



Institute for Couple and Family
Enhancement
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ICFE Policies for Child Focused Therapy

Many therapists at ICFE specialize in working with children and adolescents, and much of our office space is dedicated to child and family therapy to support social, emotional, and psychological health of children. It is important for parents to understand a few aspects of ICFE policies and procedures involving therapy involving minors. Please review this information and let your therapist or our administrative staff (210-496-0100) know if you have any questions. We are dedicated to supporting children and their families, and are here as a resource for you and your family.

The first session to be scheduled will almost always be a Parent Intake with the therapist and parent(s) only to allow an open and unfiltered discussion without concern for the child listening in on the discussion. Separated or divorced parents can elect to schedule separate Parent Intake sessions, but should be aware that each session will billed the full fee for services based on the therapist's fee schedule. The Parent Intake will cover important information, including a developmental history of the child(ren), description from parents of concerns bringing them to therapy, goals for therapy, previous attempts to address the concerns, and other information about the current family circumstances that may be relevant to the therapeutic process. The therapist will also share information with the parents regarding how to introduce their child to the therapist and set appropriate and helpful expectations for the child. Parents are important partners in therapy from the beginning to the end of the process. As part of the Parent Intake, ICFE therapists will potentially request HIPAA releases from parents to speak with and gather information about the child from school administrators or teachers, or the child's physician.

The first encounter of the child with the therapist, scheduled after the Parent Intake is completed, is intentionally child-focused and has the primary goal of the child feeling safe and accepted by the therapist. ICFE therapists vary in specific preferences, and will also tailor the child's intake session based on information gathered during the Parent Intake. Your therapist will discuss with you regarding how to talk with your child about beginning therapy.

If guardianship and/or parental rights are in any way impacted by a court order or other legal action, the therapist must first review the legal document before the child can begin therapy. Please bring a physical copy of relevant legal documentation or email an electronic copy prior to the Parent Intake to allow the therapist to determine who has rights to consent for therapy, rights to receive information about therapy, and duty to share information about therapy. Children will not be seen for therapy at ICFE until the legal documentation is received and reviewed by the therapist, and therapist's supervisor if applicable. Except in rare circumstances, the therapist will require confirmation that both parents are aware of therapy engagement even if one parent has "independent" rights to give consent. Child therapy at ICFE has a significant focus on parent involvement and engagement in achieving therapy goals, which almost always means it is beneficial for both parents to contribute to the process if both are involved in any level of care for the child. ICFE therapists will, at minimum, ensure that both parents have an opportunity to participate and engage in their child's therapy. We cannot and will not agree to withhold information about a child's therapy from a legal guardian except in situations where

there is a high likelihood that immediately sharing the information will put the child in imminent danger.

Because so much of child-focused therapy involves communication and collaboration with parents, it is also important for parents to understand they are considered to be a “client” along with their child. Parents will complete consent forms for themselves, and as clients, parents are entitled to the same confidentiality and privacy protection as in any other type of psychotherapy. Information discussed with married parents, based on the ICFE documentation completed that emphasizes our “no secrets” policy for family therapy, will be shared openly between the parents. Divorced or separated parents will be required to complete HIPAA releases to allow the therapist to communicate openly between the parents regarding the child’s needs, history, and treatment plan. ICFE therapists will not engage in child-focused therapy without the ability to communicate openly between the parents because of the significant negative impact on the therapeutic process. Any requests for exceptions to this policy will need to be reviewed and approved by the ICFE Director in consultation with the therapist.

All therapy provided at ICFE is focused on growth, healing, learning, and connection for individuals and families of all constellations. We will not provide services that do not foster these goals. Some of our therapists provide therapy services especially tailored for court-ordered or court-involved families; however, we do not conduct custody evaluations or psychological evaluations in conjunction with custody evaluations. When serving in a therapeutic role, a mental health professional is prohibited from making recommendations for custody. Parents seeking a custody evaluation should consult with an attorney. Similarly, while ICFE therapists are mandated to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, we do not conduct investigations regarding allegations of abuse. A parent who suspects that their child is being abused should visit the Child Protective Services website (CPS;) for information about making a report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child.