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**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF PARENTING CAPACITY**

This Psychological Evaluation has been ordered by the Court and is therefore somewhat different than other psychological/mental health services. Because this evaluation is intended for use in some type of legal proceeding, it is defined as a forensic psychological evaluation. It is important for you to understand how a forensic psychological evaluation differs from more traditional psychological evaluations.

While the results of this evaluation may or may not be helpful to you personally, psychological evaluations of parents are typically ordered when the Court wants more information about the parents to be able to make decisions in the best interests of the children. The overall purpose of this Psychological Evaluation is to determine each individual's overall level of psychological functioning; *specifically, as it pertains to parenting capacity.*

It is the intent of this evaluator to provide the Court with information pursuant to *Virginia Code § 20-124.2. In determining best interests of a child for purposes of determining custody and visitation arrangements.*

The confidentiality of the evaluation is determined by the rules of the legal system. Since this evaluation has been ordered by the Court, the report and any information pertaining to it will be admissible into evidence.

This report will be submitted to the Court, attorneys of record and Guardian ad Litem. This evaluator does not distribute this report to other professionals or individuals. However, it may be useful for mental health professionals working with you and/or your family to receive a copy of the written report. In such instances, the copy of the report is distributed through your attorney and/or the guardian ad litem. If you have concerns about the use or distribution of this report, you should discuss these issues carefully with your attorney or the Guardian ad Litem.

It is important to understand the evaluation is not for the purpose of treatment or counseling. Although Dr. Minrath does have a psychotherapy as well as forensic psychology practice, when working as the neutral, objective evaluator appointed by the Court, she functions solely in the role of a forensic psychologist and does not provide clinical services before or after completing the psychological evaluation. A clear standard

of practice is the psychologist must maintain a well-defined forensic model when conducting these evaluations.

Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Dr. Minrath will not conduct the evaluation without your signature on this document. You have the right to stop the evaluation at any time. She also has the right to recuse herself from the evaluation at any time, if she unable to complete an objective, unbiased evaluation.

She does not audiotape or videotape any of the interviews in the evaluation and does not allow you to audiotape the interviews. If, at any time, you have a question about any aspect of the evaluation or these procedures, please ask for clarification. In addition, if at any time during the interview you need a break, please let her know and the interview will resume after the break.

### **THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

The psychological evaluation consists of clinical interviews, psychological testing and record review and interviews with collateral sources of information.

It is not the intention of this evaluator to address every complaint or allegation expressed by either parent. However, the interviews will include a report of concerns/allegations as reported and responded by each parent will be documented.

When legal and medical records as well as other materials and collateral sources are submitted to this evaluator for the review, the evaluator will review the materials and collateral sources that are determined to be most directly related to the question of parenting capacity.

The evaluation will conclude with a follow up of the report draft to review the accuracy of the informational data as noted in the report.

The format for the Psychological Evaluations is as follows:

1. All psychological evaluations are court ordered and the Order must be sent to Dr. Minrath before she can discuss the evaluation with you and schedule the first appointment to begin the evaluation interviews. Typically, the attorneys representing the parents and/or the Guardian ad Litem have reviewed the case and the Informed Consent with her. It is important to understand Dr. Minrath cannot discuss any aspect of this case with you until she has agreed to do the evaluation and has received the Court Order.
2. The record review includes records from multiple sources. Examples of a thorough record review include legal documents such as court orders, transcripts from court hearings and depositions as well as related interrogatories; medical and psychiatric records of the parents and the child; school records and police reports and criminal records. In certain cases, Dr. Minrath is asked to review email communications, selected social media postings and other personal correspondence. All records should be

submitted in well-organized notebooks. If the records are extensive, Dr. Minrath may submit itemizing billing for the additional hours necessary to complete the review.

3. Clinical interviews. These interviews include a report of the circumstances leading to the request for a psychological evaluation as well as an in-depth review of personal and family history, medical/psychiatric history, substance abuse, educational background, employment history and criminal history.

4. Description of Child/Children. You will also be asked to describe your child, your relationship with your child and the overall developmental needs of your child. You will be asked about your child's preschool/school experience and/or childcare. You will be asked about disciplinary measures and socialization.

5. Psychological testing. Dr. Minrath will determine the use of psychological tests on an individual basis and will administer the tests that are most appropriate in answering the questions posed by the court in your case. The psychological testing will also take approximately 2-3 hours. Testing may include the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-III (MMPI-3), Parenting Assessment Inventory (PAI), the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-IV(MCMI-IV) and the Parenting Stress Index (PSI).

6. Collateral sources of information are interviewed, usually by telephone. These interviews provide a better understanding of the circumstances leading to the request for an evaluation as well as provide additional information about you and your parenting style. Collateral sources may be family members, mental health professionals, physicians, the guardian ad litem, school teachers and childcare providers. Authorizations for release of information are necessary for any communication with professionals such as physicians, therapists and teachers. Other collateral sources of information must be informed about a possible contact from Dr. Minrath prior to the evaluation.

7. Before the report is finalized Dr. Minrath will review all of the data with you to insure accurate reporting of information. She will discuss the case summary and any recommendations for mental health treatment or other services with you.

8. A written report is submitted directly to the attorneys of record, the guardian ad litem and the court.

The process of completing all of the data collection as described above and writing a comprehensive report will take approximately 4-6 weeks. This time frame may vary depending on the complexity of your overall situation and the questions posed by attorneys and guardian ad litem.

## **PAYMENT AND FEES**

The retainer fee for this evaluation is \$5000.00. The retainer fee for this evaluation is due at the time of the first appointment. This fee does not include Courtroom testimony. If testimony is required, the fee is \$250 per hour for testimony preparation as well as courtroom time. The half-day fee is \$1000. The full day fee is \$2000. If testimony is cancelled within a week of the scheduled date, the parties are responsible for half of either the half-day or full day fee depending on the scheduled court hearing date. If testimony is cancelled within 48 hours of the scheduled date, the parties are responsible for the full half-day or daily fee.

In some evaluations, requiring a very extensive record review as well as multiple interviews of collateral sources of information, an additional hourly fee of \$250 will be applied.

Please note the fee of a forensic evaluation and any related report writing and courtroom testimony is not covered by health insurance. To qualify for reimbursement all insurance companies require that services rendered are *medical care*. A forensic psychological evaluation is an evaluation in the context of the legal system and, as such, is not medical care.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

Both the legal and clinical standards of practice require that appropriate records are kept in the process of compiling the forensic evaluation report. Documents prepared for litigation at the request of an attorney are covered by attorney-client privilege.

The psychological evaluation report is only for the use of mental health and legal professionals. It should never be distributed to non-professional individuals. This policy is compliant with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association. This evaluator only distributes this report to the attorneys of record and the Court. The report is never distributed to other parties through my office.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

I have read and agree to the above: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_