



## **Agreement For Parents/Caregivers/Guardians**

Counseling can be a very helpful resource for children of separation and divorce. Counseling can:

- Facilitate open and appropriate expression of strong feelings commonly experienced by children in family transitions, including guilt, grief, sadness, and anger
- Provide a neutral environment where a child can explore these feelings
- Provide resources for caregivers to help focus on specific emotional and developmental needs of the child/children.
- Help caregivers communicate with their children plans for transitions, changes, etc.

However, the usefulness of such therapy is extremely limited when the therapy itself becomes simply another matter of dispute between parents. With this in mind, and in order to best help your child, I strongly recommend that each of the child's caregivers (e.g., parents, stepparents, daycare workers, guardian ad litem (GAL) etc.) mutually accept the following as requisites for the child's participation in therapy.

1. As your child's therapist, it is my primary responsibility to respond to your child's emotional needs. This includes, but is not limited to, contact with your child and each of his/her caregivers, and gathering information relevant to understanding your child's welfare and circumstances as perceived by important others. Sometimes this may include recommendation that you consult your child's physician for physical health relevant to therapy.
2. I ask that all caregivers remain in frequent communication regarding this child/children's welfare and emotional wellbeing. Open communication about his/her emotional state and behavior is critical. In this regard, I invite each of you to initiate frequent and open exchange with me and your child's therapist.
3. I ask that all parties recognize and, as necessary, reaffirm to the child, that I am the child's helper and not allied with any disputing party.
4. I strongly recommend that all caregivers choose to participate in groups in which separating and divorced parents learn basic strategies for conducting a divorce in the best interest of the child.

5. Please be advised regarding the limits of confidentiality as it applies to therapy with a child in these circumstances:
- I keep records of all contacts relevant to your child’s well-being. These records are subject to judge ordered subpoena.
  - I am not a secret keeper. Any matter brought to my attention by either parent regarding the child may be revealed to the other parent in matters where it is relevant to the child’s wellbeing. Any information irrelevant to the child’s wellbeing are best used by being brought to the attention to the attorney, physician, or personal therapists.
  - I am legally obligated to bring any concern regarding the child’s health and safety to the attention of relevant authorities. When possible, should this necessity arise, I will advise all parties regarding my concerns.
6. I will not make any recommendations or judgments about custody. I recommend that parties who are disputing custody strongly consider participation in alternative forms of negotiation and conflict resolution, including mediation and custody evaluation, rather than settle a dispute in court.
7. If for any reason I am asked to participate in court proceedings, a fee of \$150/hour is required at the time of court involvement and for any preparation needed for the court proceedings.

Your understanding of these points and agreement in advance of starting this therapy may resolve difficulties that would otherwise arise and will help make this therapy successful. Your signature below signifies that you have read and accept these points.

Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print signature

Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print signature

Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print signature

Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print signature

Child’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print signature