finish and get resolved. Even when the parties resolve their disputes in mediation, there are more steps to take that the parties must do themselves. Our Family Law Coordinator (Teala Sunderman) helps parents follow through, and encourages them to work hard to resolve their disputes. She helps to calm parents, which help them to focus on their children's best interests. I have heard lots of parents say how helpful Teala has been for them.

The Family Law Coordinator also fulfills a crucial role for represented clients. She provides consistent information to everyone, parties or their attorneys. She organizes the court-required "Helping Children Cope" parent education course, and has been instrumental in developing its curriculum and insuring that it is a highly effective program. I have heard parents ask each other if they have gone to the parent ed course, because "it really helped me to see what we need to do for the children."

Another crucial role of the Family Law Coordinator is as the central organizer for the local Family Law Advisory Committee (FLAC). Children with separated parents experience less conflict when their parents get cooperative support from court staff, judges, attorneys, mediators and other community partners. This cooperative support begins with the FLAC and relies on the FLAC meetings. Without the Family Law Coordinator's leadership to keep FLAC meetings going, I doubt the FLAC would operate.

Without this program and the coordinator, court processes would be more difficult, parents would retain conflictual approaches, and children would suffer. I sincerely hope that support is maintained at current or increased levels.

Sincerely,

Robin Stedfeld, MA  
Mediator