



Custody and Access Assessments

What is a Custody and Access Assessment?

Custody and Access Assessments identify and provide an understanding of the needs of the children in a separated family and each parent's willingness and ability to meet the children's needs. The assessor's recommendations may assist separated parents, their lawyers or the Courts in deciding on the custody and access arrangements or shared parenting plan that will best meet their children's needs.

We work in a multidisciplinary team context to provide you with a comprehensive assessment that meets best practices. You will be assigned a highly skilled masters or doctoral level assessor who does not work for either parent/guardian and strives with the highest integrity to adopt a neutral and unbiased focus. The assessor consults regularly with the team and, in some cases you may meet with more than one team member. Throughout the assessment, all information is considered within the context of the "best interests of the child" as required by the Children's Law Reform Act (CLRA).

How Can I Access Services?

We accept referrals directly from parents' lawyers, on consent of both parties, or by way of court orders under the CLRA.

What is the Process?

The assessment:

- Typically takes 3 to 4 months (depending on the complexity of the case);
- Consists of 3 to 5 interviews at our London office;
- Includes a first appointment outlining the process of the assessment, gaining the consent of the parties, and explaining the limits to confidentiality;
- Involves multiple individual interviews with parents/caregivers to discuss the current situation, the background history, parents' views on parenting and their children's needs;
- May consist of completing questionnaires and rating scales to learn more about each person's functioning and views on child-rearing;
- Incorporates observations of parent-child interactions;
- Involves assessing the child(ren)'s needs;
- Includes gathering information from collateral sources (e.g., physicians, counsellors, police, school, friends/family)

Parents will receive feedback on the results and recommendations will be provided. A report will be prepared and made available to the parents through their lawyer.

What is the Cost?

The cost of a Custody and Access Assessment will vary. It is determined by a number of factors including:

- the number of parties to be assessed,
- the number of children involved,
- how many interviews and observations are needed,
- whether testing is to be included in the assessment,
- how many collateral contacts are involved to gather the relevant information needed,
- the time required to write a comprehensive report with recommendations.

A retainer and administrative fee from each side is requested to begin the assessment process. Additional costs related to disbursement fees, mileage costs, and other related expenses for the assessment are also billed to the parties being assessed.

