


When Should I Request a Psychological Evaluation in a Child Custody Case?

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Following a divorce, one of the most difficult aspects of a divided family relate to concerns ***about the well being of the children involved***. While the ideal scenario is that both parents share custody of the children and continue to be positive forces in their lives, sometimes this is simply not possible.

In some cases, a parent may not be a positive influence on the children. ***In extreme cases, if psychological instability or mental illness are factors, the parent may even pose a danger to the child physically and/or emotionally.***

In divorce or child custody cases, courts have an obligation to always act in the best interests of the children involved. If you think your former spouse could be dangerous to your child, you **do** have options.

Psychological Testing

There are a number of standardized tests that courts can use to assess parenting ability and mental fitness. These include:

The Ackerman-Schoedorf Scales for Parent Evaluation of Custody (ASPECT). This test uses interviews, IQ analysis and other methods.

The Bricklin Perceptual Scales (BPS). Helps to discern children's perception of her parents through questions, storytelling, drawing pictures and interviewing the parents.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2). Evaluates psychological disorders and cognitive functioning.

The Million Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMMI-3). Can identify personality disorders.

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Uses responses to drawings to determine personality traits.

The requirement of a psychological evaluation is not uncommon in child custody cases, and neither parent should see it as a threat or an insult. The court simply wants to make sure that the children involved will be safe and well taken care of following the outcome of the court case.

Reasons for Requesting Psychological Testing

Either spouse can request a psychological evaluation for the other during a divorce or child custody case.

Some of the top reasons for doing so include:

Mental Illness. If a partner has a known or suspected mental illness that could inhibit their ability to be a fit parent, a psychological test can confirm this to the court and influence custody decisions in positive and appropriate ways.

Suspected Personality Disorder. A personality disorder such as narcissism, sociopathy or schizoid tendencies could indicate a parent will be an effective caretaker or even dangerous to children.

Signs of Psychological Instability. Whether a person has a diagnosed mental illness or not, anyone can be prone to psychological instability for a range of reasons. The divorce or child custody case itself could be a cause for it, or other issues in a parent's personal life. Anxiety, depression or personality changes can all impair a person's ability to be an effective parent. Psychological testing can assist in determining if someone is unstable as well as the degree of the problem.

Persons involved in a divorce or child custody case should be aware that if they request a psychological evaluation for their former spouse, he or she will likely respond with the same request. The court does not pay for this testing, so it will have to be covered by one or both of you.

While psychological testing for parental fitness may yield valuable insights that assists children in getting ideal care, in some cases the testing may not turn up any significant information. It could even backfire and cast the one who requested the testing in a bad light.

The Law Office of David Pedrazas in Salt Lake city, Utah Can Help With All Divorce and Family Law Related Issues

If you're not sure how to proceed, consult with your Salt Lake City divorce and family law attorney, David Pedrazas, to receive an expert opinion. David Pedrazas is experienced in divorce and child custody issues and has overseen many situations like yours and can ***advise you on the best course of action***. Contact The Law Office of David Pedrazas in Salt Lake City, Utah today for a ***free case evaluation***. Give us a call at **801-263-7078**.

The health, well being and safety of the children involved in a divorce or child custody case is of paramount importance. Because of this, ***if there any doubts regarding the fitness of either parent to be a caretaker, psychological testing is an important step to take***. It's ultimately better to err on the side of caution than risk allowing children to be put into harm's way.