

WARNING TO PARENTS

1. A custody/parenting time evaluation is not therapeutic and not necessarily in the best interests of you, your children, or the functioning of your family. Its purpose is to assist litigation and judicial decision-making.
2. Custody/parenting time evaluations probe into some of your and your children's most personal thoughts, feelings, and actions. **The process is not confidential.** Once this probing is done and a report is written, you will have no control over how it will be used. The reports will be released to the judge, the attorneys, and to you.
3. Custody/parenting time evaluations **can be lengthy and expensive.** They can dramatically delay the time when parents choose to reach agreements, and they can divert money that parents need for other family expenses.
4. A custody/parenting time evaluation does not in any way guarantee an end to your conflict. It can cause **further conflict** and, thus, further harm to children. The evaluation may encourage parents to amplify the bad and forget the good in each other.
5. There is little chance that a custody/parenting time evaluation or a judge's decision based on it could be as **beneficial as agreements reached by parents**; a judge can only pick from the bad choices left in the midst of parental conflict, while parents can actually create better choices by ending conflict.

For all these reasons, a custody/parenting time evaluation should be used only in those rare cases in which parents are unable to develop their own parenting plans, not in cases where parents simply have not as yet agreed on a parenting plan. Evaluations should be limited to cases of **serious** allegations of domestic abuse, substance abuse, and mental illness. They should **never be used to try to identify the "better parent."**

Most divorces or separations do not involve "unfit" parents. They involve angry, hurt, but **"good enough" parents.** None of these parents will be disappearing from their children's lives, nor relieved of the responsibility of raising their children. What they require is precisely the opposite of what custody/parenting time evaluations provide; they require assistance in making a child-focused transition from an intimate spousal relationship to a non-intimate cooperative parenting relationship.

Please talk to your Family Court Specialist about options designed to help families in conflict, not do more harm.