



# Ellis Evaluation & Consulting Services

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## LIMITED SCOPE CUSTODY EVALUATION

Dear Family Law Attorney,

This letter outlines the procedures for limited scope psychological custody evaluations in our office. (See attached checklist.) The interviews for a limited scope custody evaluation usually takes place over the course of one day and the report is usually ready in two or three weeks.

### **Communication with Attorneys**

Any oral discussion of case content with attorneys will be done in the form of a conference call. However, we will discuss procedures (e.g., when is report to be released, arrangement of fees) with attorneys' offices separately. For a limited scope evaluation, I usually conduct a conference call with both counsel together regarding the scope of the evaluation, my availability and deposit requirements.

### **Fees**

I require a minimum deposit of \$4,000 for limited scope evaluations. I may or may not charge a flat fee, depending on the scope of the evaluation, report and any testimony. I may request a larger deposit once we are made aware of the scope and reporting requirements. Please call our office to discuss the deposit amount and for our hourly rates. Any balance due is payable in the form of a cashier's check or money order.

### **Stipulation and Order**

I require the parties and attorneys to sign a stipulation, which then becomes an order of the court, covering issues concerning our fee arrangements, release of confidentiality, immunity, and calling the evaluator as a witness. I can provide a sample stipulation or will also agree to use other stipulations that cover the above issues. There is a due date for receipt of an order naming the evaluator or the conformed stipulation three weeks (21 days) prior to the date of the first appointments so the evaluator can file form FL-326 with the court; if receipt is past the due date, the day of evaluation sessions may be rescheduled.

### **Scheduling Appointments**

Once the deposit and stipulation/order are received, my office will call the parties to set up their appointments. It is more efficient for the parties to schedule directly than for us to schedule through attorneys' offices. Please instruct them to phone my staff at 424-206-6124.

**Informed Consent**

During the first evaluation appointment, I ask parties to sign an informed consent regarding evaluation procedures, which I also discuss in person. The parties and their attorneys are provided with the informed consent in advance, for their review.

**Materials Submitted**

The parties will bring the original and two copies of the Detailed History Questionnaire and the Collateral Contact List to their first appointment. The parties may also submit three copies of any ancillary materials that shed extra light on the scope of the evaluation. The evaluator will give the two copies to the other party, usually at the end of the day. The parties are responsible for providing to their attorneys copies of these forms from both parties.

**Reporting of Results**

Usually I provide a brief report with information collected, analysis of results and recommendations. In some cases, I will give court testimony or an oral presentation to the parties and their attorneys, along with a short written report that includes conclusions and recommendations. Reports are released on the same day to the court and both attorneys.

**Testimony**

If I am asked to testify in a deposition or court appearance, I expect a subpoena that makes it clear whether the file or my testimony alone is required. I ask that you make arrangements at least fifteen court days in advance with my office and schedule me to appear for a given day or half-day. We do not make arrangements to be "on call." Our witness fee is payable in the form of a cashier's check one week prior to the appearance. No fees will be refunded for cancellations made less than 48 hours before the scheduled appearance.

I testify as the court's expert, and remain neutral. All communication with attorneys prior to a court hearing about the case will be done in the form of a conference call, except for communication strictly concerning arrangements for testimony.

**Security Issues**

If there is a restraining order/s in place at the time of the evaluation, please notify my office promptly so we can make appropriate modifications regarding procedures that may bring the parties into contact with one another. Also please notify us if either parent has a concern about possession of guns, fears of child abduction, or any other concerns that may require extra attention to security.

**Court Dates**

Attorneys are responsible for informing me of the court date for which the report is needed. If I cannot complete the report within the time frame of the given court date, I will contact the attorneys with an expected date of completion.

Please phone my office if you have further questions.

Mesha Ellis, Ph.D.

## **Checklist For Starting A Limited Scope Custody Evaluation With Ellis Evaluation & Consulting Services**

### **To schedule an appointment, please provide:**

- ▲ Key contact information
- ▲ Initial deposit
- ▲ Stipulation signed by both parties and both attorneys

Then we will assign a date for the initial day of appointments.

### **Complete the Custody Evaluation Questionnaire:**

- You may complete it by hand or you can type it.
- If you want to type it, you can ask our staff to send a Word version.
- If you type it, please use double spacing and at least 12-point font.
- Please limit your responses to the space provided. For any one question, try not to add more than one page beyond the space provided.
- All materials must be letter-size.
- Please staple or clip the questionnaires and attachments. Do not put them in binders. Manila or accordion folders are good.

### **Bring to the initial appointment the original and two copies of:**

- ▲ The Custody Evaluation Questionnaire
- ▲ The Potential Collateral Contact List
- ▲ Other materials requested in the questionnaire attached at the end
- ▲ Other ancillary materials related to the scope

(The two copies are for the other parent and their attorney. Make two extra copies for yourself and your attorney.)

### **Be ready to sign at the initial appointment:**

- ▲ The informed consent form
- ▲ The Custody Release of Information Form

### **Further deposit requests:**

- There may be a further deposit request.
- All fees must be paid before the report is released or testimony given.