

Judge Paul Burmaster addresses the importance of Communication in Family Court cases.



Kansas City, Kansas Jul 17, 2024 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - [Judge Paul W. Burmaster](#) is a District Court Judge in the Johnson County Kansas District Court. He is currently assigned to the Family Law division and presides over divorce cases, parentage cases, and protection order cases.

Communication may seem like a pretty easy thing. We can text, we can email, we can make phone calls, we can send letters through the mail, and some of us even send faxes. What then is the big deal with “communication” in family court cases?

“Proper communication is absolutely vital in family law cases,” says Judge Burmaster. “But not all communication is proper – and that can be complicated.” For instance, in no circumstance should litigants directly email the judge or include the judge in emails to others. The Judge has to remain outside the chain of information exchanged between the parties. The Judge should only learn of information regarding the case through motions, through argument and testimony in court, or through court-ordered reports. And, the Judge’s Administrative Assistant (AA) should be contacted only to schedule hearings or to review reports (when allowed). Neither the AA nor the Judge can answer legal questions.

Parties should feel free to email their own counsel or the opposing parties’ counsel (if they don’t have their own attorney). However, parties should not email each other to negotiate the case if they are represented by counsel – that’s what their attorney is for. They should, however, communicate with each other about ongoing parenting issues for the best interests of the children, unless there is a “no contact” order due to a criminal case or a protection order case or some other reason.

Some communication may be limited by court order, says Burmaster. For instance, the Court may order that parties only communicate regarding parenting issues. Or, the communication may be limited to the use of a particular app, like Our Family Wizard, so that the parties’ exchanges can be monitored and evaluated.

Communication can be complicated. “But it’s nevertheless vital,” says Burmaster. “Cases may languish for months or even years if counsel and parties don’t communicate.” Judge Burmaster suggests that mediation is a great way to address these impasses. “It gives parties an opportunity to speak plainly without all the formality of court. Mediation can even lead to speedy and cost-effective resolution of cases.”

If communication is particularly poor, the Court may order Co-Parenting therapy. “Co-Parenting therapy can be remarkably effective in addressing and treating the dysfunction that many parents face in communicating with their co-parents,” says Judge Burmaster. “Parents often remark that they wish they had known about this therapy years ago.” Parents have even been known to reconcile and dismiss their divorce cases after they find common ground in Co-Parenting therapy.

Whether it’s during the case or after the case, proper communication between parties is vital for healthy families. Parents need to work together to be on the same page for their children, says Burmaster. And they can’t do that unless they communicate. Judge Burmaster urges parents to work together, to communicate in a friendly manner, and to always put their children first.

Judge Burmaster is the second most senior judge in the seven-judge Family Law department of the Johnson County Kansas District Court. He brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to the welfare of children to family law cases in Kansas.

Media Contact

Market News

marketnews@mail.com

Source : Judge Paul Burmaster

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