

Lane County Family Mediation Custody and Parenting Time Evaluation



Dear Parent,

Lane County Family Mediation has received a copy of the court order to conduct a custody and parenting time evaluation for your family. Going through an evaluation can be a stressful experience, both because of the emotions involved and the many details to remember. This letter is to try to help you be informed ahead of time about the process, organize yourself and help the process go as smoothly as possible.

Your appointments will be scheduled once both parents have attended the Focus on Children class and one mediation session with a FMP mediator (in this court action), and FMP has received the \$1,500 evaluation fee.

In the meantime, please familiarize yourself with the information below.

- An evaluator's role is assess families and make recommendations about the custody and/or parenting time of minor children. Evaluators are impartial and do not take the side of either parent. Their focus is on the best interests of the child and the goal of the evaluation is to ensure the best possible outcome for children.
- The evaluator has advanced training in custody evaluations, mediation, and domestic violence, as well as an in-depth knowledge of custody and parenting plans. Evaluators have also earned, at a minimum, a master's degree in a related field.
- Program staff are mandatory reporters. This means they are required to report to the appropriate agency any information they receive concerning harm to a child or adult or any outstanding criminal warrants against either parent.
- The evaluation is based largely on the following factors:
 - The child's needs based on age and developmental level, attachment to each parent, individual personalities, thoughts, and feelings;
 - The ability, stability, mental health, and maturity of each adult as a parent;
 - The desirability of continuing existing relationships and environments;
 - The relationship between the parents and each parent's ability to support the child's relationship with the other parent;
 - The plan presented for the day-to-day needs of the child; and
 - Any patterns of substance, child, or domestic abuse.

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- At the initial appointment, each parent will meet individually with the evaluator for ninety minutes. During this appointment, the evaluator will review the procedures and have them sign the Informed Consent and Release of Information forms. Parent must bring their completed Parent Questionnaire and Potential Collateral Contacts (as well as other document indicated in the questionnaire) to the initial appointment.
- The evaluator may also want to observe each parent spending time with the children and spend time with the children without parents present. A home visit sometimes takes place but is not always necessary. With parents' consent, the evaluator may seek information from professionals in the community who know the children, such as teachers, mental health professionals, and other agency staff. Evaluators may contact personal references if deemed relevant. Each parent should also expect to have a subsequent ninety-minute follow up appointment with the evaluator.
- Information provided during the evaluation is not confidential.
- In most cases the evaluator will complete a brief written report that includes the recommended custody and parenting time schedule.

Please note appointments are available during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, and once scheduled cannot be rescheduled.

Sincerely,

Lane County Family Mediation Program

cc: **Attorney on Record**

Reminder:

Bring to the initial appointment:

- Parent Questionnaire
- Potential Collateral Contacts List
- Other materials requested in the questionnaire

Be ready to sign at the initial appointment:

- Informed Consent to Participate in a Custody and Parenting Time Evaluation
- Consent to Obtain and/or Release Information