



Parenting Capacity Assessments (PCA)

What is a Parenting Capacity Assessment?

Parenting Capacity Assessments under the Child and Family Services Act (Section 54), are available to lawyers, Courts, Children's Aid Societies, or other community agencies to assist in making decisions about the best interests of children.

Assessors gather information from different sources about: the needs of the child(ren) involved; the ability of the parent(s) to meet their child(ren)'s needs; the skills of the parent(s) to overcome identified challenges; the quality of the parent-child relationship; and supports available to the family. The information gathered is analyzed and recommendations are made based on the best interests of the child(ren). Recommendations can address placement options for the child(ren), long term planning, treatment suggestions for the child(ren), and/or services that might help the parent(s) work out problem areas. When looking at placement options, the final decision always rests with the Courts.

We consider a parent's participation in an assessment to be voluntary and a parent can withdraw from the process at any time. Assessments typically take 3-4 months involving several sessions, often lasting 2-3 hours in length.

The London Family Court Clinic's PCA should only be considered when a Children's Aid Society is already involved. We are an independent and neutral agency and do not replace the work of the Children's Aid Society. Our Clinic's mandate is to provide lawyers and the Court with an independent assessment in the event that there is an unresolved conflict between the Children's Aid Society and the parents over supervision, placement, treatment planning, access arrangements, and/or custody of a child(ren).

How Can I Access Services?

Typically through Family Court a parenting capacity assessment is ordered by the presiding Judge.

What is the Process?

The assessment includes:

- A first appointment outlining the process of the assessment, gaining the consent of the parent(s), and explaining the limits to confidentiality for these assessments;
- Interviews with all those putting forth a parenting plan to discuss the family situation, the background history, parent's views on parenting, and on their children's needs;
- Completing questionnaires and rating scales to learn more about the parents' psychological

functioning and views on parenting;

- Observations of parent-child interactions;
- Assessing the child's needs; and
- Gathering information from collateral sources such as physicians, counselors, police, other services or supports, and friends or family.

Parents will receive feedback on the assessment and be able to discuss the results and recommendations with the assessors. A report will be prepared and made available to the parents through their lawyer. Copies of the report are also provided to the Court and the Children's Aid Society.

What is the Cost?

Costs are generally worked out as a part of the Court process and parents may or may not be expected to contribute.

