

Practice Guidelines and Techniques **for "Child-Inclusive" Processes**

Intake Considerations:

- Offer option to parents early in the process
- Age/Developmental Stage of Child
- Have there been additional interviews with other professionals?
- Do parents report widely diverse feelings/beliefs about what the child(ren) want and how they feel?
- Has the child expressed an interest in taking part?
- Do parents agree on the need to talk to the child? If not, is there any fear the child will be "coached" or further made a "tie-breaker"?
- What is our belief that parents can reach a good outcome without the children's input?
- How "high" is conflict – can parents put it aside for their children or will they use what they heard to fuel the fire?
- If child(ren) have been made a part of the discussions and conflict, will including them in this way empower or worsen that role for the child?

Release of Information/Permission from Parents/Custodians

Always review and sign before proceeding

- Explain advantages/disadvantages – be cautious if parents are reluctant
- Remind this is not an opportunity to make children into decision-makers – just to gather additional input for making decisions.
- Brainstorm with parents about best ways for interview to take place/*include them in process/maintain neutrality in location and timing*
- How will information will be used? Written? Oral? Report back to parents or just for mediator/evaluator background and knowledge?

Confidentiality – under Rule 114

- Will you report back to parent? Oral or Written? What about notes and records? Will presentation include attorneys or other professionals?
- Will child take part in mediation and have opportunity to report own thoughts feelings?