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Custody/Parenting Time Study Agreement

In conducting custody/parenting time evaluations, I strive to be unbiased, even-handed, and comprehensive. I also believe it is important to be clear about my role as an evaluator. My goal is to reach an understanding of family members and their inter-relationships so that a custody/parenting time solution can be found that is in the best interest of the child(ren). Toward this end, I have detailed below a number of stipulations that allow me to do my job as effectively as possible. Before beginning a study, I will need both parents to carefully read and sign this document, thereby indicating that they understand and agree to all conditions.

1. I will be permitted access to all members of the family for the number of sessions deemed appropriate to obtain necessary information. Furthermore, I will retain the option to see family members individually or together in any combination. I will also be granted the freedom to interview any and all other persons who are viewed as sources of potentially useful information.
2. A modification of traditional confidentiality arrangements shall be adopted so that all pertinent information can be fully explored. Specifically, I will be granted the freedom to reveal to any study participant what has been told to me by any other study participant. This does not imply that all information provided will automatically be shared with other study participants – only that I reserve the right to make such revelations if they are considered warranted for the purpose of collecting meaningful data.
3. The parents shall sign all releases necessary to obtain information from professionals who may have relevant information regarding the parents or children (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, teachers, school officials, and law-enforcement officials). Please note, that while I encourage parents to provide a list of relevant professionals, I reserve the right to make an independent determination about which professionals to contact. For example, I may decide to contact a child's current teacher, but not teachers from previous years. Conversely, I may insist upon speaking with a parent's previous therapist even if the parent prefers that I not contact this individual. If a parent is concerned that my contact with another professional may produce an adverse impact, I encourage the parent to make these concerns known so that I can address them appropriately.

4. Attorneys, parents and other interested persons are invited to send material that they consider useful and relevant. The base fee for evaluation includes review of up to 200 pages of material. Beyond this, I charge my regular hourly rate for any additional time spent reviewing material (i.e., \$180/hr).
5. I keep all source documents and case-related materials for three years, at which time I electronically scan the file and destroy the original. It is advisable, therefore, for parents and attorneys to provide me with copies of the documents they wish me to review, rather than originals.
6. Each parent will be asked to identify up to four persons whom they would like me to contact as personal references (e.g., extended family members, friends of the family, involved neighbors, etc.). The most useful personal references are those who can provide unique and pertinent information about your child(ren) and the family situation. Please note, if parents submit more than four personal references, I will make an independent determination about which persons to contact. My interviews with personal references generally occur over the phone, but I am open to in-person interviews and written submissions as well.
7. Please keep in mind that none of the information provided by parents, children, or collateral sources may be considered privileged communication. In other words, any verbal and written information shared with me is not confidential and may be included in the written report.
8. It shall be agreed that while the evaluation is in process, all communications between the attorneys and myself will take place either through conference calls, joint meetings, or memos distributed to both attorneys. I may initiate or respond to calls regarding routine matters, and these contacts will be summarized in memoranda and distributed to both attorneys.
9. I will take notes throughout the study and these will become part of the clinical file, which can be accessed by any attorney involved in the case following completion of the study. At no time will any audio-taping or video-taping occur. At my discretion or that of the attorneys, I may release copies of notes and test data to other professional consultants.
10. My base fee for conducting a custody/parenting time evaluation involving two parents and one child is \$5500. A fee of \$800 will be charged for each additional child. The fee for each additional spouse, fiancé, or significant other is \$400 without psychological testing, \$800 with psychological testing. These fees must be paid in full prior to initiation of the study. This payment covers the following professional services: individual clinical interviews with involved family members, psychological testing with parents, psychological testing with children and step-parents as deemed appropriate, parent-child observations, contact with collateral sources, review of background documents, a written report, and 1-hour debriefing sessions with each parent after submission of the report. Once the written report is submitted, the evaluation is considered complete. With the exception of the 1-hour debriefing session, any services rendered after submission of the report are billed at regular rates.

11. If court testimony or deposition is necessary, a separate retainer will be required: either \$700 for a half day (morning or afternoon) or \$1400 for a full day. If court is cancelled or reset, I will refund half of the retainer as long as I receive notice at least 24 hours in advance.
12. After submission of the report, I will also be available for consultations with the attorneys. These consultations will be billed at a rate of \$180 per hour. It will be the attorney's responsibility to garner a retainer or other guarantee of payment from his or her client in order to ensure that adequate funds are available to cover these additional fees.
13. It is understood by parents and attorneys that payment of the fee in no way influences the outcome of the study.
14. At the completion of the study, I will send a written report to the attorneys involved in the case. Attorneys are expected to share evaluation findings with their clients and are welcome to furnish their clients with a copy of the report. On request, I am also willing to send a copy of the report directly to a parent. I am not at liberty to send the report to professionals or other individuals consulted during the evaluation process, however, unless both parents have had the opportunity to review the contents of the report and consent to such a disclosure.
15. Once I become involved in case as a custody/parenting time evaluator, I can not assume additional professional roles with members of the family. For example, I will not be able to provide mediation or therapy sessions for parents or children. However, I will be permitted to communicate with an attorney separately when discussing preparation for court or deposition testimony. I will also be permitted further communication with study participants under the following circumstances: (a) when contact is made for the purpose of following up on therapeutic referrals connected with the case, (b) when updated information is needed about children involved in the case in the event that testimony or deposition is requested at a later date, or (c) in the event that a re-evaluation of family members is requested at a later date.
16. Please note that I only perform second evaluations when both parents freely select me as the evaluator. I have adopted this policy because parents who are reluctant to see me for a second evaluation are less likely to seriously consider my opinions or adhere to my recommendations, choosing instead to attribute any unfavorable conclusions to evaluator bias. In order to be maximally useful, the evaluation process must not only be fair, but be perceived as fair by all parties.

Parent Signature

Date