



CUSTODY & VISITATION-RELATED ASSESSMENTS: TRAINING GUIDELINES

The following are guidelines for the Maryland Basic Custody Evaluation training course, to be conducted pursuant to Maryland Rule 9-205.3. For each training mode, attendees shall be educated about relevant current research and best practices and shall explore practical application of ethical considerations.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

- Legal terms, standards, and concepts related to family law judicial process
- Relevant statutes, case law, and rules, including Rule 9-205.3
- Parenting plans
- Distinctions between clinical and forensic examinations
- Roles and perspectives of judges and attorneys

CHILD DEVELOPMENT:

- Basics of infant and child development, including critical periods of brain development
- Attachment and how it relates to developmentally appropriate access schedules
- Overview of normal and aberrant mental health functioning
- Impact of high conflict parental behavior on children and family
- Impact of separation and divorce on children

CUSTODY EVALUATION PROCESS:

- Interviews of children, parents, caregivers, and collaterals
- Parent-child observations
- Areas and modes of data collection
- Required and optional elements of custody evaluations and specific issue evaluations under Rule 9-205.3
- Psychological evaluations
- Cultural and diversity considerations
- Neutrality: Personal attitudes, values, and feelings that may compromise an evaluator's neutrality
- Risks inherent in the role of custody evaluator and how best to manage them

REPORTING TO COURT AND INVOLVEMENT IN COURT PROCEEDINGS:

- Written report structure and format for custody evaluations and specific issue evaluations
- Oral reporting
- Depositions
- Testimony

[see next page]



FAMILY FACT SHEET



SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES:

- Parental relocation
- Intimate partner violence: Dynamics and effects on parenting and children; barriers to disclosure; initial screening; assessment protocols; indicators for protective safety recommendations; implications for child access
- Child abuse: Types (physical, emotional, sexual); barriers to disclosure; dynamics and effects; implications for child access; nature and role of child protective services investigations
- Special needs children
- LGBTQ+ parents and children
- Mental health conditions, protocols for monitoring and treatment, and implications for child access
- Substance misuse, protocols for monitoring and treatment, and implications for child access
- Parent-child contact failure

