



Role of the Family Professional & Child Consultant

Collaborative Settlement Process
for Separation & Divorce

F.

Section 1

In order to prepare you for settlement discussions and meetings, the following is information to explain the role of the Family Professional & Child Consultant.

The Family Professional will help you to understand and deal with:

- ✓ Strong emotions stemming from betrayal, fear, anger, lack of self-esteem.
- ✓ The emotions related to challenging issues, such as not enough money, mobility, differences in parenting styles.
- ✓ The loss of hope of reconciliation, or when there has been an affair, or when you or your spouse is feeling like a victim or feeling a sense of entitlement.
- ✓ Low levels of trust between spouses; differences in knowledge and control.
- ✓ Respectful communication focusing on the future, not the past, for problem solving to find suitable resolutions.
- ✓ Developing age appropriate parenting plans.
- ✓ The voice of the children, when age appropriate, if, and as needed.
- ✓ Substance abuse/addictions; mental health issues; personality issues.
- ✓ Different stages of accepting the separation by helping to understand the other's needs at a pace that is neither too slow nor too fast.
- ✓ When there are team issues, such as differences in experience levels of lawyers; past history of poor working relationships to ensure that the dynamics of the professionals do not negatively impact you or your spouse in reaching a mutually acceptable agreement.
- ✓ **Provides strong advocacy as a neutral professional to maintain balance.**

The Family Professional – Child Consultant helps parents when:

- ✓ There is a need for strong advocacy on behalf of the child; an additional neutral professional is needed for mediation of a Parenting Plan so that the Collaborative Family Professional can remain neutral with the parents.
- ✓ Parents need to develop a Parenting Plan and the voice of the child is important because the parents have conflicting views of the child's needs or preferences.
- ✓ The child is older (e.g. teenager) and they are requesting that their views and preferences be considered in the determination of the residential schedule.
- ✓ There are parental capacity issues and/or CAS (Children's Aid Society), police, or other agency involvement with the family which may be a result of a parent's substance abuse/addictions, mental health or personality issues.
- ✓ The child is struggling to accept the separation or is fearful of the unknown, such as moving to a new home, changing schools, etc.
- ✓ The child has additional challenges such as learning difficulties, bullying or other peer related struggles, anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues.

Further Things to Consider Regarding the Involvement of a Child Consultant:

Sometimes a referral to a child therapist is all that is needed. Most often, a Child Consultant is needed in a Collaborative process when the Family Professional needs to remain neutral, and the voice of the child is required.

Including the voice of the child needs to be assessed carefully. What is the motivation behind the request? Is the child being influenced by either parent? What is the age/developmental stage of the child?