

Treating Children of Separated or Divorced Parents

In families of separation and divorce, children's psychotherapists work to help them cope adaptively with the forces acting upon their lives. Treating children in this context is difficult because:

1. Both parents usually have different views of the forces acting upon the child and the child's needs.
2. Parents' views may be affected by their own psychological experiences, issues, and needs.
3. Both parents usually fear that the child's psychotherapist will side with the other parent.
4. Both parents usually fear that the child's psychotherapist will make custody or visitation recommendations that are not in the best interest of the child or parent.

For these reasons, your child's psychotherapist has instituted the following policies in treating children of separated or divorced parents who share legal custody:

1. Both parents must consent to treatment, ideally before the first session with the child, or shortly thereafter.
2. Both parents will be offered "equal time" in face-to-face or phone contacts as much as realistically possible, unless this is contraindicated, such as cases in which the therapist judges that contact with one or both parents might negatively affect the child (e.g., if there is a concern related to parental abuse or threats to the child).
3. Your child's therapist will not communicate with attorneys for either parent or guardian.
4. Any information provided by one parent may be shared with the other parent or the child at the sole discretion of child's therapist.
5. Your child's psychotherapist will not provide custody or visitation recommendations to the court, mediator, or psychologist conducting a family psychological evaluation. If the child has a court representative (attorney, guardian ad litem, or other advocate) or if requested by both parents or ordered by the court, your child's therapist may discuss observations about the child with these parties.

These policies may not apply when a parent resides out of the area or is incarcerated, when parent-child contact is limited by a court (Juvenile, Family, or Guardianship) or court representative (e.g., Children's Services Bureau social worker), when there is substantial evidence that a parent has abused, endangered, neglected, or abducted a child, when communication with a parent might be physically or psychologically harmful to a child or damage the therapeutic relationship, or when a parent fails to respond to the therapist's attempts to establish contact with that parent.

I have read and understand the above policies.

Signed: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Date Signed: _____