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COURT-ORDERED PARENTING EVALUATION PROTOCOL

The steps of the evaluation that you will be asked to follow are described below so that each party will know exactly what will happen. This step-by-step plan will help Dr. Cole make fair recommendations regarding the best interests of your child(ren).

Please refer to your attorney for any questions or concerns that you may have during the evaluation process. Dr. Cole and his staff will not communicate with you directly aside from your scheduled appointments. **All e-mails are shared with both attorneys/pro-se parties in order to promote transparency and fairness during the evaluation process.**

BEFORE THE EVALUATION BEGINS

1. There must be a Court order directing Dr. Cole to conduct the evaluation and a letter from each attorney that includes their perspective on this case and the purposes for this evaluation.
2. You will pay a fee before the evaluation starts ranging from **\$7,500 - \$12,500** (per party), or more depending on the specifics of the situation. Each party must pay the fee before the evaluation begins so that Dr. Cole cannot be accused of making decisions influenced by any outstanding balances.
3. Once the court order and the letters from each attorney are received by Dr. Cole, the Intake Information Packet and the Parenting History Survey (PHS) are sent to each party and are to be completed by you and returned to Dr. Cole within **TWO WEEKS**. Please ***STAR* or highlight** the parts of the PHS that you think are important. Consult with your attorney if you have any concerns about any of the aforementioned documents.
4. Please do not try to contact Dr. Cole or his staff directly with any questions during the evaluation process. Direct your questions to your attorney and the matter will be addressed with both attorneys. Any violation of this procedure may be reported to the court and/or become part of the final report.

AT THE FIRST APPOINTMENT

5. The first appointment will last approximately 3 hours. To lessen stress, each party will be scheduled on separate days. During the first meeting with Dr. Cole, you will sign the Parenting Evaluation Agreement. The client and their attorney should discuss the Parenting Evaluation Protocol prior to this first interview.
6. During the first appointment, a very detailed interview will be conducted by Dr. Cole. After the interview, you will be administered the MMPI-3.
7. During this initial appointment, the allegation packets will be provided and clearly explained to ensure that both parties understand exactly what is requested of them.

ALLEGATIONS

8. At the end of the first interview, you will receive an “allegation packet” to take home. **THE ALLEGATION PACKETS ARE THE CORE OF THIS EVALUATION AND SHOULD BE COMPLETED PROPERLY AND THOROUGHLY.** The allegation packets provide each party with the opportunity to show poor parenting, poor decision making, risky behavior, etc. exhibited by the other parent. Please complete one packet per allegation (make copies of the packet as needed). Each packet should have only one of the allegations from the first page checked and three supporting examples of the alleged behavior.

The allegation packets must be returned in a three-ring binder (3 inch maximum). You will put each allegation packet in the binder along with supporting documentation right behind the applicable allegation. **Be sure to highlight the most important information that you would like Dr. Cole to focus on.**

LISTING COLLATERAL WITNESSES

The collateral witnesses are a crucial part of this evaluation. Dr. Cole is looking for individuals who have witnessed the behaviors alleged by each party. Non-professional witnesses must submit their testimony on a declaration form. If there are individuals who have witnessed these alleged behaviors, but they are unwilling to speak with Dr. Cole, they are free to write their testimony on a legal declaration form. Your attorney can provide you blank generic declaration forms.

You will have **TWO WEEKS** to return the allegation packets in a three-ring binder. If either parent delays the return of these documents, the attorneys will be notified. The evaluation will not continue until the allegation packets are returned.

9. Once your allegations have been returned, Dr. Cole’s notes from his first interview with you will be sent to your attorney. At this point, you will have the opportunity to make any factual corrections or additions that you see fit. You cannot remove information from these notes. You will have **ONE WEEK** to return any edits that you have made. If your notes are not returned to our office within one week, the notes will be entered into the report as is.

SPOUSE/PARTNER TESTING & INTERVIEW

10. If you have a new partner (spouse, fiancée, boyfriend or girlfriend) who is involved with parenting the children, he/she will be required to take the MMPI-3 and will be interviewed by Dr. Cole.

Dr. Cole does not typically speak with the child(ren) involved. This is to protect the child(ren) from additional stress and feelings of guilt. Children should not feel caught in the middle of any parental fight. Under certain circumstances, depending on the age of the child(ren), Dr. Cole may request to speak with the child(ren); however, this is unlikely.

PARENT/CHILD OBSERVATION

11. The next step is to schedule the Parent/Child Observation. The purpose of this appointment is for Dr. Cole to watch you and your children interacting together. Dr. Cole asks that you to come to the office “ready to interact with your child(ren)” for approximately one hour. Toward the end of this evaluation, you will be requested to complete the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). The CBCL is used to detect behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents. You will complete the CBCL while in our office; you will not take it home.

CONTACTING COLLATERAL WITNESSES

12. After the parent/child observations are complete, Dr. Cole’s office will begin contacting the collateral witnesses that you listed in your allegations. Once it has been determined that the collateral witness is a non-relative/first-hand witness to your allegation, a phone meeting will be scheduled between the collateral witness and Dr. Cole. During the phone meeting, Dr. Cole will read the applicable allegation(s) for which they were listed as a witness. The phone conversation will be typed up and emailed to the collateral witness for review. The conversation will then be entered into the report.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

13. Throughout the duration of the evaluation, we understand that new information/allegations/witnesses may arise. This information must be provided to Dr. Cole’s office as soon as possible, and it must be submitted in allegation packet format **ONLY**. Unwarranted information that is received by our office from either parent or attorney will not be reviewed unless presented in the allegation packet format. Collateral information received by our office via email will not be reviewed unless necessary. Under no circumstance will collateral documentation be accepted from a third-party.

CLOSING INTERVIEWS

14. Once Dr. Cole has had the chance to speak with the collateral witnesses and review all applicable documentation, a closing interview will be scheduled with each client separately. During the closing interview with Dr. Cole, he will discuss the opposing party’s allegations with you. After the closing interview, you will

have **ONE WEEK** to submit additional supporting documentation/evidence for Dr. Cole's review. This is not a requirement, rather an opportunity to defend the allegations that have been made against you.

ATTORNEY MEETING

15. A final meeting will be scheduled between Dr. Cole and both attorneys. If either parent is without representation, they will represent themselves at the final meeting. Any party with representation will not be in attendance of the final meeting as their attorney will be present. Moments prior to the meeting, the final report will be securely emailed to the attorneys/pro-se parties. During the final meeting, Dr. Cole will discuss his recommendations. The final meeting is not an opportunity for either party to object to the information/recommendations in Dr. Cole's report.

COURT TESTIMONY

16. Please be aware that if Dr. Cole is to be called as an expert witness during a deposition or trial because the two attorneys in your case cannot work out a settlement, then an additional advanced fee will be required. **Additional costs are further described in the Parenting Evaluation Agreement.**

DECLARATION OF NON-COMPLIANCE

17. If at any point during the parenting evaluation process, either parent **OR** attorney delays the steps listed above, an email will be sent to the attorneys containing a warning of non-compliance. If the parent/attorney remains non-compliant with the agreed upon terms, Dr. Cole will be required to submit a Declaration of Non-Compliance to the court.

Please note: An additional fee of \$500 will be charged to the client for each Declaration of Non-Compliance that Dr. Cole is required to submit to the court regarding the client's and/or attorney's non-compliance. The evaluation process will not continue until this fee has been paid.