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COLLABORATIVE Practice Tips

A monthly bulletin from the CP Cal Practice Excellence Committee

The Practice Excellence Committee is pleased to offer tips to help you increase your Collaborative cases and achieve *practice excellence*.



Please send us your comments and questions! Email us at info@cpcal.com

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How the Child Specialist Supports our Families and our Collaborative Teams.

Child specialists are an underutilized resource in the Collaborative world. Here are some tips to help you and your clients benefit from the experience of working with a trained Child Specialist.

Tip #1

Discuss the value of a Child Specialist with your team and your client at the start. Experienced Collaborative professionals agree that children benefit from having their own "voice" in the process. Older children appreciate being able to express their concerns and needs. The Child Specialist is the conduit for the child's participation in the process. These meetings offer all aged children a neutral supportive person to help explain the process to them and offer needed perspective and coping skills. Very young children, although unable to directly communicate their questions and needs, can be brought into the process through office observations or home visits.

Collaborative professionals suggest that Child Specialists are parallel to financial neutrals in that they will help gather and organize complicated information to help the parents make well informed choices about parenting planning.

The Child Specialist acts as a consultant to the team about special issues that the family/parent/child have, whether or not the Child Specialist meets the children. It is helpful to bring the child development perspective to the conversation at least indirectly through the coaches/attorneys.

Tip #2

How to bring in the Child Specialist: Ideally, a Child Specialist is brought on the team at the beginning, and is present at the first meeting where the questions about the current and future status of the children are *explicitly* integrated into the Collaborative process.

Alternatively, one of the team members asks the parents individually at a team meeting, or a bit later in a coaching four-way, to articulate their hopes and concerns for their children currently and in the future. The children can be part of the divorce story the parents want to create for their transitioning family.

Tip #3

Child Specialists help parents to be SPECIFIC about their children's needs, and their hopes and concerns for them. Child Specialists specifically organize for the parents and the team a sophisticated overview of risk and protective factors that go beyond the spoken "voice" of the child. Parents, when upset during a divorce and fearing for their children's well being and their connection with the children, often oversimplify or overgeneralize catastrophic outcomes. Neither "the kids will be fine" nor "they will be ruined for life" is accurate or helpful.

Tip #4

Child Specialists help parents look to the FUTURE developmental needs of children and how parenting plans will need to adapt. Often parents wish to reduce their feelings of being overwhelmed by "getting it done" without a more specific view of current factors and the likely arch of the restructured family.



Stay Connected



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