

# THE MEDIATOR

Mediation Offices of Michael Becker  
Because Experience Matters

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## It Happened Then

On February 16, 1968, the country's first 911 system was put into place in Haleyville, Alabama.

## Quote Me on It

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

Mahatma Gandhi

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## Revised CT Financial Affidavit: What's New

New Financial Affidavit forms have arrived for CT divorces.

Financial Affidavits are sworn statements each spouse must provide regarding their finances. They are critical in any divorce.

The old two-page Financial Affidavit form has been replaced with two alternate forms, a long and a short version. The long form (six pages), is used when income or net assets exceed \$75,000. The short form (four pages) is used in all other cases.

Both new forms ask explicitly for more detailed information about income, expenses, assets and

debts than did the old form. Each is also more clear than was the old form that willful misrepresentations can result in penalties.

So is this an improvement? The early verdict among attorneys and clients seems mixed. Some report that the old form was too basic, and the new forms add important information. Others find the new forms too long and poorly laid out.

If you don't like the new forms, CT Practice Book §25-30 still allows anyone to use their own manuscript Financial Affidavit, so long as they meet the requirements of that section.

## A Successful Marriage: Do Credit Scores Matter?

It seems everyone wants to know how best to select a spouse or long-term partner so as to avoid a break-up down the road. New information suggests that credit scores can be a predictor of whether a relationship will survive.

Two Federal Reserve economists have examined the individual credit scores of millions of couples. Their preliminary results show that the couples with closer

scores have fewer break-ups. Vastly differing credit scores likely reflect differing attitudes toward credit management, money, savings and the like. Couples who differ on these key financial aspects of a relationship are less likely to stay together than those who for the most part agree.

So maybe the time has come to ask for a credit score before tying the knot.

## Tax Stuff

### Home Office Simpler

The home office deduction can be very valuable for those whose principal place of business is their home — even if it isn't their only place of business. But calculating the deduction hasn't always been so easy.

IRS has issued new rules simplifying how to do this. Previously, you had to track actual home expenses (rent, mortgage, utilities, etc.) and multiply them by the percentage of the square footage of the home used as a home office. This meant lots of recordkeeping, calculations — and errors — at tax time.

Now IRS allows a simplified method for calculating the deduction. Just multiply the square footage of the home office (up to 300 square feet) by \$5, and you have the deduction!

You can use either the old or simplified method, whichever yields the higher deduction, and you can switch methods each year. There are some fine distinctions between the two methods, so it's best to consult with a tax advisor to be sure you qualify for the deduction, as well as which method is most beneficial.

## Tools & Tips

There are many apps to help divorced parents keep track of parenting plans, children's activities and other key information. Clients say most work well.



I especially like Our Family Wizard. This website is very comprehensive.

Parents can coordinate calendars and expenses, create message boards, as well as share and store important family information, such as emergency contacts and vital information. Parents can select how often to receive notifications, such as instantly or once a day. There's also an app for Android and iPhones. And it's very easy to use.

Our Family Wizard is available at [www.ourfamilywizard.com](http://www.ourfamilywizard.com). It costs about \$100 per year per parent, and kids' accounts (to see restricted information) are free.

**Michael Becker** is a Westport CT attorney with a Bachelor's Degree in accounting and a Master's Degree in marriage and family therapy. An ACR Advanced Practitioner and an APFM Advanced Mediator, Michael is one of the most experienced mediators in the area. He is also founding Director and twice President of the Connecticut Council for Divorce Mediation, and a James W. Cooper Fellow of the Connecticut Bar Foundation.

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