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What is a Child Specialist (CS) & how does it differ from a Divorce Coach (DC)?

Both are licensed mental health practitioners with a master's or doctorate degree

CS: Background in child development, working with children and families, understanding parenting and parenting skills, knowledge of parenting time schedules and how to determine right fit for the child.

CS Role: Sometimes it begins by helping the parents develop their script for telling their children about their decision to divorce; work with the parents to help them develop the allocation judgement, which is their parenting plan; this includes how to share time with their children, and how to manage decision-making for their children; coaches typically are assisting each client in formulating their goals and concerns, communicating effectively, problem solving, and help to manage the overall team process

AS CS I typically meet the children to help bring their voice into the process, and to assess if further support is needed to help them through the transition; the coach does not meet the children.

Frame it as an "opportunity" to talk and be heard; no expectations, no obligation, no pressure

Ask about their lives currently, and what they are most worried or concerned about with their parents divorce; what do they want their parents to know or to consider when making decisions about how the family will live going forward; how are they feeling about the news of the divorce? Do they want to talk to someone about how they feel?

Ask the kids if there is anything we discussed that they don't want me to share with their parents (confidentiality).

Share feedback with parents and the team from these meetings, with the goal of informing the decision making process relative to the allocation judgment.

Separate meetings with the parents; attorneys not present for most or all meetings; coaches may join if needed to facilitate communication or manage emotion.

Educate the parents about all the provisions in their AJ and walk them through the decisions step by step.

Write a working draft of agreements as they emerge, and this can be relayed to the team to keep everyone apprised of progress.

If impasse and can't resolve, will get coaches and attorneys involved--may be professional phone conference, may bring coaches in to work with parents, may have full team meeting.

How does the meeting with the children go?



The Child Specialist in Collaborative Divorce

How does the process unfold for putting together the allocation judgment (AJ)?

Litigation vs. Collaboration

Creativity

Personalized for your family's needs

Plans can evolve and change

Parents may have much more control, input and autonomy in developing the plan for their family.

In litigation other people are making recommendations and ultimately making decisions for you and your family that you are not in control of developing.