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ORIENTATION AND CONSENT FOR CHILD CUSTODY EVALUATIONS

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Background

1. Dr. David Lombard will be the only psychologist involved in your evaluation through our office. Dr. Lombard has been licensed in this state since 1999. Being licensed requires passing a national written examination and a written examination given by the Indiana State Psychology Examining Board. You may contact them with questions or concerns at 55 Monument Circle Suite 455, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

2. In this information sheet we will try to cover issues which come up frequently in parenting/child custody evaluations. Please take the time to read through it and then feel free to ask questions of Dr. Lombard in your initial appointment. All parties need to understand that we will direct letters, requests for records, and requests for payment through the attorneys involved in this case. If there is any question about this point, please discuss that before signing this document.

Purpose, Process, and Limitations of the Evaluation

1. It is important that you understand in advance that this is an evaluation for legal purposes and that the best interests of your children will be Dr. Lombard's only concern. There is a possibility that his impressions may be unfavorable to your legal position. Dr. Lombard will be making recommendations with regard to your contact and involvement with the children. This may include recommendations about the delegation of legal decision making for them. It is a very difficult and, at times, a painful task to make recommendations concerning parent-child relationships.

2. The evaluation itself will consist of interviews and psychological testing with each parent. Children may be interviewed and tested separately and/or observed in a brief session with each parent, depending on the children's ages. The psychological testing allows Dr. Lombard to collect a wide range of data and organize the issues while minimizing cost to you. At the end of the evaluation, a report and recommendation will be provided to both attorneys. For this, as well as other reasons, I generally do not evaluate cases in which one or both parties are representing him/herself. If you become pro se during the course of the evaluation, you run the risk that Dr. Lombard will terminate his involvement.

3. Dr. Lombard recognizes that his impressions are very important to you. However, please do not ask him to give you an opinion until he had had an opportunity to hear all sides, review the psychological test results, and fully review the file. At that time, feedback will be given to the attorneys either verbally or in written form.

4. Once the evaluation has begun Dr. Lombard cannot be a resource to you or anyone else involved in the case for advice, therapy, or support. These activities conflict with Dr. Lombard's role as a non-partisan evaluator. However, Dr. Lombard strongly advises parents to seek therapy elsewhere if they would find it beneficial. Some people refrain from doing this for fear it will reflect badly on them during the evaluation process. Dr. Lombard does not feel that this reflects badly on anyone, especially

given the stresses of divorce and custody situations. Dr. Lombard encourages you to take care of yourself in this regard.

Confidentiality Issues

1. As Dr. Lombard begins the evaluation both parents will be asked to sign "Release of Information" forms. This allows Dr. Lombard to discuss this situation with anyone who he thinks would be helpful in coming to a recommendation. This also allows Dr. Lombard to talk to your attorney and submit reports to the court. The laws of confidentiality might otherwise prevent him from doing so.

2. While parents will not have confidentiality with regard to what is said in the interviews, this may not be so for your children. In an attempt to buffer them from the pain of this custody action, Dr. Lombard may promise them that what they talk about to him is confidential. Dr. Lombard will use his judgment regarding this on a case by case or issue by issue basis with each child. Again, it is important to understand in advance that the children are Dr. Lombard's primary concern and their interests are first.

Evaluation Costs

1. There is a retainer fee for each evaluation of \$3000.00 which must be taken care of by the appropriate party or parties before the evaluation begins (paid in percentages by each party as stipulated by court order). This is a credit balance against which fees will be charged. Once this retainer has been paid, \$500.00 is not refundable should you decide not to proceed with this evaluation. Unused payments will be refunded promptly at the close of the matter. However, charges may be considerably higher than the retainer and the balance must be satisfied before any results are released. I could not go into court with one party owing a large bill. This would leave me open to a question as to whether the financial situation had influenced my judgment. This is not an acceptable situation for you or me, and I will adhere strictly to this policy.

2. With regard to fees, the cost of a custody evaluation is often high and difficult to predict. My fees are \$150 an hour and you will be charged for face to face contact, phone calls, test scoring, consultation with lawyers and other professionals involved in the case, report preparation time, and review of any materials submitted by you or your attorney. Please do not give me any original documents or pictures since I cannot guarantee their return. There will also be charges for any missed or canceled appointment where 72 hour notice is not given. The costs of the evaluation vary widely with the number and complexity of the issues, the number of children involved, and the degree of attorney and court involvements. Court time and depositions will be billed at \$150 an hour and four hours must be paid for in advance to reserve time. If a court appearance or deposition runs more than four hours, you will be billed for the balance. Any unpaid bills will accrue interest at the rate of 18% per annum. A \$20.00 surcharge will be assessed for any returned checks. Please avoid faxing lengthy, non urgent material. Excessive faxing may be charged at a rate of \$.30/page.

The Evaluation Process

The following describes the steps and the purposes of the procedures that are involved in this evaluation process. The description is being given so that you know what to expect as you decide to have an evaluation done and as you prepare for and go through this evaluation. This evaluation will follow a structured pattern to maximize the fairness and the objectivity of the report and to work towards the best interests of your child or children. However, Dr. Lombard may make changes in the process in a case by case basis due to the needs of each case.

1. The first step of this process is for each side to agree to have the evaluation. There must be a stipulated agreement or a court order.
2. Payment for this evaluation must be made in advance.
3. Once the evaluation fee is paid, then initial appointments will be made with both parents.
4. The parents will bring to their initial clinical interview appointments their completed Parenting History surveys. Failure to do so will result in the appointment being cancelled and fees being charged.
5. The first clinical interview/testing day will require at least an 8-hour block of time. Each party will be scheduled for a separate day.
6. At the first appointment, you should bring any written documents that you might think would be relevant to the concern that you are raising. Please highlight the segments of the documents that you think are noteworthy. Do not include documents from people who have not observed firsthand parenting behavior or alarming behavior that might affect parenting.
7. In the first part of the clinical interview you and Dr. Lombard will go over this form, ask and answer any questions, and sign that document. Dr. Lombard will then review your completed background surveys with you and conduct a clinical interview of you.
8. After your clinical interview you will complete the MMPI-2 and several other psychological tests in my office. These psychological tests are the most researched and standardized tests in use today.
9. Following your structured interview and testing, releases of information will be signed so that the relevant records may be obtained and so that third-party individuals can be contacted who may be able to help with the evaluation. **It is most likely that only collaterals that can provide firsthand information about the allegations or about parenting strengths or weaknesses will be contacted.**
10. If you request that non-professional collaterals be contacted, then that individual must submit a written declaration that is specific about relevant evidence from firsthand witness of parenting behavior or behavior that could affect parenting.
11. You will also need to bring your child(ren) in for a 2 hour Parent-Child Observation with any significant others you live with or are engaged to.

12. Each party will be asked to produce records that become apparent during the first interview. These records might include police incident reports, criminal history reports, juvenile court records, mental health records, medical records, school attendance and grade reports, achievement and standardized testing records, social services agency records, and psychological and educational testing reports. Once each party has offered permission to access records that party is to ask the agency to mail the records directly to the evaluator. Each party is asked to have all of the records sent to Dr. Lombard within 2 weeks.
13. If the party has a new life partner who is involved with the children, then that new partner will be required to take to have a brief interview and complete testing. An additional parent child observation may be requested.
14. Two appointments will be set for the child(ren) to have clinical interview and testing. Each parent will bring the child(ren) to one of the two appointments unless there are extenuating circumstances.
15. Collaterals will be interviewed if appropriate.
16. All of the documents will be reviewed.
17. A follow-up interview will occur with each parent. The first part of the appointment is to clarify any details that are missing or that are inconsistent with the findings of the evaluation. The second part allows the party to offer any new or final information they perceive to be important.
18. The final payment is due before the report is issued. The parties will be notified of the balance and once payment is received, copies of the report will be sent to the attorneys, also to the judge if requested.
19. If the evaluator is to serve as an expert witness during discovery or trial because the settlement process has failed, then an additional retainer will be required by the requesting party.
20. Changes may occur in the process, order of appointments and testing, due to the situation in each case. The evaluator still attempts to complete all the objectives of the child custody evaluation.

The policies and procedures described in this form have been developed to help assure that I am able to direct my evaluation toward a recommendation that is in the best interests of the child or children involved. If after reviewing this information you have questions, please be sure to discuss them with me at your initial interview when I will more fully explain the evaluation procedure you are about to begin.

DATE

PARENT SIGNATURE

NAME PRINTED

DATE

EVALUATOR SIGNATURE

NAME PRINTED