

Parenting Guidance Services, LLC



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Custody/Parenting Time Evaluation Procedures

Step 1. A copy of the court order for the custody evaluation and any existing court-ordered custody and parenting time arrangements are obtained.

Step 2. Each parent downloads and completes the forms listed below. Forms can also be faxed or mailed to the parents.

- Informed Consent
- List of Involved Parties
- Background
- Consent for Services to Child(ren)
- Child Information Form (one for each child)
- List of Collateral Contacts

The forms can be returned to our office when the parent appears for the face-to-face portion of the evaluation, or they can be returned sooner by fax, mail, or email attachment. They *must* be received before the face-to-face portion of the assessment begins.

Step 3. An appointment is set for each parent. The contesting parents will not be scheduled on the same day. If a parent has a cohabitating partner, that person schedules a *separate* appointment and the children do not need to appear with the cohabitating partner (there will be parent-child observations with each of the contesting parents). .

Step 4. Office visit evaluations are conducted for each parent. These evaluations typically take 4 – 6 hours. The parents usually submit any documents they deem relevant before or at this appointment, but relevant documents will be accepted after the appointment. Releases are obtained to contact teachers, physicians, therapists, etc. who may have relevant information. At the office visit, in most cases each parent will complete:

- A structured clinical interview
- Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence – Second Edition
- Parent Relationship Questionnaire or Parental Stress Index
- Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory – 2

- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – Second Edition - Restructured Format
- NEO Personality Inventory – Third Edition
- Behavioral and Emotional Screening System
- Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory – Fourth Edition

Cohabiting partners are also evaluated (at a separate appointment) and are usually administered only a structured clinical interview, the MMPI-2-RF, and the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory - 2.

An appointment is set for each parent to come in with the child/ren.

Step 5. Evaluations are conducted with the children.

- For children age six and older, a cooperative task is set up for the child/ren and the parent. For younger children, a play activity is set up for the parent and child/ren.
- Each child who is verbally and developmentally competent to offer relevant and reliable information (usually six years old and above) is individually administered a structured clinical interview.
 - We are very sensitive to the precarious position of the child during this process. The child is always treated with warmth and reassurance, and will not be subjected to questions that would be expected to significantly raise his or her anxiety level.
 - No parent is in the room during the interview.
 - It does not matter which parent escorts the child to his or her interview, the only considerations are convenience and expediency.
 - Often, the child's interview is scheduled with the first parent that I see. You may not know the date of your child's interview. I ask you not to question your child about this.
- Older children may undergo additional assessment if questions remain unanswered.

Step 6. Cohabitants or spouses are scheduled for an office visit lasting about 2 hours. They are administered an interview, the MMPI-3, and the AAPI-2

Step 7. The evaluator determines which collateral informants to contact. Collateral contacts are completed during this time. Usually, each child's primary teacher is asked to complete a very brief questionnaire on his or her classroom behavior.

Step 8. Once all data has been collected, a report is written that summarizes the findings and provides specific recommendations for custody, parenting time, and any other issues that impact the psychological well-being of the child(ren).

Step 9. The report is released to each parent's attorney and the court.

Step 10. The evaluating psychologist remains available to the attorneys to clarify statements in the report; answer questions about the procedures, findings, and recommendations; and if necessary to appear in court to answer questions about the evaluation.