

Carmel CEO introduces new AI-driven app to support family law cases

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A local entrepreneur is using his own experiences in family court to develop artificial-intelligence-driven technology that makes divorce and child custody proceedings easier for attorneys, clients and the court system.

The development comes as legal professionals seek more ways to use AI technology efficiently and ethically.

Mike Estridge, CEO and founder of Parency LLC, is on the cusp of introducing two software applications dedicated to streamlining the documentation and communication processes in family law matters. The applications, Parency and ParencyLegal, are designed with clients and attorneys in mind, he said.

“We’re using technology to give lawyers modern technology tools to drive better outcomes for kids in divorce and custody situations,” Estridge said.



Mike Estridge created two software applications to streamline documentation and communication processes in divorce and custody proceedings after his own experience with family law. (IBJ photo/Chad Williams)

Estridge built Parency into two entities working toward the same goal: Parency is for families and will be used as a tool for co-parents to communicate with one another in child custody matters. The app also supports uploading documents related to child custody cases, such as school report cards and expenses. ParencyLegal will support attorneys and courts on the legal side of family law matters. Using the app, attorneys can sort through the uploaded documents to ensure compliance with court orders.

from a legal standpoint.

Attorney Portland Schnitzius of Schnitzius Family Law LLC, one of Estridge's consultants, said she supports the technology because of its potential to reduce the number of hours spent on documentation. The technology will act as an assistant to her legal work, she said.

"It's going to bring order to chaos and be able to do it in seconds instead of hours," she said.



Portland Schnitzius

Supporting attorneys and families

Family law can be "organized chaos" Schnitzius told The Indiana Lawyer. Attorneys in the practice often sift through large amounts of data and documents to help clients navigate divorce and child custody cases.

Schnitzius has and continues to advise Estridge on the development of Parency, offering insight into how the software can best meet attorney and client needs. Two of the biggest needs she sees in her own practice are the ability to organize the information she receives from clients and the ability to sort through that information to identify patterns and pertinent information in case documents.

"We're helping them complete financial declarations, and it's very laborious," she said. "If this platform can synthesize and even tell them, 'Here's what you're spending on utilities, average per month over the last 12 months,' that's going to make things easier for our client as well."

Although the exact number of hours spent on each case varies, Schnitzius said it takes a significant portion of time for attorneys and paralegals to work through the discovery process, which includes sorting through information like evidence of communication between parents, bank statements, school records and medical records.

Kena Hollingsworth, founding partner and attorney at Hollingsworth Law Group, told The Lawyer she frequently runs into the same issues and often wishes she had technology that makes the discovery process easier for her and her team.

A practicing divorce attorney for 25 years and a friend of Estridge, Hollingsworth was involved in the early conceptual stages of Parency and continues to help hone the apps to serve users' needs.



Kena Hollingsworth

Some but not all cases have extensive discovery processes, she said, and some cases are more contentious than others. Her firm's mission is built on the concept of "divorce done differently," and it's her hope that Parency can be a tool in that mission.

"While I think it's the most magical thing in the world when parties can put their children first and put their contention down and just do what's in the best interests of their kids, that often isn't the case," she said. "What started as that really has morphed into kind of this two-part system that did not just do what's better for families but also became a significant tool for attorneys to help minimize the manpower."

Both Schnitzius and Hollingsworth emphasized Parency's ability to find common themes and specific information in documents uploaded to the system, something attorneys could do but don't always have the time or bandwidth for. Using artificial intelligence, the software should be able to identify gaps in information, as well.

"We can upload the documents, and AI is going to tell us if they gave us everything, and create a list of deficiencies very specifically," said Schnitzius. "We need a list of deficiencies before we can complain to the other side that they didn't give us everything."

While the use of AI is growing among legal professionals, the question of how secure the technology is remains top of mind.

Estridge said Parency operates in a "closed system," meaning the AI is not trained on client

Parency and ParencyLegal

What they are: Software apps that use artificial intelligence to organize family-law-related documents in centralized digital locations for **attorneys** (ParencyLegal), **courts** (ParencyLegal) and **families/clients** (Parency).

Purpose: Streamline communication and documentation in family law matters, particularly for attorneys handling complex cases.

Projected launch: This summer. The software was developed by Parency LLC CEO Mike Estridge and family law attorneys.

Source: Mike Estridge

Next steps

While Estridge said the software will be ready for launch this month, it'll continue to be tested among family law attorneys to identify any discrepancies or additional needs.

Estridge is also working on introducing the software to courts in central Indiana, including in Hendricks and Hamilton counties.

There is no statewide process to approve the use of technology such as this, said Hamilton Circuit Court Judge Andrew Bloch, who works in family law. Approval is typically on a county-by-county basis. Even then, judges don't require parties in a case to use certain technology.

If a party wanted to use a new product in a case, Bloch said he first wants to see what it is, but "if you both use it and you're liking it and it meets your needs and it meets your economic needs, let's try it," he said.



Andrew Bloch

Schnitzius is currently being trained on using Parency and will continue to test the software through 2026. Once she's ready, she'll begin using it on her own caseload. But she's already optimistic about how the tool will help her practice.

"So often I've said that about this work: I'm trying to find a needle in a haystack in the trial prep, and it's extremely challenging," Schnitzius said. "So this is going to be able to surface patterns and inconsistencies across hundreds of documents and thousands of messages and make connections."•