

READ ME FIRST

INFORMATION FOR YOUR FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Wondering what a forensic psychological evaluation is? This document describes the basic procedures of a "typical" evaluation and my role as a forensic psychologist. Dealing with the legal system can be bewildering, frustrating and disillusioning. I have yet to meet a person who really wants to place their situation into the hands of someone they don't know who will make recommendations about their situation. The process is stressful whether you are undergoing a psychological evaluation, a custody evaluation or a civil matter. Whatever your situation, please understand that I am not "your expert" or "your witness," but rather the "Court's expert,"

Please read my resume (Curriculum Vitae) when you have time to learn about my background. The resume can be found towards the bottom of the home page – just click on the orange button and it will appear on your screen.

Your psychological evaluation begins by reviewing and completing paperwork before your first appointment. Instructions on how to complete the documents can be found at the Family Law page of our website (www.jamesdavidson.net). I'll also send you an email with links to the documents for your convenience.

A link to an additional document – the "Statement of Assent" – will be sent to you by email. This document describes the policies and procedures I use when conducting a forensic psychological evaluation. Please carefully read the Statement of Assent. The Statement of Assent has also been given to your attorney for review. Please sign the Statement of Assent online once you're confident that you understand my policies and procedures. The evaluation will not begin until the Statement of Assent has been signed by each party.

The first face-to-face meeting begins in my office with a review of the evaluation process and time to answer your questions. A typical evaluation includes one or more interviews, psychological testing and obtaining releases to obtain records from professionals such as doctors and impressions from individuals who know you. You will have plenty of time to inform me of your concerns. Some evaluations also involve obtaining detailed information about allegations of physical or sexual abuse, alcohol or drug abuse, and serious mental illness.

An individual psychological evaluation usually involves speaking with you and the person requesting the evaluation. My responsibility to the Court for a psychological evaluation is to describe your mental condition and make relevant recommendations. I cannot make any recommendations about parental rights and responsibilities such as custody (described next) when I perform an individual psychological evaluation.

A custody/parenting time evaluation also involves interviewing and observing your child(ren) following the initial interview of both parents and obtaining medical, school and counseling records for each child. Children are observed in your home. They will be interviewed in a private place of your choosing in the home if they are old enough. My responsibility to the Court is to make recommendations about parenting rights and responsibilities that I believe are in the best interests of the child(ren). This includes custody time, vacation and holiday schedules, exchange procedures and more.

You may or may not agree with my findings. Please understand that I seek to perform evaluations in a thorough, fair and unbiased manner. Tell me if you ever think you are not being treated courteously or in a fair way. Regardless of my findings and recommendations, I expect to treat you with respect during this stressful time.

Please understand that the Court is the authority to whom I am responsible and the child(ren) are my primary concern. After the evaluation is completed, a report with my findings and recommendations will be sent to the attorneys and the Court. A written report in a "typical" custody evaluation or psychological evaluation takes many hours to prepare. Please understand that I cannot tell you my findings before the report is released.

Please consider the risks of this process. I may form opinions and recommendations that you may find painful to hear and that you may think are inaccurate – as they may well be. Although I strive to do my best, forensic psychology is not an exact process or exact science. I may make recommendations that are very different from what you want and very different from what you feel is right and fair.

For most people, undergoing a forensic evaluation is stressful and worrisome. People are sometimes reluctant to seek therapy when undergoing an evaluation because they fear it will reflect badly on them. As a former therapist, that is not what I believe. If you are feeling the weight of the current situation, please seek therapy for yourself. Being in therapy will not reflect poorly on you. If you take good care of yourself, you will be better able to cope with the pressures of the situation.

There are at least four parts of this process that you may find upsetting: 1) re-living some painful memories and feelings as part of the evaluation process; 2) hearing the results of the evaluation, some of which may be negative; 3) having other people be informed about very private and personal aspects of your life; and 4) the possibility that my recommendations may differ substantially from what you desire and what you feel is correct and fair. It is hard to imagine anything much more painful than the possibility of losing time with a child, especially in the midst of a divorce or after ending a marriage.

The policies and procedures described in this document and further described in the Statement of Assent are intentionally designed to allow me to be as legally, professionally and financially independent of you as possible. In this way, I strive to be unbiased in my observations, and maintain my integrity and credibility with the Court.

Sincerely,

James Davidson, Ph.D.
Forensic and Clinical Psychologist

Nancy Davidson, Ph.D.
Forensic and Clinical Psychologist