

## Agreement for Therapy with a Minor Related to Domestic Concerns

Psychotherapy can be a very important resource for children if facing domestic concerns related to separation, divorce, blended families, and parent-child estrangement.

Establishing a therapeutic alliance outside of the home can:

- Facilitate open and appropriate expression of the strong feelings, which routinely accompany family transitions, including guilt, grief, sadness and anger.
- Provide an emotionally neutral setting in which children can explore these feelings.
- Help children understand and accept the new family composition and the plans for contact with each member of the family.
- Offer feedback and recommendations to a child's caregivers based on knowledge of the child's specific emotional needs and developmental capacities.

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, etc.) mutually accept the following as requisites to participation in therapy:

1. As your child's psychotherapist, 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 or her caregivers, and gathering information relevant to understanding your child's welfare and circumstances as perceived by important others (e.g., pediatrician, teachers). In some cases, this may include a recommendation that you consult with a physician, should matters of your child's physical health be relevant to this therapy.
2. I ask that all caregivers remain in frequent communication regarding this child's welfare and emotional wellbeing. Open communication about his or her emotional state and behavior is critical. In this regard, I invite each of you to initiate frequent and open exchange with me as your child's counselor.
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 involved choose to participate in psycho-educational groups in which separating and divorced parents learn basic strategies for conducting a divorce in the best interests of the child. I can refer you to such programs.
5. Please be advised regarding the limits of confidentiality as it applies to psychotherapy with a child in these circumstances:
  - I keep records of all contacts relevant to your child's well-being. These records are subject to court subpoena.
  - Any matter brought to my attention by either parent regarding the child may be revealed to the other parent.

Please be advised that legally, confidentiality and therapist-client privilege does not apply amongst family members when they have agreed to participate in family therapy.

However, for best practice, I will use my clinical discretion to decide when such is appropriate, and I will inform either parent if I feel they have brought a matter to my attention that should be shared with the other parent.

6. Matters brought to my attention that are irrelevant to the child’s welfare may be kept in confidence. I will ask each party to sign an “Authorization for Release of Information” for any auxiliary contacts they would like for me to speak with regarding my work with their child (teachers, grandparents, etc.). 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.
7. This psychotherapy will not yield direct recommendations to a family court about parenting time or decision-making. That role is governed by C.R.S. 14-10-124, which dictates that only appointed Child and Family Investigators make said recommendations directly. In general, I advise parties who are disputing these matters strongly consider participation in alternative forms of negotiation and conflict resolution prior to disputing them in court.
8. We do not do court work. If you need, referrals to forensic professionals will be provided to you. Our desire is to protect your child’s psychotherapy from the intrusiveness of legal proceedings. By signing this form, you are agreeing that neither you nor your attorney will call us to testify in court or any other legal proceedings, nor will a disclosure of psychotherapy records be requested for legal 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.**

**I have read the above “Agreement For Therapy with a Minor Related to Domestic Concerns”. I understand them and agree to comply with them:**

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Name of Parent/Guardian	Signature	Date
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Name of Parent/ Guardian	Signature	Date
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