

## ***Jill D. Sanders, Ph.D.***

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTING PLAN EVALUATIONS, CUSTODY EVALUATIONS, RELOCATION EVALUATIONS, SOCIAL INVESTIGATIONS, UPDATED EVALUATIONS AND BRIEF PARENTING ASSESSMENTS

In order to best serve children and families in these cases it is important that you understand the philosophy, purpose and procedures related to these types of evaluations. Please read this entire document carefully. Your signature at the end of the document indicates that you understand all of the material presented here, have had the opportunity to ask questions and **agree** to the parameters and procedures outlined below.

#### PHILOSOPHY:

1. The best interests of the child are the focus of all of these evaluations. That means that Dr. Sanders will be focused on your child's best interests when she makes recommendations and provides opinions. She may believe that your child's best interests are not consistent with your desires.
2. Dr. Sanders strives to treat all parties with respect and aims for thoroughness over speed.
3. Dr. Sanders believes that evaluations of this type should be used after other less intrusive, less expensive methods of resolution have been exhausted (i.e. mediation, counseling, consultation, etc.). If she feels you are prematurely seeking an evaluation she will contact your attorney for clarification.

#### PURPOSE:

1. The purpose of these types of evaluations is to provide an objective, educated evaluation of the circumstances and issues in your case. Dr. Sanders will develop conclusions and recommendations to be used by you as parents, by your attorney and by the court to make plans and decisions for your children.

#### METHODS:

1. Dr. Sanders accepts only cases which have been court ordered. She does not perform evaluations requested by only one parent. Participation by both parents is required unless otherwise specified in the order.
2. The following methods are typically used in these types of evaluations. However, not all of these methods are utilized in all evaluations:
  - Individual interviews with the parents, step-parents, significant others, and the children
  - Parent-child observations
  - Collateral interviews (i.e. teachers, therapists, physicians)

- Document review
  - Psychological testing
3. Topics covered in adult interviews may include (but are not limited to): family history, educational history, employment history, substance use, psychological/psychiatric treatment, medications, health, and relationship history. You will be asked about your involvement in your child's life, your knowledge of your child and your parenting practices, styles and skills.
  4. Topics covered in child interviews may include (but are not limited to): school life, friends, hobbies, habits, parents' behavior, awareness of separation/divorce issues, emotional state and behavior issues. Dr. Sanders will make a strong effort to make your child feel safe and comfortable during all interviews and observations. Most children appreciate the opportunity to provide input and are comforted, rather than distressed, by their participation in this process.
  5. Dr. Sanders often conducts a search of public records on parents, step-parents and significant others.
  6. Home visits are often but not always conducted though Dr. Sanders reserves the right to conduct them if needed.
  7. Questions will be asked that help Dr. Sanders offer opinions on the various Florida statutory factors that apply (i.e. best interests factors, relocation factors, modification factors).
  8. In all cases Dr. Sanders will determine the methods to be used. Dr. Sanders will determine which persons will be interviewed, how often they are interviewed, what psychological tests or questionnaires will be administered, how long the interviews will last and the content of the interview. She will also determine the number of parent-child observations, what collateral sources she will contact and what documents she will review.
  9. Parents, step-parents and significant others agree to complete any psychological testing or questionnaires that Dr. Sanders deems relevant to your case. Parents also agree to allow testing of children if warranted.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING:

1. These are NOT confidential evaluations. Any information provided during these evaluations may be shared with the other parent or may be divulged in a report or during testimony.
2. Dr. Sanders may share information provided by one parent to the other parent so that both parents have the opportunity to present and rebut information.
3. Parents agree to sign all releases as requested by Dr. Sanders so that she may speak with other persons with relevant information (i.e. teachers, therapists, school officials, physicians, police, etc.).

4. Unless prohibited by the order both attorneys are invited to send any material that they feel will be useful to Dr. Sanders as long as they notify the other attorney that the materials have been provided.

#### TIME FRAMES:

1. Dr. Sanders will not schedule an evaluation without an order from the court. Appointments will be scheduled as soon as possible following the receipt of the order. Most evaluations take between three and six months to complete. If your court order provides a specific time frame for completion of the evaluation Dr. Sanders will attempt to meet that deadline. However, Dr. Sanders reserves the right to petition the attorneys and the court for an extension if she feels unable to produce a thorough report within the time limit.

#### PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES:

1. Dr. Sanders may only function in the role of evaluator. She will not provide guidance, advice, therapy or mediation services. Her conclusions and recommendations will be offered in writing at the end of the evaluation.
2. Following the release of a report Dr. Sanders may answer questions of clarification or provide further detail on recommendations as requested by your attorney for the purposes of settlement.
3. Dr. Sanders is aware of and practices in line with the aspirational guidelines for these types of evaluations that are published by the American Psychological Association and the Association of Family and Conciliatory Courts.

#### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Your cooperation with the evaluation process is important and Dr. Sanders will take your cooperation into account in her conclusions and recommendations. Please consult your attorney if you have questions about what to discuss and divulge. Deliberate misleading or deceptive behavior on your part will be noted in the report and in testimony and will seriously reduce your overall credibility as it pertains to the evaluation.
2. It is your responsibility to be as candid and forthcoming as possible with Dr. Sanders so that the information she gains is accurate and thorough.
3. It is your responsibility to voice your specific concerns or issues so that Dr. Sanders has the opportunity to investigate and evaluate those concerns/issues.
4. It is your responsibility to provide any materials and documentation to Dr. Sanders that you believe is important in helping her conduct a thorough evaluation.
5. It is your responsibility to notify Dr. Sanders of court dates in a timely fashion. Your attorney may or may not do so. Dr. Sanders assumes no procedural or financial

responsibility for depositions, hearings, trials or other events that are postponed or cancelled due to the absence of a report.

#### FEES:

1. Your court order specifies the parent or parents who are responsible for payment. Dr. Sanders does not have the authority to alter the fee arrangement.
2. All services related to the evaluation will be billed according to the court order. All services related to deposition and trial are the financial responsibility of the parent whose attorney calls Dr. Sanders to testify. Deposition and trial fees will not be split or assigned to the other parent unless so ordered by the court.
3. Dr. Sanders' fee for evaluation is \$240 per hour. Services will be billed in increments no less than ¼ hour. This rate applies to time spent in interviews, observations, testing administration, review of documents/materials, review and response to emails/letters/phone calls or any other activity associated with the evaluation.
4. The fee for deposition preparation, deposition appearance, trial preparation and trial appearance is \$250 per hour.
5. Travel is billed at the rate of \$100 per hour.
6. A \$6000 retainer is collected prior to the start of a comprehensive evaluation. A \$3500 retainer is collected prior to the start of a brief parenting assessment or relocation evaluation. One half of these retainer amounts are non-refundable.
7. If the retainer you provided is exhausted and Dr. Sanders contacts you to obtain additional retainer funds, she may choose not to do further work on your case until the additional retainer is paid.
8. The final report will not be released until the bill is paid in full.
9. It is impossible to predict the final cost of an evaluation. Most comprehensive evaluations cost between \$8000 and \$10,000. Brief parenting assessments (where the one or two issues which require evaluation are defined in advance) typically cost between \$3500 and \$5,000.

#### LEGAL ISSUES:

1. Dr. Sanders is required to report any suspected physical or sexual abuse of children. If you or your child reports such abuse, she must report it unless it has been previously reported.
2. A claimant is responsible for any costs and expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred in connection with any legal claims, legal actions, investigations, administrative proceedings including informal and regulatory complains, or any other actions brought by the claimant or

on behalf of the claimant's child, against a court-appointed psychologist performing a Parenting Plan evaluation who is not held liable.

**REPORT DISTRIBUTION:**

1. Distribution of reports is guided by family law rules of procedure. Depending on the type of evaluation Dr. Sanders may not allowed to give you a copy of the report. However, typically, these reports are distributed to the parents, their attorneys and the court. These reports contain sensitive, personal information and parents are responsible for not allowing or promoting the distribution of the report to anyone including friends and family members.

**STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT:**

- I understand that Dr. Sanders has the right to choose which methods to apply to my evaluation.
- I understand that she may not support my position.
- I agree to fulfill my financial obligation to pay her fees (if so assigned by the court) even if she does not support my position.
- I understand that Dr. Sanders cannot include all information gathered in the body of the report and that she will use professional judgment as to the inclusion/exclusion of information.
- I agree to pay Dr. Sanders my court ordered share of the cost for services provided, even if they exceed initial estimates or exceed the estimates offered in this document.
- I understand all of the items in this document, have had the opportunity to discuss this document with Dr. Sanders and am providing my signature as evidence of my informed consent.

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Parent signature/Date