

INFORMATION ABOUT CUSTODY AND PARENTING TIME EVALUATIONS

Philosophy and Procedures:

The philosophy of this office in conducting custody/parenting time evaluations is that the children's best interests are my primary concern. Both parents are viewed initially as being equally capable of being custodial parents. Children are seen as dependent beings and emotionally have needs for relationships with both parents. Children should not be involved in the decision making about custody/parenting time and will not be asked directly their parental preference.

Custody/parenting time evaluations are conducted with the full participation of all parties, including disclosure of any and all behavioral health and/or substance use/abuse providers within the past five years. Appointments will mostly occur in my office but in addition to in office appointments, I will generally conduct home visits at each parent's home. The visits in the office consist of structured interviews with each parent, parent-child interaction sessions, and structured interviews with the children. Formal psychological assessment is done by referral to a licensed psychologist. The need for such assessment will be determined on an individual basis. The fees for such assessments are the individual prerogative of the psychologist.

If you provide information to me, please make sure you keep a copy for yourself as whatever documentation you submit becomes part of your chart. All attorney communication, written and verbal, is done jointly until the evaluation is completed and the results are relayed to the attorneys. At the time that one attorney states that he or she is calling me as a witness, it is appropriate to have individual conversations with the attorneys.

I will also ask to review any previous evaluations and to review the course of previous therapy of either parent, the children, or marital therapy. I will be able to contact collateral parties such as school teachers after the parents sign releases. I will contact a reasonable number of non-professional collateral contacts such as friends and family members. When requesting that I contact such parties, please keep in mind that their opinions are evaluated in the context of their relationships with the parties and not at face value. I may contact law enforcement agencies for additional information, and I may access publicly available records, including but not limited to, civil and criminal records.

I will relay the results of the evaluation to the parties jointly and/or to their attorneys jointly. Sometimes a joint meeting of the parties, when appropriate, is helpful in promoting the best interests of the children and is more helpful than hearing the results from the attorneys in understanding my recommendations.

I ask that parents prepare their children only by saying that they will be seeing a "talking doctor" who will be helping the parents understand them better. When appropriate, the children may want to know that I have a playroom with toys, puppets, art supplies, Legos, etc. Parents should not say anything in preparation of what they want the children to tell me as I can usually detect such intervention and it is not in the children's best interest nor in the parent's best interest to do so.

The usual privileges regarding confidentiality in the doctor-client relationship do not exist when doing custody/parenting time evaluations, although I try to be responsible and selective in how and what information I share in relaying the report. I attempt to make my reporting of information less inflammatory than the process may be already. This is not always possible if I have learned information which I feel is critical to the well-being of the children.

Fee Considerations:

Generally, a minimum \$5,000 deposit is required prior to the start of the evaluation. The deposit may vary according to the number of children and the complexity of the problem. The fees for the custody/parenting time evaluation are assessed at \$275 per hour until the court appearance. The hourly rate is charged for office visits, consultation with attorneys, the written report if one is requested, and time spent contacting ancillary parties and reviewing their information and/or depositions. Any missed appointments will be billed at the full hourly rate as well.

Fees for court appearances are assessed individually to the person who is calling me as a witness, and a \$750 deposit is required prior to the scheduled court date. The minimum fee for going to court is \$600, as it usually requires two to three hours out of the office, even if the testimony is short. The fees for court appearances are calculated based on time spent at the rate of \$300 per hour to testify and \$200 per hour in travel or waiting time.

Many unexpected scheduling issues arise regarding courtroom appearances. Sometimes the court is delayed or postponed, and as I have already saved the time for your case, I will be charging you for that time, even if I am not actually called to testify that day. If court is canceled, I will do my best to reschedule the time I have reserved for testimony, but any time I am not able to reschedule will be billed to you. In addition, there may be additional charges associated with going to court, such as time spent reviewing records or talking with attorneys.

When situations require extensive administrative time regarding unique difficulties, numerous phone calls, letter writing, and/or consultation with others, there will be a charge for that time. If there is a decision from either parent to withdraw from the study, fees may be charged for administrative expenses incurred for the initial phase of the evaluation of not less than \$275.

