

James N. Bow, Ph.D., LLC

Licensed Psychologist
Board Certified in Forensic Psychology,
American Board of Professional Psychology

COURT-ORDERED CHILD CUSTODY EVALUATION STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

The Family Court has referred you for a custody/parenting time evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to gather all relevant information and make custody/parenting time recommendations to the court. These recommendations are based on the Best Interests of the Child criteria as established by law. See attached page.

It is critical that I have access to all pertinent information. Please provide me with copies of any reports/materials pertaining to the case, such as past evaluations, police reports, Protective Services documents, children's report cards, and any other relevant documents. You will also be requested to grant permission for me to contact other individuals or agencies. It is important to note that when contacting such individuals, case specific information might be revealed during questioning. Furthermore, the Internet might be used to gather personal information about the parties involved.

This comprehensive evaluation will involve the following components:

- Review of pertinent court documents and records
- Psycho-social history and clinical interviews with each parent
- Psychological testing of each parent
- Interview with each child
- If required, testing of each child
- If either parent has a live together partner or fiancée/fiancé, that individual will be interviewed and tested as well
- Observation of parent/child interaction via one-way mirror or home visit
- Review of current and previous clinical material, reports, or contacts
- When indicated, interviews with collateral contacts, such as friends, therapists, teachers, baby-sitters, etc.

Ordinarily, the interview and testing appointments are scheduled in three-hour blocks. After each parent has been seen, appointments will be scheduled to interview each child and to observe each parent interacting with the children. Two additional follow-up interviews occur with each parent. The scheduling of other appointments will occur as necessary. Gathering and analyzing all the information and writing the report usually takes eight weeks.

During the evaluation process, much information will be gathered. Data collection begins at the time the court order is received and encompasses all observations and contacts from that point on by the clinic staff or me. It is important that you be as honest and truthful as possible; all data will be closely scrutinized. This process is strictly evaluative, not treatment. The evaluator is unable to give you emotional support or guidance during the evaluation; he must remain neutral and objective. It is also critical to note that all information gathered during the evaluation process might be utilized and included in the report. **Therefore, typical patient-therapist confidentiality does not apply.** Furthermore, if suspicions of abuse or neglect surface during the evaluation process, the evaluator is obligated by law to report it to Children's Protective Services (CPS). In addition, if CPS requests a copy of the report, the evaluator is obligated to provide it by law.

Your case may be used for training and research purposes. When this is the case, all identifying information will be removed. Private secretarial services are used to type, format, and/or proof read reports. Such services are instructed to abide by confidentiality guidelines.

Due to my role as a neutral, impartial evaluator, I avoid communication with the attorneys during the evaluation process. If such communication needs to occur, it usually happens by letter/e-mail with copies to both attorneys, or through a conference call with both attorneys.

It is essential to avoid multiple relationships as well. Therefore, I do not conduct forensic evaluations on past therapy clients or individuals that I know socially or professionally. This also applies when examinees' immediate or extended family members have been involved with me in the above-mentioned capacities. Your signature at the bottom of the page indicates no knowledge of such an association.

During the evaluation process, I will not provide feedback or give advice to the parties on custody and parenting time, again due to my role as a neutral and impartial evaluator. However, feedback is usually provided at the last session. A comprehensive report will be provided at the end of the evaluation, which will be sent to each attorney, judge, and anyone else (Guardian Ad Litem, Parenting Coordinator, Friend of the Court, etc.) designated in the court order.

You have already signed the Payment Agreement Form. The designated fee covers the cost of the evaluation process and report. Any additional services, such as expert testimony during a deposition or trial, will be charged separately. None of these fees are reimbursable by health insurance. Moreover, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) does not apply to this court-ordered evaluation since forensic services are provided, not health care or mental health services. In addition, the evaluator is not a HIPAA covered entity.

In the event of a deposition or trial, the case file is occasionally subpoenaed. When this occurs, a copy of the entire case file (or requested documents) must be provided to the requesting attorney(s). A fee of twenty-five cents per page is charged, plus postage and handling. Since this is a forensic evaluation and discovery is part of the legal process, a release of information is not required.

I understand the above information and give my assent for the evaluation:

Print Name

Signature

Date

MICHIGAN BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD CRITERIA

- (a) The love, affection, and other emotional ties existing between the parties involved and the child.
- (b) The capacity and disposition of the parties involved to give the child love, affection, and guidance and to continue the education and raising of the child in his or her religion or creed, if any.
- (c) The capacity and disposition of the parties involved to provide the child with food, clothing, medical care, or other remedial care recognized and permitted under the laws of this state in place of medical care, and other material needs.
- (d) The length of time the child has lived in a stable, satisfactory environment, and the desirability of maintaining continuity.
- (e) The permanence, as a family unit, of the existing or proposed custodial home or homes.
- (f) The moral fitness of the parties involved.
- (g) The mental and physical health of the parties involved.
- (h) The home, school, and community record of the child.
- (i) The reasonable preference of the child, if the court considers the child to be of sufficient age to express preference.
- (j) The willingness and ability of each of the parties to facilitate and encourage a close and continuing parent-child relationship between the child and the other parent or the child and the parents.
- (k) Domestic violence, regardless of whether the violence was directed against or witnessed by the child.
- (l) Any other factor considered by the court to be relevant to a particular child custody dispute.