

Interviewing Latency-age (6-10 years)

Tasks

- Gaining mastery of skills, knowledge and competencies.
- Concepts of "rules" and "fairness".
- Age of concrete thinking.

Reactions to Parents Conflict

- Feelings of responsibility for parental conflict; grief, loss, guilt.
- Pressures of loyalty conflict.
- May act out to bring parents together.
- Decline in school performance and somatic complaints.

Interaction

- Ask about interests, goals activities.
- Engage over cards, ball toss, drawing etc.
- Questions like "what would it be like if ---" what bothers you about ---".

Interviewing Pre-teens (11-13 years)

Tasks

- Development of logical thinking.
- Peer and social acceptance is critical.
- Assesses right and wrong and then criticize and blame.
- Development of gender identity.

Reaction to Parental Conflict

- Confused and guilty; trying to act "cool."
- Loyalty conflicts.
- May "take sides"; "rescue the wronged" parent; at high risk for alienation.
- May act out anger in rebellious ways; skipping school, premature dating and sexual activity, stealing and lying.
- Decline in school performance and somatic complaints.

Interaction

- Maybe uncomfortable with direct eye contact; parallel "eyes", talking while walking or other activity such as jenga.
- Formulation of questions "what do kids in your class think about---", "what are the best/worst parts about---"?

Interviewing Teens (14 years and up)

Tasks

- Identity formation and development of abstract thinking.
- Sexual Maturation.
- Separation, individuation, and autonomy while still requiring the reassurance of the family connection.

Reaction to Parental Conflict

- Anger, insecurity, depression.
- Resentment that the parent's conflict pulls focus and energy away from self and own need to separate and individuate.
- May experience more serious acting out including substance abuse, promiscuity, delinquency, aggression and self harm.

Interaction

- Treat them with respect and be matter of fact and straightforward.
- Expect rationalization and argument as they are practicing new reasoning skills.
- Challenge with discretion
- Formulation of questions: "what usually happens when ---- ?" "how do you handle it when----?"

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Baris, M.A., Coates, C.A., Duvall, B.B., Garrity, C.B., Johnson, E.T., LaCrosse, E.R..
Working with High-Conflict Families of Divorce.

Gunsberg, Linda, Hymowitz, Paul, eds. A Handbook of Divorce and Custody. Forensic, Developmental, and Clinical Perspectives. American Bar Association.

Haralambie, Ann M. Child Sexual Abuse in Civil Cases. A Guide to Custody and Tort Actions. American Bar Association.

ASK EACH PARENT AT INITIAL INTERVIEW

Keith N. Schiszik

I. work hours

- A. overtime
- B. travel
- C. Flexibility

II. daycare needs

III. physical health

IV. mental health

- A. counseling in past
- B. Counseling now
- C. marriage counseling
- D. medications
- E. substance/alcohol abuse on either side

V. other party unfit/less fit

VI. physical abuse

- A. by you
- B. of you
- C. of kids

VII. "emotional abuse"

- A. by you
- B. of you
- C. of kids

VIII. If you "win", what visitation for other party?

IX. Ability/desire to reach shared decisions

- A. religion
- B. non-E/R medicals care
- C. school
- D. activities
- E. Location of child's primary residence

X. What do you tell kids about other parent

- A. Denigrate?

XI. Would parenting classes be helpful?

- A. Court Sponsored parenting classes?
- B. STEP or other program?

XII. What type of relationship would you encourage between kids and other parent?

- A. Allow part (by other parent) in sports?
- B. " " " activities
- C. church school

XIII. Investigate issues concerning each child:

(Ability of each parent to encourage)

SAFETY/SECURITY issues (age appropriate)

Dr, Dentist appointments

seatbelts

smoking with kid in car

safe driving

child-proofing house

caring for themselves (parental drug/alcohol abuse)

Rules and consequences/appropriate discipline

domestic violence history

etc., etc

Intellectual Functioning

Chores (responsibility, etc)

Appropriate discipline

homework, book reading, study habits

how allow child to express their feelings

(goldfish died, fights with friends, etc)

etc, etc.

Interpersonal functioning

Play date, sleep overs, birthday parties

encourages positive relationship with other parent

" " " " " family

socialization skills, sharing, etc.

Positive self-concept

Discipline

No denigration of other parent

No denigration of child ("You're a duminy," etc)

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Parents can create a safer, more secure and harmonious environment for their children by following these suggested guidelines:

1. Refrain from saying anything of a derogatory nature about the other parent in the presence of the child(ren).
2. Refrain from bringing up past grievances regarding the other parent to the child(ren).
3. Refrain from discussing financial and legal issues and disputes with the child(ren).
4. Refrain from saying anything which might discourage the child(ren) from spending time with the other parent, and from pressuring the child(ren) to take sides against the other parent.
5. Spend as much time as possible with the child(ren) during the time you are responsible for them.
6. Carefully avoid scheduling or arranging activities for the child(ren) which are likely to conflict with any time period allocated to the other parent.
7. In the event that you are unable to keep the scheduled arrangements with the child(ren) on a given occasion, notify the other parent at the earliest possible opportunity.
8. Arrange ahead of time for both parents to be authorized in writing in case of emergency to take any and all actions necessary to protect the health and welfare of the child(ren).
9. Keep the other parent advised at all times of your current residence address, telephone numbers (home and work), your child(ren)'s school or child care facility, and the location where your child(ren) will be spending any extended period of time (four days or more). This information is not to be used for the purpose of harassing or annoying each other in any way.
10. Since it is both frightening and damaging for children to be exposed to violence and parental conflict, avoid arguments, fights, and threats in the presence of the child(ren).
11. Since child(ren) need to be able to depend on and to trust both parents, keep the agreements and promises you have made to the other parent and to your child(ren). This means being reliable about keeping appointments and schedules, being prompt, and not making promises to children that you cannot keep.
12. Cooperate fully, not only in carrying out the written terms of your agreement or Order but in living up to the underlying spirit of the order as well.
13. For your child(ren)'s sake, make a special effort to set aside personal feelings toward the other parent and maintain an attitude of tolerance, flexibility and good faith.

**Keith N. Schiszik's Outline for
Direct Examination re: custody cases
or
Parent Interview in BIA/Advocate Custody cases**

1. Brief History of marriage/separation
2. Information about kid(s)
3. Your involvement as a parent
 - a. After child was born
 - i. Feeding
 - ii. diapering
 - iii. laundry
 - iv. Time off from work?
 - v. After you returned to work
 - vi. Babysitters
 - vii. Well visits
 - viii. Sick visits
 - b. Toddler
 - i. same as above, plus:
 - ii. daycare arrangements
 - iii. daycare drop off and pick up
 - iv. playgroups
 - v. potty training
 - c. Within the last three years (until separation)
 - i. Sleep overs
 - ii. birthday planning
 - iii. doctor/dentist
 - iv. school selection
 - (1) homework
 - (2) Teacher meetings
 - (3) school clothes
 - v. activities
 - (1) sports

- (2) clubs (Brownies)
 - vi. meals/laundry/clothes shopping/haircuts/
 - vii. holidays - cards and gifts for dad, grandparents, etc

 - d. Arrangement since separation
 - i. work hours
 - overtime
 - travel
 - Flexibility
 - daycare needs

 - ii. Why did you go along with this?

 - iii. Discussions with other parent about arrangement
 - i. Impact of present arrangement on child(ren)
 - (1) School grades
 - (2) Emotionally
 - (a) child in therapy - ? other parent supportive/involved?
 - (b) what other negative impact?
-
4. Is other parent unfit or less fit?
 - a. How should other parent change to become better?
 - b. what else?
-
5. physical abuse
 - a. by you
 - b. of you
 - c. of kids

6. "emotional abuse"

- a. by you
- b. of you
- c. of kids

7. Your environment

Number of bedrooms

Work hours

Daily routine/weekend activities

friends/playmates

interrelationship of siblings/step-siblings

discipline techniques

activities

Therapy problems with other parent? Who pays?

You in therapy? Why? Prognosis? Crazy? Impact on child?

i. counseling in past

ii. Counseling now

iii. marriage counseling

iv. medications

v. substance/alcohol abuse on either side

religious activities

School at mom's vs school at dad's

Your relationship to your family /network/friends

Your relationship to other parent's family

Would you foster positive relationships with other parent's family?

Would you foster positive relationships with other parent?

8. Your health

9. Describe your relationship with child(ren)

Child development matter:

10. Investigate issues concerning each child:

(Ability of each parent to encourage)

A. SAFETY/SECURITY/HEALTH issues (age appropriate)

Dr/ Dentist appointments
seatbelts
smoking with kid in car
safe driving
child-proofing house
caring for themselves (parental drug/alcohol abuse)
Rules and consequences/appropriate discipline
domestic violence history
parental oversight re alcohol/drugs

B. Intellectual Development

Chores (responsibility, etc)
Appropriate discipline
homework, book reading, study habits
educational trips/games
how allow child to express their feelings
(goldfish died, fights with friends, etc)
Benefits of this particular school
parent/teacher meetings
Knowledge of child development matters
classes, reading books, advice from MHP

C. Interpersonal functioning

Play date, sleep overs, birthday parties
encourages positive relationship with other parent
" " " " " family
socialization skills, sharing, etc.
"girl talk", etc.
friendships
extracurricular activities

- D. Positive self-concept
 - Discipline
 - No denigration of other parent
 - No denigration of child ("You're a dummy," etc)

11. Describe your relationship to other parent as a parent able to communicate and reach share decisions?
this situation new or always existed

CHILD SUPPORT

- d. Your income
- e. Your health insurance
- f. Daycare/summer camp costs
- g. cost of other child in your household
- h. orthodontist / extraordinary medical expenses
- i. therapist expenses
- j. how do you work clothing, activity costs, etc between you?

9. If you "win", what visitation for other party?

10. Ability/desire to reach shared decisions
- a. religion
 - b. non-E/R medicals care
 - c. school
 - d. activities
 - e. Location of child's primary residence

11. Would parenting classes be helpful?

STEP

Circuit Court

12. What type of relationship would you encourage between kids and other parent?

Allow part (by other parent) in sports?

" " " activities

Church

school

13. COUNSEL FEES

Put in your bill to date and get financial info into evidence about each parent