

## Introduction

When the structure of a family changes, the people involved may experience a period of uncertainty. Changes often cause differences of opinion about the sharing of parenting time and responsibilities. During these times, families can often benefit from the help of professionals in setting up a parenting plan that would be in the children's best interests.

The Comprehensive Evaluation process is designed to provide that help. For many parents, the process becomes a learning experience. Parents discover more about the needs of their children and their own reactions to the family situation.

It is hoped that the information and recommendations that are shared during this process will help parents resolve the issues and move forward with a healthy parenting arrangement for their children. Resolving the conflict will also allow the children to make a successful adjustment to the changes in their lives.

## What to Expect

A Comprehensive Evaluation is only conducted after it is ordered by the Court. A Family Relations Counselor (FRC) is then assigned to the case. During the process, information is collected from the parents and various professionals in order to better understand what might help the family and the children.

The comprehensive evaluation is not

a confidential process. This means the information gathered by the FRC is shared with the parents, the attorneys, and Guardians Ad Litem (GAL) in the case, and possibly the Court at the conclusion of the evaluation.

In addition to providing the parties with an assessment of the family, the FRC will also make recommendations about a parenting plan that best meets the needs of the children. Often, parents may come to an agreement on the issues during the evaluation process or at its end. When this happens, there is no need for a trial.

## How it Works

All parts of the Comprehensive Evaluation are important and help the FRC in making recommendations about the best possible parenting arrangement for the children. The process includes the following:

- The Comprehensive Evaluation usually begins with both parents meeting together with the FRC who will conduct the evaluation. This gives both parents a chance to share their concerns and proposals to the FRC and each other. NOTE: If you have safety concerns about meeting with your child's other parent, you should contact your FRC when you get the appointment letter to talk about those concerns.
- The evaluation process will also include individual appointments,

home visits, and meetings with the children.

- Information will be collected from professionals (schools, doctors, therapists, and others) who have been involved with the family. Parents will be asked to sign Authorization for Release of Information forms for each professional source that will be contacted to allow an exchange of information.
- Parents will be required to give 3 personal references from people who know them as parents.
- The Comprehensive Evaluation will end with a final conference. Whenever possible, the meeting will be scheduled for the parents and the attorneys together. In this meeting, the FRC will share their assessment of the information gathered during the process, their conclusions, and their recommendations.

The information shared at the end of the Comprehensive Evaluation may help the parents in resolving the issues. If there is an agreement, the Court is then notified of that by Family Services. If an agreement is not reached, the FRC will send a written evaluation to the Court. The written report includes a summary of the facts, the counselor's assessment of the family, and recommendations. This report may be used as evidence at a trial and the counselor may testify.

## What Parents Need to Do

The participation and cooperation of the parents throughout the evaluation process is essential. It is very important that a commitment be made to cooperate with the Family Relations Counselor in the following ways:

1. Keep scheduled appointments and arrive on time for all meetings.
2. Fill out the Comprehensive Evaluation Questionnaire completely and accurately before the first appointment and bring it with you to your first appointment.
3. Sign the necessary Authorization for Release of Information forms and bring all requested information to appointments.
4. Make arrangements to have the children available to meet with the FRC at the requested times, for both home and Family Services Office visits.
5. Explain to the children that they will meet with an FRC, but let them know that they will not be asked to choose between their parents.

**For more information, contact your local Court Support Services Division - Family Services Office. Contact information is available at the Superior Court – Court Service Center.**

## Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division Family Services



For more information, you may go to the  
Judicial Branch website at:  
[www.jud.ct.gov](http://www.jud.ct.gov)



## Comprehensive Evaluation