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Informed Consent for Psychological Evaluation during a Legal Dispute regarding Custody, Visitation or other Family Issue

Dr. William L. Buchanan, a licensed psychologist, has been either appointed by Court Order, referred by the Guardian Ad Litem, and/or agreed upon by your attorney to conduct a Psychological Evaluation of you. Dr. Buchanan's purpose in conducting this evaluation is to gather information that will enable him to formulate an impartial professional opinion so to assist the Court, the Guardian and/or your attorney in addressing issues regarding your family or your well being. This is *not* a formal Custody Evaluation, and as a result, Dr. Buchanan will *not* render an opinion to the Court regarding custody. However, the Psychological Evaluation will examine your personality and your parenting strengths and weaknesses. Thus, results from this Psychological Evaluation may have implications for the Court in determining custody, visitation, living arrangements, and other issues the Court is considering.

The process of this Psychological Evaluation will include interviews and psychological testing. If appropriate for your case, Dr. Buchanan may also make observations of the interactions between you and your children. Also if deemed appropriate for your case, other family members, such as your spouse or ex-spouse, may be requested to be interviewed and/or be observed interacting with you or other family members. Dr. Buchanan may request access to "collateral contacts," including, but not limited to, consultations with physicians, therapists, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, etc. who interact with members of your family. You will need to sign a Release of Information form before each "collateral contact" is made. Dr. Buchanan is open to making contacts with such individuals, but this will increase the financial costs of the evaluation as well as take additional time, thereby extending the date of when Dr. Buchanan's written report will be issued. Dr. Buchanan will also talk to the attorneys and the Guardian Ad Litem (if one is appointed) at his discretion. Please organize and label any materials you submit to Dr. Buchanan for his review. Anything submitted to Dr. Buchanan (e.g., photos, documents, drawings, etc.) will be placed in your case file and will not be returned.

Dr. Buchanan utilizes psychometrists to administer and score the psychological testing. Most often the psychometrists are doctoral students in clinical psychology under his supervision. Dr. Buchanan is totally responsible for the interpretation of the tests and the writing of the final report. During the administration of the psychological testing, no one may accompany you. Spouses, children, parents,

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companions, etc. can serve as sources of distractions. Dr. Buchanan also wants to gets honest and truthful responses and does not want the person being tested to be influenced in any way by another party.

The principles of confidentiality and privileged communication are modified when an individual or family participates in a Forensic (i.e., legal or court related) Psychological Evaluation. The general rules of confidentiality still apply to you and your family in that no information will be released to anyone not involved in the court proceedings without your written consent. However, any information obtained during this evaluation can and may be included in the written Psychological Evaluation report and/or discussed with each party, their attorneys, and/or the Judge. If your children are interviewed by Dr. Buchanan, please do not mislead them by telling them what they say to Dr. Buchanan is confidential, because that is not totally true as what they tell Dr. Buchanan may be included in the Psychological Evaluation report. Furthermore, information obtained from “collateral contacts” is not totally confidential as it too can be included in the Psychological Evaluation report. If Dr. Buchanan testifies in your case, whether in deposition or on the witness stand, all information he obtained is open to discussion, and none of it is protected as privileged communication.

Regardless of the method of payment for your evaluation and even though the Court does not pay for Dr. Buchanan’s services, Dr. Buchanan will operate as if he is an impartial evaluator employed by the Court.

A separate document, the Psychological Services Contract, reviews Dr. Buchanan’s billing policies and fees. However, a few issues are also covered here. Fees are based on services provided, including interviewing, testing, document review, phone conversations, consultation with other professionals, report preparation, etc. *The Psychological Evaluation report will be written and issued only after all bills have been paid in full.* There are also *separate and additional fees* for depositions, court appearances, and consultations after the written report has been issued. Depositions and Court appearances are charged in half day increments at \$1800.00 per half day. Travel costs are additional if more than 25 miles from Dr. Buchanan’s office. Fees are charged whether or not Dr. Buchanan actually testifies since time waiting to testify is time away from the office thereby preventing Dr. Buchanan from seeing other patients and earning income for that period of the work day.

The profession of psychology has not developed specific methods and procedures used for Psychological Evaluations that are universally accepted. It should be noted that other psychologists use many of the same methods and procedures, while other psychologists may employ somewhat different methods and procedures. The criteria that Dr. Buchanan utilizes and the methods and procedures he uses have been chosen by him to reflect, in his judgement, a reliable and valid system of collecting the necessary information to form a professional psychological opinion regarding your case. Dr. Buchanan uses methods and procedures that he has many years of experience using and that address the psychological issues he believes are important. In the written Psychological Evaluation report, Dr. Buchanan will offer the Court conclusions and recommendations that are within a reasonable degree of psychological certainty. However, these conclusions and recommendations are not perfect or infallible

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but are reasoned professional opinions by a licensed psychologist.

It should be noted that it is impossible to have all the information regarding all individuals in a particular family. Also, not all information is necessary, helpful or relevant in a Psychological Evaluation. Dr. Buchanan always tries to balance obtaining necessary, sufficient and useful information vs. completing the report without adding unnecessary additional costs and time. Thus, Dr. Buchanan strives to be pragmatic and balance these issues.

Dr. Buchanan will try to complete the report in a reasonable amount of time. However, no guarantee can be made as to when the written report will be issued. This is because he can not tell in advance how many interviews will be necessary, how flexible your schedule is for scheduling appointments, how many collateral interviews need to be conducted, or how long it takes for Dr. Buchanan to obtain and analyze the information required to come to a reasonable professional opinion about your case.

Dr. Buchanan's written report of the Psychological Evaluation may include recommendations. However, the Court is not obligated to accept any of Dr. Buchanan's recommendations. The written report will be sent to the Judge, all attorneys and/or the Guardian Ad Litem at approximately the same time unless the Court has ordered another arrangement. If significant time elapses between the issuance of Dr. Buchanan's report and the date of the Court hearing, Dr. Buchanan may request additional interviews and consultations so to be updated of events and circumstances prior to providing testimony.

Having carefully read this document, and agreeing to the terms and conditions stated above, I hereby give my informed consent to have a Psychological Evaluation to be conducted by William L. Buchanan, Ph.D., ABPP and North Point Psychology, LLC.

Patient's Signature

Patient's Printed Name

Date