



DAVID A. PATTON, ESQ.

**Mediator | Temporary Judge (Judge Pro Tem)
Certified Family Law Specialist**



David A. Patton, Esq. has spent more than three decades helping families navigate some of the most financially and emotionally complex disputes of their lives. A Certified Family Law Specialist, founding partner of one of Silicon Valley's largest family law firms, and longtime settlement-focused litigator, Mr. Patton brings a rare combination of trial experience, practical judgment, and real-world empathy to his work as a mediator and private settlement judge.

Before transitioning exclusively into mediation and private judging, Mr. Patton spent more than 30 years litigating complex California family law matters involving:

- High-net-worth divorce
- Business owners and executives
- Business valuation disputes
- Stock options and executive compensation
- Real estate and investment portfolios
- Child custody disputes
- Child and spousal support
- Domestic violence restraining orders
- Pre- and post-marital agreements
- High-conflict divorce litigation

In 1994, Mr. Patton co-founded the firm now known as Lonich, Patton, Ehrlich & Policastri and built its family law division into one of the most prominent family law practices in Northern California, eventually growing into a 20-attorney firm widely recognized throughout Silicon Valley. Over the course of his career, he became known not only for his litigation skills, but for his ability to resolve difficult cases efficiently and strategically before trial whenever possible.

That settlement-oriented mindset has defined Mr. Patton's career. Long before transitioning full-time into mediation, he regularly served as a private mediator, settlement officer, Judge Pro Tem, and arbitrator for the Santa Clara County Superior Court. He has mediated or participated in hundreds of mediations, settlement conferences, and private judge proceedings, and estimates he has directly mediated well over one hundred matters himself.

Attorneys and parties value Mr. Patton for his ability to quickly identify the true barriers preventing settlement. His approach focuses on isolating the issues that matter most to each side, narrowing areas of disagreement, and helping parties realistically evaluate both the legal and emotional risks of continued litigation. Drawing from decades of courtroom and trial experience, he provides candid, practical feedback about likely outcomes while maintaining a calm, professional, and solution-focused environment.

Attorneys and parties frequently select Mr. Patton for difficult family law cases where:

- settlement negotiations have stalled,
- emotions are running high,
- communication has broken down,
- significant financial issues are involved, or
- parties need a realistic assessment of litigation risk and likely court outcomes.

Drawing from decades of trial experience, Mr. Patton helps parties move beyond impasse by narrowing disputed issues, identifying practical solutions, and focusing parties on the financial, emotional, and long-term costs of continued litigation.

Mr. Patton's effectiveness as a neutral is strengthened by something many family law professionals cannot offer: personal perspective. Having gone through a divorce himself, he understands firsthand the emotional toll family law disputes can take on parties and families. He combines that empathy with the ability to remain firm, objective, and focused on resolution. Clients and counsel consistently describe him as experienced, knowledgeable, professional, approachable, and highly effective at getting difficult cases resolved.

Recognized as one of California's leading family law practitioners, Mr. Patton became a Certified Family Law Specialist in 2008, a distinction achieved by only a small percentage of attorneys practicing family law in California. He was later appointed by the State Bar of California to serve as Commissioner/Vice Chair of the Family Law Advisory Committee (FLAC), the committee responsible for drafting, grading, and overseeing California's family law specialist certification examination.

His professional accomplishments have earned extensive recognition throughout the legal community, including:

- AV Preeminent Rating by Martindale-Hubbell
- Super Lawyers selection every year since 2012
- Perfect 10.0 AVVO Rating
- National Association of Distinguished Counsel Top 1% Award
- National Advocates Top 100 Award
- Silicon Valley's Top Attorney Award

Mr. Patton completed advanced mediation training at Harvard Law School and also completed the highly respected Mosten 40-Hour Family Law Mediation Training program. His mediations are known for thorough preparation, practical problem-solving, and a commitment to helping parties avoid unnecessary conflict, expense, and uncertainty whenever possible.

Areas of Expertise

- Complex Family Law Litigation
- Division of Assets and Debts, including:
 - Community vs Separate Property
 - Disclosures
 - Hidden Assets
 - Business Valuation
 - Tracing
 - Transmutation
 - Breach of Fiduciary Duties
 - Fraud

- Stock Options/RSUs
 - Retirement Accounts
- Child Custody, including:
 - Custody Schedules/Agreements
 - Move Aways
 - Alienation/Resistance
 - Substance Abuse
 - Physical/Sexual Abuse
 - Emergency Screenings
 - Brief Focused Assessments
 - Evaluations
 - Modifications
- Child Support, including:
 - Guideline Support
 - Income Available for Support
 - Add Ons
 - Imputation of Income (Medical Evaluations, Vocational Evaluations)
 - Modifications
 - Extraordinary Earners
- Spousal Support, including:
 - Income Available for support
 - Marital Standard of Living
 - Caps
 - Temporary (Guideline) Support
 - Permanent/Judgement Support
 - Imputation of Income (Medical Evaluations, Vocational Evaluations)
 - Modification/Termination
 - Buyouts
- Restraining Orders
- Marital Settlement Agreements/Judgments, including:
 - Enforcement
 - Modifications
 - Set Asides
- Judicially Enforceable Settlements/Enforcement
- Pre-Marital Agreements
- Annulment

Education

Santa Clara University School of Law, J.D., 1987
 Editor, Santa Clara Law Review

University of California, Berkeley, B.A. International Business, B.A. French, 1983

Experience

Lonich Patton Ehrlich PolICASTRI

- Managing Partner | 2016 – 2026
- Founding Partner | 1994 – 2026

Collins & Zapala

- Attorney | 1987 – 1994
- Civil litigation and trial attorney handling insurance defense and plaintiff personal injury matters.

Professional Affiliations

- California Association of Certified Family Law Specialists
- Academy of Professional Family Mediators
- State Bar of California
- Santa Clara County Bar Association

Admissions

- State Bar of California
- U.S. District Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DAVID PATTON, ESQ.

What types of cases does David Patton mediate?

David Patton mediates complex California family law disputes across the full spectrum of issues that arise in high-stakes divorce and family dissolution proceedings. His caseload includes high-net-worth divorce, child custody and parenting plan disputes, child and spousal support, property division, business valuation, executive compensation and stock options, real estate and investment portfolios, domestic violence restraining orders, and pre- and post-marital agreements.

He is particularly sought after for matters involving significant financial complexity; cases where business ownership interests, executive compensation structures, or multi-layered asset portfolios make resolution especially difficult. Parties and attorneys throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and greater California regularly engage Mr. Patton when the legal and financial stakes are highest and when a credible, experienced neutral is essential.

What makes David Patton effective at settling difficult family law cases?

David Patton's effectiveness as a mediator is rooted in more than 35 years of active litigation and trial experience in California family law. Because he spent decades inside the courtroom trying complex cases, he understands, at a practical level, exactly what judges focus on, how financial evidence is evaluated, and where litigation risk is real versus overstated.

That background gives him something most mediators cannot offer: the ability to give parties an honest, credible assessment of likely court outcomes. He doesn't traffic in vague reassurances. He helps each side understand the genuine risks, costs, and uncertainties of continued litigation, financial, emotional, and practical, and then works methodically to find a resolution that is better for everyone than leaving the outcome to a judge.

Mr. Patton also brings a dimension of personal perspective that is rare among family law neutrals. Having navigated a divorce himself, he understands the emotional weight these disputes carry for the people living

through them. He combines that empathy with the discipline to remain objective, focused, and firm when cases require it. Attorneys consistently describe him as someone who moves cases that feel hopelessly stuck.

Is David Patton a Certified Family Law Specialist?

Yes. David Patton earned his Certified Family Law Specialist designation in 2008 through the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization, a distinction held by only a small fraction of attorneys who practice family law in California. Achieving certification requires demonstrated experience, attorney references, ongoing continuing legal education, and passage of a rigorous written examination.

Mr. Patton's credentialing goes beyond holding the certification. He was subsequently appointed by the State Bar of California to serve as Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Family Law Advisory Committee (FLAC), the body responsible for drafting, grading, and overseeing the examination that certifies other California family law specialists. That appointment reflects a level of recognition within the profession that goes well beyond the credential itself.

Does David Patton handle high-net-worth divorce cases?

Yes. High-net-worth divorce was a defining focus of Mr. Patton's litigation practice for more than three decades, and it remains the area where he is most frequently retained as a mediator and private settlement judge. He has worked on cases involving business ownership interests and partnership disputes, executive compensation packages, stock options and equity grants, real estate portfolios, complex investment holdings, and contested spousal and child support calculations in high-income households.

As a founding partner of Lonich Patton Ehrlich Policastri, one of Silicon Valley's most prominent family law firms, Mr. Patton spent his career at the intersection of family law and the financial complexity that defines the Bay Area's professional and entrepreneurial class. That background translates directly into his work as a neutral: he understands the valuation disputes, the liquidity constraints, the community property questions, and the competing expert narratives that define these cases.

What is David Patton's mediation style?

David Patton's mediation approach is direct, well-prepared, and fundamentally practical. He begins by working to understand what each party actually needs from a resolution, not just their stated positions, but the underlying interests and concerns that are driving their behavior. He then focuses the process on narrowing the issues that genuinely divide the parties and finding realistic pathways through the ones that remain.

He does not believe productive mediation comes from keeping everyone comfortable. When parties need an honest assessment of litigation risk, he provides one, candidly, and with the credibility of someone who has litigated these cases for decades. He is known for being calm and professional in his approach while being willing to be direct when that is what the situation requires.

His preparation is thorough. He expects full financial disclosure and engages seriously with the legal and factual details of each matter before the mediation begins. Attorneys who work with him frequently remark that he arrives at the table having already identified the likely pressure points, which means less time circling and more time resolving.

Why do attorneys select David Patton as a private settlement judge or mediator?

Attorneys select David Patton because he brings a rare combination of credentials, practical judgment, and interpersonal skill to difficult cases. His extensive trial background means he can evaluate family law disputes with the same analytical rigor a judge would apply, which gives him credibility with both sides, even in high-conflict matters where parties have deeply entrenched positions.

He is particularly well-suited to cases where settlement negotiations have already stalled, where communication between parties has broken down, or where significant financial issues require a neutral who can engage substantively with complex evidence. His background managing one of Silicon Valley's largest family law practices also means he understands the pressures attorneys face in managing client expectations, litigation costs, and case timelines.

Mr. Patton completed advanced mediation training at Harvard Law School and holds a certificate from the Mosten 40-Hour Family Law Mediation Training program. He has mediated well over one hundred family law matters and has served as a Judge Pro Tem, arbitrator, and settlement officer for the Santa Clara County Superior Court. His reputation throughout the Bay Area and Northern California legal community is built on a consistent track record: cases that felt impossible to resolve get resolved.

David Patton, Esq. serves clients throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley, Santa Clara County, and the greater California region.