

LEGALESE

Merriam-Webster defines "Legalese" as:

"legalese: noun le·gal·ese | \ ,lē-gə-'lēz , -'lēz \ Definition of legalese: the specialized language of the legal profession. "I was confused by the legalese in the contract."

For people who aren't lawyers, legalese just plain sucks. You could be listening to people having a conversation, maybe about things that will effect you, and have no idea what those people are saying.

Here's some of the "Legalese" used in Family Court. (Pay attention to the abbreviations, (acronyms) too, as these terms are complicated even worse by frequent use of acronyms.) Also, please note these are MY definitions, (I only used Mirriam-Webster for the word "Legalese") I hope they help.

Alternative Dispute Resolution: ADR

A term used to describe using a method other than arguing in court to resolve a dispute.

Examples are: Mediation and Arbitration.

District Court of Appeal: DCA

There are five of these in Florida. This is where you go to complain if the Family Court Judge makes a mistake on your case.

Dissolution of Marriage: DOM

Means the same thing as "Divorce."

Department of Revenue: DOR

Florida's Government Agency that sues people for Child Support. (It does other things, too, like taxes.)

Litigation: Activities that directly have an effect on your case. For example, trials, mediations, going to court for motions, preparing and sending legal documents. Anything and everything that is for the purpose of working towards resolution of the case.

Marital Settlement Agreement: MSA

The binding contract signed by parties used to write down the resolution of the Marriage issues, such as Alimony, dividing up property and debts, and everything else in regards to the Marriage.

Parenting Plan:

The binding contract signed by parties used to write down the resolution of Parenting issues, such as who gets the child (or children) on what holidays, for how long, who pays for school activities, anything an everything specific to the children. This is different that the Marital Settlement Agreement as it is meant to only be used for aspects of parenting, not for dividing up the ports and pans or credit card debt for a divorce. Also, this same document is used for people in a custody case who have children but are not married.

Mediation:

Where you and your opposition meet with a mediator, who assists in negotiating a settlement of the case. It is confidential and is always ordered in every Family case.

Pro Se: Just means "unrepresented," "not represented by an attorney."

Self-represented Litigant: SRL

This also means "Pro Se Litigant." "Pro Se" means "not represented by an attorney," and the word "Litigant" means someone who is doing those things I described in the last definition.

Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Enforcement Act (Affidavit): UCCJEA

Think of this just as the form with all the boxes that answers the common questions the Judge might have about your children, i.e. where they've lived for the past five years, who might have a claim to custody, if there is a pending child support case, etc.