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FORENSIC POLICY AND INFORMATION

We conduct forensic evaluations upon the referral of an attorney or by court order, for the purpose of assisting in the resolution of your dispute regarding allocation of parental rights and responsibilities for your child/children. This policy introduces you to the evaluation process. When we conduct an evaluation, we use the following guidelines:

1. *Referrals:* We conduct evaluations only upon referral by a court or by stipulation by both parties. If we are retained by one side, we require a court order that both parties participate.

2. *Purpose:* We strive to formulate recommendations which we believe are in the best interests of the children, in accordance with Ohio statutes, and forensic guidelines established by the American Psychological Association and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. We understand that the parents have very strong feelings and wishes regarding the custody of their children. While we will document the wishes and concerns of each parent, we keep the children's needs paramount in determining our recommendations. We recognize that this is a difficult process and the final recommendations may be unexpected or disappointing.

3. *Confidentiality:* Confidentiality is different in our evaluations than it would be if you went to a mental health professional for therapy. All information we obtain may be used in our evaluation interviews and in our report, if we think it is relevant and important. Both parties' attorneys and the court will see the report. In the course of this evaluation, you are not obligated to give us any information or answer any questions if you do not wish to do so. If we cannot obtain information that we think is critical, we may note this in our report.

4. *Procedures:* Before the evaluation begins, we require a court order appointing us to conduct an evaluation and stipulating the extent of each party's responsibility for payment of the total cost of the evaluation, including the written report. Even when both parties and their respective counsel have agreed to our involvement or we have been asked to be one party's expert, we require a court order confirming that agreement and directing both sides to participate. A basic retainer of \$6000.00 before the first interview generally covers cases involving a maximum of two adults and two children. In cases in which there are more than two children or more than two adults in parenting roles (including parents' significant others), the retainer will be higher. Typically, the retainer covers a significant portion—if not all—of the cost of the assessment phase, but not the written report. An additional balance will be due for data gathering or review of documents that exceed the hours covered by the original retainer. Please

note: the written report is not released until we have received the entire cost of the report, in addition to any previous balance still due. We strive to make the report available one week prior to scheduled trial and will notify the attorneys and the parties of the final cost. If the evaluation does not proceed as ordered, a fee of \$400.00 will be deducted from the retainer for the time reserved for the initial interview and the postponement of other evaluations. Our reports are detailed and comprehensive and average an additional \$6000-\$8500 for 60-80 (and over) single-spaced pages, depending on the amount of data that we are given. We review and summarize the data from which our conclusions derive so that the sources are clear. We include a systematic review and analysis and list our recommendations.

At the onset, we cannot be precise concerning how many and what type of interviews your evaluation will require. We find cases differ a great deal, and so we remain flexible in our approach. During the course of the evaluation, all principal parties will meet with both evaluators. The first step is a joint interview of the parents. We then individually interview each parent or party to the dispute. Each party has the opportunity to respond to allegations and concerns posed by the other party. In addition, we interview each child and observe each parent interacting with each child. We also interview step-parents and parents' significant others who are or may be involved in caretaking. Psychological testing is administered to all parents, stepparents and the children (of appropriate age). Significant others who are involved in caretaking may also be tested. We speak, either by phone or in person, to other people who may have information relevant to the resolution of this dispute. These may include, but are not limited to: relatives, teachers, therapists, pediatricians or other doctors, babysitters, neighbors, friends and colleagues who are familiar with the parents and the children. We reserve the right to visit the homes of both parents and/or other homes in which the children spend significant time, if we deem such visits to be warranted. We request that you provide us with any documents or other materials that are relevant to parenting issues (police reports, school data, test reports, previous evaluations). We remind all parties that once we conduct an evaluation, we are not available to provide therapy, or other clinical services, but will recommend the need to pursue therapeutic interventions, if indicated.

5. We use a team approach and all interviews are conducted by Karen K. Bardenstein, Ph.D. and Mrs. Marilyn Berger, Ed.M., M.A. Dr. Bardenstein is a licensed clinical psychologist, specializing in both child and adult psychology and personality assessment. She is also an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Case Western Reserve University. Mrs. Berger is a psychology assistant, and certified family/divorce mediator, who works under the clinical supervision of Dr. Bardenstein, who is also a certified mediator. Mrs. Berger is also a Board Certified Clinical Psychotherapist (BCCP). Both Dr. Bardenstein and Mrs. Berger are members of AFCC (Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) and APA (American Psychological Association) and have had extensive experience working with high conflict divorcing families. They have both met the criteria for Parenting Coordinator, as established by the Supreme Court of Ohio's Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, based upon experience, training and fulfillment of continuing education hours, which includes training in family/divorce mediation and issues of domestic abuse. Resumes are available upon request.

The following are practical facts that you may find useful:

1. *Location of Interviews:* Interviews take place in the offices of Karen Bardenstein, Ph.D., located at 12429 Cedar Road, # 18, in Cleveland Heights.
2. *Parking:* Metered parking is available behind the building and on the street. Plan to cover one to two hours of parking. Some sessions may last up to three hours for people traveling from long distances who wish to reduce the number of trips.
3. *Scheduling of Interviews:* Interviews are scheduled during the weekdays, usually between 9:00 and 5:00 p.m.
4. *Fees:* Since the evaluations are for legal purposes, rather than clinical interventions, we do not submit claims to insurance companies. The fee is \$200.00 per hour for any sessions, psychological testing (including administration, scoring and interpretation), phone calls (with the exception of calls of less than ten minutes duration), and reviews of or copying of documents and records. After the initial payment of the retainer, a monthly bill will be issued to the responsible party or parties that will indicate charge to the retainer and charges beyond the retainer as they accumulate. When the retainer has been used up, the monthly bill is payable upon receipt, if a balance has been generated. If court testimony is required, the fee is \$300.00 an hour which includes any time spent at court, including waiting to be called. The higher fee includes travel time, preparation for testimony, and canceling clinical hours to be available. Fees for court appearance must be paid in advance. If the exact time is unknown, a full day's fee must be received as a retainer. (Please note: requests for court appearance must be issued at least two weeks prior to the date to insure time for court preparation and rescheduling of patients.) We will assume, unless otherwise informed, that the parents are splitting the cost of the evaluation.
5. *Canceled Appointments:* Our general policy is to charge for an appointment which is not canceled earlier than 24 hours in advance. The party who misses the appointment or fails to cancel earlier than 24 hours will be solely responsible for this charge, regardless of whether the other party is responsible for some or all of the costs.
6. *Scheduling the First Appointment:* We attempt to handle cases as rapidly as we can. As soon as the court order is received, we will call the parents (not the stepparents or significant others) for the joint initial interview.
7. *Records:* We find it helpful to have copies of various types of records. We like to have copies of any relevant legal documents, such as divorce decrees, court opinions relevant to your case, depositions of mental health experts, *ex parte* orders, etc. During the course of the evaluation, we may request your consent to obtain other records such as school reports or medical reports. You are not required to provide documents or to give your consent for us to obtain them.

We hope that this policy covers all your questions. If not, please contact us directly or

ask us at any time during the meetings.

Karen K. Bardenstein, Ph.D.

Marilyn S. Berger, Ed.M, M.A.
Psychology Assistant

INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the Forensic Policy issued by Dr. Karen Bardenstein and understand its content. I consent to being evaluated and give consent for my children as well. I am responsible for ___% of the cost of the evaluation (50% is assumed unless the court specifies otherwise).

Parent signature

Witness

Date

Karen K. Bardenstein, Ph.D.

12429 Cedar Road
Suite 18
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44122

Referred by: _____

Today's Date _____

Client Data:

Client's Name _____

Date of Birth _____ Age _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Work Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____

Adults:

(Circle one) M F Marital Status: S M D W

Client's S.S. # _____

Partner/Spouse's name _____

Name (s) of Child (Children) _____

Current Health Problems _____

Medications Taken _____

Physician _____

Children: (For clients under 18 years of age)

School name _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____

Father's Date of Birth _____ Mother's Date of Birth _____

Father's Work Phone _____ Mother's Work Phone _____

Place of Employment (Father) _____ (Mother) _____

Physician _____ Siblings (Name, Age) _____

Billing Information:

Send bills to: (check one) _____ Self _____ Spouse _____ Parent/Guardian

Responsible Party's Name _____ S.S. # _____

Address _____ Home Phone _____

(Street Apt. # City State Zip)

Employer's Name _____ Work Phone _____

Address _____

Credit Card information (optional): _____

Security code _____ Expiration Date _____ Zip Code _____