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Legacy Assessment Group

Court Related Psychological Assessments

General Considerations

Because your contact with our office concerns a legal matter, you should understand that there are specific limitations that apply to a psychological assessment done in the context of litigation. In several ways the services of Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney will not be the same as you would ordinarily expect from a counselor or a psychologist. The court or the attorneys have asked for a psychological evaluation and recommendations concerning your child's needs and your ability to meet those needs. Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney are not providing counseling services, *per se*. That means she cannot offer you the kind of personal advice or feedback, nor advocate for you as a counselor would. Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney have been asked for a report that will address your parenting capacity, so the effort will be directed toward gathering information about you and your child, not toward suggesting ways that you might change yourself. Please be aware, further, that the assessment services provided under this contact are governed by the *Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists*, and are *psychological* services. Finally, you are free to decline to participate in the assessment. If at any time you prefer not to participate, or to have another professional conduct the study, please discuss your preference with your attorney and notify this office.

Since your dispute involves a minor child (or children), *the psychologist's ethical standards and state law require that the primary concern of this office must be the welfare and best interests of the minor children.* (That means that we cannot be "on your side;" we must look out for the children.) Whether this office has been appointed by the court to do psychological evaluations of all the parties concerned, or retained by an attorney to consult specifically on that party's behalf, any recommendations made to the attorneys or to the court will be recommendations that speak to the best interests of the children.

Your privacy and confidentiality are limited in a court-related assessment. In most court-related evaluations, all of the information and records are subject to "discovery." That means that everything you tell us, your responses to the psychological tests, and any notes, letters, records, tapes, papers, emails or other material in your file (including things you have given to this office, yourself) must be made available to both attorneys if the court or the attorneys request that the records be produced. Only the attorneys and the court, however, may have access to these records. Records will not be made public in any other way by this office without notice to you and your approval, but you should understand that once the report

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is released to the court and lawyers, this office cannot control or predict who might obtain access to it. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, but the parties in a family law matter often know of one other's appointments and may know some of what has been said by the other in the course of the assessment. Similarly, other informants may be asked to provide information, and in that context, may learn or discern something about your matter. Of course if you indicate that you may abuse or harm yourself or others, including children, we may be required by law to report our concern to the proper authorities.

From time to time during the evaluation this office may also communicate with the court or with the attorneys involved. Contacts with the attorneys during the evaluation will be primarily for gathering information from them, but some information, necessary to facilitate the assessment, may be given to them as well. After the evaluation is completed a report of findings and recommendations will be submitted to the court and copies provided to the attorneys. Please be informed that the written report of findings and recommendations is customarily provided to the attorneys and to the court, but in most cases, by the court's order, this office may not provide a copy of the report directly to you. It is the policy of this office not to provide the report directly to you, but to allow your lawyer that prerogative. Also, be aware that either attorney may ask for a deposition or for testimony to be offered in court. If you participate in the evaluation, it is possible that the information gathered during the evaluation will be reported in court or in a deposition. If you have any questions concerning these matters please discuss them with your attorney or with Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney at the time of your appointment.

The Assessment Process

A court-related psychological evaluation usually takes place in three parts, whether the evaluation is requested by the court and includes all the parties concerned, or by only your attorney on one party's behalf. (The following describes the usual processes; your evaluation may vary somewhat.)

The first step, which is usually completed during your initial appointment in this office, includes an individual interview and psychological testing. You will have the chance to tell your account of the problem that has come before the court. We would also like to hear information about you, personally, and about your life. The psychological tests are designed to provide information that will clarify and amplify the information obtained during the interview. Expect to be at the office for five or six hours, usually between two-and-a-half and three hours for the interview, and about the same for the psychological tests, depending on your reading and writing speed. The initial interview and the psychological testing may be done on different days if that is more convenient for you.

The second step in the evaluation is an observational visit with caregiver and child. Depending on the age and maturity of the children Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney may want to spend some time alone speaking with them.

Finally, a complete evaluation requires contacts with other individuals who may have knowledge relevant to the matter at hand, and/or a review of related written material. The contacts might include former or current counselors, the children's schools and teachers, your

employers, supervisors and coworkers, police officers, or family members, friends, and neighbors who have relevant knowledge as well as written notes, letters, findings, and reports. You may provide a list of references and their addresses and telephone numbers; you will also be asked to sign an information release waiver to allow this office to contact and to receive information from professional sources. Formal permission is not needed for contacts with friends, family, and coworkers. You or your lawyer may also provide written documents for review, as well. Copies of emails, arrest and police reports, legal documents, and letters may be helpful, as well as photographs, audiotapes, or videotapes. None are necessary or required, but some clients feel such records provide information that cannot be obtained otherwise.

From the initial visit to the finished report the entire process is completed based upon the court order, and the cooperation of all parties involved.

SCHEDULE OF CUSTOMARY FEES

Parental Ability Evaluation	\$1200
Child Custody Evaluation – per person	\$1500
Court Testimony and/or Depositions	\$250 per hour
One hour preparation	
Court appearance and waiting time	
Attorney consultation	\$250 per hour

Payment for evaluation required at time the initial appointment is scheduled.

Deposit of \$500 required at time of subpoena summons. Deposit refundable if cancelled with 72 hours advance notice

A credit card will be required to be on file in order to schedule forensic testing services to be charged only in the case of missed appointments, late cancellation or difficulty obtaining payment after services are rendered.

CANCELLATION POLICY

In order to provide you with optimal care, your appointment time is reserved specifically for you. Dr. Talmage and Dr. Haney do not double book her appointments.

In return, we ask that you provide us with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice if you are unable to make it to your appointment. This gives us an opportunity to fill those appointment times with other clients in need of care. If you are unable to provide us with this notice, you will incur a missed appointment/ late cancellation fee as follows:

\$500 for full day testing appointments/ \$300 for half day testing appointments

I have received and read the three pages that describe the assessment process and the limitations to confidentiality, and I understand the fees, limits, and process of the psychological evaluation. I agree to cooperate with, and to participate in the assessment under the stated terms and to pay the fees for services as those are described above and as they are necessary for completion of the assessment, when presented with a statement for services. I understand that no report will be submitted to the court or to the attorneys until all fees have been paid. If I have any questions about the assessment I will discuss them with Dr. Haney or Dr. Talmage or with my attorney. I will discuss any legal questions with my attorney; I agree not to ask legal questions, nor to solicit legal advice from Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney.

Client Signature: _____ Date: _____

This document is yours to keep, so that you may refer to it as the assessment progresses, and so that you may discuss it with your attorney. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the assessment or the information discussed above, please mention your questions to Dr. Talmage or Dr. Haney at the time of your first appointment. Also, please feel free to discuss any questions with your attorney. It is our intent to conduct a thorough evaluation and to provide a report that will be of value to all of the parties.