

## **Custody Evaluation Process Reexamined**

A small committee, consisting of Chris Casebeer, Lynda Bridges, Lorrie Dukart, and chaired by Judge Albin Norblad, recently reviewed the custody evaluation process to determine if cost reduction measures could be implemented to lessen the financial impact on litigants. The committee developed several recommendations for a less expensive custody evaluation option, which were adopted by the Marion County Bench. The committee felt that parties who wish to have a full blown custody evaluation should be allowed to have one, and should pay for it. Parties who wish to have a less expensive option may agree to a scaled down version within the following parameters:

- the evaluator has discretion to limit interviews to the extent they are redundant or being misused by either party;
- the parties are limited to submission of four references per parent;
- the parties may submit only written materials that are relevant, and that are less than five years old, with the exception of criminal records; and
- the evaluator's findings and written summary shall not exceed three pages.

Some of the limits may be modified depending on the circumstances of the case. For example, parties may request permission from the court to submit more than four references. In addition, the parties may request permission from the court to submit particular records in excess of the five year limit. Likewise, the evaluator has discretion to investigate matters older than five years old if he or she finds there is something essential to the evaluation beyond that date.

The cost for a scaled down custody evaluation is presumed to be \$2,000 total, with each party footing half of the bill, unless otherwise ordered by the court. In some circumstances, the court may advance the fee on behalf of one or both of the parties and will assess the cost against the responsible party or parties in the judgment.

The following evaluators are available to provide the scaled down service:

- Lynda Bridges: 503-364-2016
- Lorrie Dukart: 503-588-7644
- Judy Moyer: 503-540-3442 (Salem); 503-988-3189 (Portland)
- David Sweet: 503-399-9691
- Carol Jansen: 503-540-3442
- Cliff Johannsen: 503-399-9691
- Jerome Gordon: 503-399-9691

For the full text of the new Order for Custody Study, visit the Circuit Court's website at: <http://www.ojd.state.or.us/mar/programsandservices/CourtFormsforAttorneys.htm> Questions or feedback about the new process may be directed to Megan Hassen at [Megan.Hassen@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:Megan.Hassen@ojd.state.or.us), or 503-584-7754.