**Debunking the Non-Specialist in PA**

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It is sad but true that those who are hired to perform forensic evaluations to determine custody and visitation and to assess for parental alienation have had little or no training in the specialized mental health field of family dynamics and in the extremely specialized sub-specialty of parental alienation. This fact is sad but true. Not even the degree in child psychiatry—let alone psychology—have had even family dynamics 101 in their degree coursework. Only the degree of Marriage and Family Therapy provides comprehensive training and experience in family assessment and treatment intervention.

This is not to say that there are not many fine mental health professionals who are experts on the family and parental alienation who had not trained for the degree of Family Therapy. Indeed, most of my colleagues in the field were trained as psychologists. BUT, their expertise in parental alienation was gained SUBSEQUENT to their formal degree training.

What does this mean for victims of alienation, for fighting a erroneous forensic evaluation undertaken by a non-specialist in parental alienation, and for seeking the help of a PA expert? You MUST evaluate any potential expert—who you are considering hiring you or **who will be testifying against you**—regarding their training, education, and experience in PA. You are entitled to receive the CV of any expert testifying in your case, and you should certainly request the CV if you are considering hiring anyone on your behalf.

Here are some of the important questions to ask your potential specialist or to have your attorney question under cross if the evaluator is testifying against you. This is the opening comment of your attorney or in your interview of a potential specialist:

Since the issues before the court involve family dynamics, I would like to determine your expertise in the relevant areas.

Are you licensed by any state as a family therapist?

How many credits have you taken in family dynamics as part of your formal degree education?

How many continuing education units in family dynamics have you taken?

What specialized training have you had specifically related to parental alienation?

What is the basis for you stating that you are an expert on the family?

What is the basis for you stating that you are an expert in parental alienation?

Is family therapy your principle treatment orientation?

If not, what is?

What % of your practice is devoted to family therapy?

What % of your practice is devoted to individual treatment modalities?

How many cases of parental alienation have you treated?

How many cases have you assessed for parental alienation as a forensic evaluator.

What % of children do you treat using a family systems modality?

Have you published books and/or articles on family therapy?

Have you published any books on parental alienation?

Please name some of the recognized experts in Parental Alienation with whom you collaborate.

How do you keep current on issues regarding parental alienation?

Please cite the books and articles you have read to stay informed on parental alienation.

Please define parental alienation.

Please name the symptoms in the child that are indicative of parental alienation.

Please name some of the research validated alienating strategies as defined by Baker and Fine.

How does parental alienation differ from estrangement?

What process did you undertake to rule out for parental alienation?