



## ADDRESS

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## RE: CHILD CUSTODY EVALUATION

Dear Parent,

I have been requested to complete a court ordered Child Custody Evaluation regarding you and your family. Experiencing an evaluation can be stressful, both because of the emotions you may experience and the many details to remember. When conducting a Child Custody Evaluation, the goal is to examine the ways in which each parent contributes to the physical, emotional, and social development of the child(ren) in question and to make recommendations to the court as to what appears to be in the child(ren)'s best interests. Your cooperation is necessary in providing information that will help in understanding you and your family and this letter is intended to help better inform you of what will be needed.

The role of any professional conducting a Child Custody Evaluation is that of a third-party neutral. Evaluators always serve impartially, never as an advocate for one parent or the other. I will attempt to answer any questions you have regarding the evaluation process; however, I will refer you back to your attorney to cover any legal or additional questions you may have. Each party to the case will be given the same opportunities for contact, and each will go through substantially similar interview processes. I will not offer any type of parenting time recommendations to you or the other party before the interview process is complete. Recommendations will typically be made via a formal report to the court. After a final report is made to the court, I will not have further direct contact with the parties unless the court orders an update to be conducted. I am, however, available to the attorneys involved, and to pro se parties via written communication, until such time as the litigation is resolved.

I make a special effort to put children at ease and to minimize any disruption(s) in their lives relative to the evaluation. You may help prepare them for our sessions together by letting them know the evaluator is someone who works with parents to help them make decisions about how to take care of children. You can also express that I will need to talk to them about their thoughts and feelings regarding their lives, so that I can help you with your decisions. Please do not tell child(ren) that I am here to decide where they will primarily live, as



this is both incorrect and places an inappropriate burden on children that they must somehow choose who they want to live with. Your child(ren) will not be asked with whom they want to live or which parent they like better. Again, the goal of the evaluation is to provide the court information on how each parent contributes to the physical, emotional, and social development of the child(ren) in question, and to make **recommendations** to the court as to what appears to be in the child(ren)'s best interests. It is up to parents to make decisions for their child(ren), even if that decision is to place parenting issues before the court.

Information about fees and the retainer for the evaluation is detailed on the **Advisement Form**. In an effort to maintain an impartial role during the process, the retainer is due in advance of beginning the evaluation. Payment may be made via check or money order. We do not accept payments through credit cards. I will schedule your **first appointment** after I have received the completed **intake forms** and **initial payments** from all parties. We will schedule a number of subsequent appointments together during the course of the evaluation to see both you and your child(ren). It is important in order to complete this process in a timely manner that you notify us as soon as possible any time an appointment needs to be changed or rescheduled. Throughout this process you must assume responsibility for keeping the evaluator informed any time there are changes in your situation or any issues or potential problems in completing the evaluation.

If for some reason you believe we may have interacted in the past, or that I may have previously provided services or otherwise been involved with anyone in this case, please inform me of this **immediately**. Although I attempt to prevent even the appearance of any possible conflicts of interest, I have been in practice, both privately and at various agencies, for over a decade and cannot guarantee that I remember every person in which I may have had contact with in that time. I may have been professionally involved in previous cases with one or more of the attorneys in this case, just as they may have been involved with each other in previous cases. If I am made aware of any conflict(s) of interest that may impact my ability to conduct a neutral evaluation, I will disclose those to you and to the court.



The number one thing that you can do to help yourself during the evaluation process is to be honest and cooperative with the evaluator. Any dishonest or inaccurate information that you report will only hurt you. Clearly, as in any occasion where people are not in agreement, you and the other parent may have different perceptions of events. This is understandable and something to be expected in a child custody dispute. However, I am required to verify, to the extent possible, statements of fact that are pertinent to the evaluation. As part of this process, each of the parents are asked to voice their concerns regarding the other parent, and respond to that parent's concerns regarding them. Any untrue or inaccurate information is likely to be challenged by the other parent.

Along these same lines, please do not expect me to be a mind reader or otherwise guess at your needs and/or concerns during this process. You will be best served by communicating openly, so that I may make as accurate an assessment as possible. While it is unlikely that I will share the same beliefs about all issues, my beliefs are not the important issue in an evaluation. The important issue rather is how both of the parents' beliefs, lifestyles, and other factors interact and affect the child(ren) in question. There are many different parenting styles and techniques that have varying levels of success with different children. What is important is how your parenting and the other party's parenting affect the specific child(ren) in question in your case.

In order to expedite the process, you are asked to complete the following paperwork tasks:

**FIRST:** Please read, review, and complete the enclosed **Advisement Form**. If you have any questions regarding the procedures outlined, please contact your attorney. A copy of the form has been provided to them as well. If after consulting with your legal counsel there are any remaining questions regarding our policies and procedures, please contact us directly. If there are other adults living with you please make copies and have them complete the form as well. All persons living in the household will need to be interviewed as part of the evaluation process, in accordance with the Texas Family Code.

**SECOND:** Please complete the enclosed **Personal History Questionnaire Form**, **Custody Evaluation Fees Form**, and **Acknowledgement of Notice of Privacy Practices**, and return them with your completed **Advisement Form** and **initial**



**payment.** Provide complete names, addresses, zip codes, and phone numbers of all persons listed on the Personal History Form. Provide complete names and dates of birth on the Acknowledgment of Notice of Privacy Practices Form. It is important that you fully complete the requested information in the forms. Again, if there are other adults living with you, please make copies and have them complete these forms as well. I will contact you regarding scheduling your initial appointment after we receive **Advisement Forms, Personal History Forms, Custody Evaluation Fees Forms, Acknowledgment of Notice of Privacy Practices**, and initial retainer from all parties.

**THIRD:** Please provide the following additional information:

- **Driver's License(s):** A legible copy of the Driver's License (*or state identification card*) of each person in the household (*color copies are preferred*).
- **Report Cards:** Copies of school aged child(ren)'s report cards for the current and previous school year.
- **Employment Verification Letter:** A letter of employment verification/reference from your employer.
- **Parenting References:** Four parenting references answering the questions addressed on the **Parenting Reference Questionnaire**. These forms should be sent directly to us by your references. Please refer to "*Parenting References*" at the bottom of page six of the **Personal History Questionnaire Form** for more detailed instructions.

Please send all information to us via fax, email, and/or to the **Mailing Address** above. Please note that these items are required prior to your first appointment. It is important that you provide the requested number of **Parenting Reference Questionnaires** as any fewer returned to the evaluator raise a concern about the level of contact you and your child(ren) may be having with the larger community. Please mail, fax, and/or email information to us. **Do not send any information to the interviewing office.** All/any copy(s) of required document(s) submitted should be either scanned and/or photocopied. PLEASE DO NOT SEND PHOTOS/ PICTURES OF SIGNED/COMPLETED DOCUMENTS. In addition, you may contact us via email if you have questions and/or concerns. Again, all documentation and correspondence should be sent to us via fax, email, and/or to the **Mailing Address** above.



Often parents have information from other professionals that they have interacted with (*doctors, teachers, law enforcement, etc.*) that they believe is important to share during the course of the evaluation. I will be requesting that you sign **Release of Information Forms**, so that I may obtain basic information from these types of professionals. In addition, parents are urged to provide clear copies of any information from these sources which they believe is relevant, but to provide only relevant information. Please note that it is not necessary to have a copy of every form or report that has ever been generated regarding the child(ren) in question. I will not review any **video or audio recordings** unless directed to do so by the court or by agreement of all parties. Please have your attorney discuss this issue with us if you have any questions.

Again, I understand that this is a difficult process for parents to go through. With your cooperation and active participation, the evaluation should be minimally disruptive for the child(ren) involved. We will take time at your initial appointment to further detail the process and what you can expect as you and your family go through it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monika Logan".

Monika Logan, LPC, LSOTP

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