



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CUSTODY EVALUATION?

A custody evaluation is ordered by a judge when parents cannot agree on custody arrangements. A custody evaluation is a study of each parent and child to determine what living arrangements are in the best interest of the child.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

- At least two, and perhaps three, individual interviews with each parent.
- At least two individual interviews with each child.
- Observations of your children with each parent.
- Review of court documents and other appropriate written information.
- Contact with some collateral sources (e.g. therapists, teachers, day-care personnel, pediatricians).
- A written report with specific recommendations about custody / visitation, & which addresses all of the major concerns raised by you and your ex-spouse.
- Psychological testing to help provide information about your emotional functioning and parenting style.
- Home visit to each parent's home.

CAN I CHOOSE WHO COMPLETES THE CUSTODY EVALUATION?

Typically the custody evaluator is chosen by the judge or attorney's and both parties agree. There are several qualified psychologists in the Fort Wayne area who regularly perform custody evaluations.

CAN I CALL AND SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT FOR A CUSTODY EVALUATION?

A court order from a judge is required prior to scheduling an appointment.

WILL WHAT I TELL DR. SEISS BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Principles of confidentiality and privilege do not apply in court ordered assessments, such as a custody evaluation. Information provided by you, regardless of the form in which it has been provided or obtained may be shared with others involved in the evaluation. Such information may include your statements, tape recordings, diaries, correspondence, photographs, observations outside the interview context and other such materials.

WHAT SHOULD I TELL DR. SEISS?

I will want to understand as much about your family as possible. Most parents are nervous when seeing me want to present themselves favorably. While this is normal, it is important to be open with me about your strengths and weaknesses as a parent. Most parents want to present the other parent negatively. While this is normal, it is important to be open about your ex-spouses weaknesses and strengths as a parent. Try and stay more focused on the needs of your child than your differences with your ex-spouse. Try to be open to various custody / visitation plans, even though you favor a particular one. Consider the benefits to your child of maintaining a healthy relationship with his/her other parent.

CAN MY CHILD OR I SEE DR. SEISS FOR PRIVATE THERAPY?

Once Dr. Seiss becomes involved in a custody evaluation she, nor any of her colleagues at The Aberdeen Group can see you or your child.





WHAT SHOULD I TELL MY CHILD(REN) ABOUT THE CUSTODY EVALUATION?

Children at different ages will have various levels of understandings and they should be given information in a way that will make sense to them. When I meet children I tell them that it is my job to help their mother and father find ways to agree and cooperate about how to raise them. It would probably make sense to tell your child that I am a psychologist who is trying to understand as much about your family as possible, so that I can help the two of you learn to agree on parenting. Tell them that I will be wanting to learn as much as I can about them and their feelings, not just about the divorce and the two of you. Encourage your child to be open and talk about how he/she feels. Please do not tell your children that what they say to me will be confidential. I will not ask children who they would like to live with.

WHAT KIND OF RECOMMENDATIONS WILL DR. SEISS MAKE?

I will make individualized recommendations based on the unique needs of your family. Typically, recommendations will fall in several categories, including but not limited to:

- Custody / visitation recommendations
 - This will typically include both legal and physical custody.
 - Since conflict-resolution is difficult for many families who need a custody evaluation, I may make recommendations about how you can work together to solve future problems. I might suggest a Special Master or Parenting Coordinator, someone who is like a binding arbitrator, to work with you on an ongoing basis to learn to resolve future problems.
- Therapy recommendations for either the parents and/or the children
 - I will provide specific treatment recommendations about the need for therapy.
- When special problems exist, such as domestic violence, substance abuse problems, alienation of children, and others, there will likely be special recommendations focusing on those special issues. In some of those cases, there might be a recommendation for an updated evaluation after treatment or some period of time.
- Parenting classes when they are needed to help parents improve their understanding of their child's needs.
- With very young children, I might recommend a re-evaluation as the child gets older and his/her needs significantly change.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE DR. SEISS TO PROVIDE ME WITH ANSWERS AND A REPORT?

The custody evaluation process can vary depending on the availability of each participant. The average evaluation can be completed in 1 - 2 months.

WHAT IF I DO NOT AGREE WITH DR. SEISS' REPORT AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

It is important to talk over with your attorney the report and recommendations. Your attorney can guide you on how to respond should you have any specific concerns regarding the outcome of the report.

