

SENATE BILL 336

D4
SB 355/21 – JPR

2lr0935

By: **Senators Carozza, Lee, and West**
Introduced and read first time: January 20, 2022
Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Family Law – Custody Evaluators – Qualifications and Training**

3 FOR the purpose of specifying certain qualifications and training necessary for an
4 individual to be appointed or approved by a court as a custody evaluator; and
5 generally relating to custody evaluators.

6 BY adding to
7 Article – Family Law
8 Section 9–109
9 Annotated Code of Maryland
10 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

11 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
12 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

13 **Article – Family Law**

14 **9–109.**

15 (A) IN THIS SECTION, “CUSTODY EVALUATOR” MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL
16 APPOINTED OR APPROVED BY A COURT TO PERFORM A CUSTODY EVALUATION.

17 (B) A COURT MAY NOT APPOINT OR APPROVE AN INDIVIDUAL AS A CUSTODY
18 EVALUATOR UNLESS THE INDIVIDUAL:

19 (1) IS:

20 (I) A PHYSICIAN LICENSED IN ANY STATE WHO IS BOARD
21 CERTIFIED IN PSYCHIATRY OR HAS COMPLETED A PSYCHIATRY RESIDENCY

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 ACCREDITED BY THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR GRADUATE MEDICAL
2 EDUCATION OR A SUCCESSOR TO THAT COUNCIL;

3 (II) A MARYLAND LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST OR A
4 PSYCHOLOGIST WITH AN EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE;

5 (III) A MARYLAND LICENSED CLINICAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
6 THERAPIST OR A CLINICAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST WITH AN
7 EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE;

8 (IV) A MARYLAND LICENSED CERTIFIED SOCIAL
9 WORKER—CLINICAL OR A CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER WITH AN EQUIVALENT LEVEL
10 OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE;

11 (V) 1. A MARYLAND LICENSED GRADUATE OR MASTER
12 SOCIAL WORKER WITH AT LEAST 2 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN ONE OR MORE OF THE
13 AREAS LISTED IN SUBSECTION (C)(1) OF THIS SECTION; OR

14 2. A GRADUATE OR MASTER SOCIAL WORKER WITH AN
15 EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF LICENSURE AND EXPERIENCE IN ANY OTHER STATE; OR

16 (VI) A MARYLAND LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL
17 COUNSELOR OR A CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR WITH AN EQUIVALENT
18 LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE; AND

19 (2) HAS EXPERIENCE, OBTAINED EITHER THROUGH OBSERVATION
20 UNDER CLINICAL SUPERVISION OR THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE OF CUSTODY
21 EVALUATIONS WITH THE FOLLOWING:

22 (I) FAMILY SYSTEMS, PARTNER CONFLICT, AND CONFLICT
23 RESOLUTION STYLES;

24 (II) NORMATIVE CHILD, ADOLESCENT, AND ADULT
25 DEVELOPMENT;

26 (III) THE IMPACT OF INTERPERSONAL LOSS AND CHRONIC
27 STRESS ON AN INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SYSTEM;

28 (IV) MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES, INCLUDING CURRENT
29 SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE CAPACITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL TO
30 PROVIDE HEALTHY, PROTECTIVE, OR RESTORATIVE PARENTING;

31 (V) THE IMMEDIATE AND LONG—TERM NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

1 IMPACT OF CHILD NEGLECT, ALL TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE, AND EXPOSURE TO
2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE;

3 (VI) CULTURALLY AND SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE CLINICAL
4 INTERVIEWING SKILLS;

5 (VII) HOW CHILDREN RESPOND TO TRAUMATIC STRESS AND WHY
6 THE VERBAL AND NONVERBAL EXPRESSION OF TRAUMATIC STRESS BY A CHILD MAY
7 BE DELAYED;

8 (VIII) ALL FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, INCLUDING SEXUAL
9 VIOLENCE, STALKING, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AGGRESSION;

10 (IX) THE IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF PARENT
11 SEPARATION ON A CHILD;

12 (X) PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE A CHILD'S HEALTHY
13 RESOLUTION OF PARENT SEPARATION; AND

14 (XI) PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND PARENT PRACTICES THAT
15 PROMOTE TRAUMA RECOVERY IN CASES OF CHILD ABUSE.

16 (c) (1) BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2023, IN ADDITION TO MEETING THE
17 REQUIREMENTS UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION AND COMPLYING WITH
18 THE CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE APPLICABLE FIELD,
19 BEFORE APPOINTMENT OR APPROVAL BY A COURT AS A CUSTODY EVALUATOR, AN
20 INDIVIDUAL MUST COMPLETE AT LEAST 20 HOURS OF INITIAL TRAINING IN THE
21 FOLLOWING AREAS:

22 (I) NEUROTYPICAL INFANT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT;

23 (II) THE IMPACT OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES,
24 TRAUMA, COMPLEX TRAUMA, AND CHRONIC TOXIC STRESS ON THE
25 NEURODEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD AND THE VARIOUS RESPONSES OF CHILDREN TO
26 TRAUMA;

27 (III) THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS AFTER A LAW ENFORCEMENT
28 AGENCY OR LOCAL DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED A REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD
29 ABUSE OR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, INCLUDING:

30 1. THE ROLE OF CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS AND AN
31 EXPLANATION OF THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW;

1 **2. THE LIMITATIONS OF LOCAL DEPARTMENTS IN**
2 **INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE;**
3 **AND**

4 **3. THAT THE LACK OF A FINDING OF INDICTED CHILD**
5 **ABUSE OR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OR A LOCAL DEPARTMENT**
6 **DOES NOT MEAN THAT CHILD ABUSE OR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE DID NOT OCCUR;**

7 **(IV) THE DYNAMICS AND EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE,**
8 **INCLUDING GROOMING BEHAVIORS BY FAMILY OFFENDERS AND THE DISCLOSURE**
9 **OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BASED ON DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE CHILD,**
10 **INCLUDING DELAYED DISCLOSURE;**

11 **(V) THE DYNAMICS AND EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL AND**
12 **EMOTIONAL CHILD ABUSE;**

13 **(VI) THE DYNAMICS AND EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,**
14 **INCLUDING COERCIVE CONTROL, LETHALITY ASSESSMENTS, LITIGATION ABUSE,**
15 **AND THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN OCCUR WITHOUT A PARTY SEEKING OR**
16 **OBTAINING A PROTECTIVE ORDER OR OTHER DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE OF ABUSE;**

17 **(VII) THE IMPACT OF EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON**
18 **CHILDREN AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING THIS IMPACT WHEN MAKING**
19 **CHILD CUSTODY AND VISITATION DECISIONS;**

20 **(VIII) THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CUSTODY BIAS AND IMPLICIT**
21 **BIAS ON CHILD CUSTODY DECISIONS, INCLUDING THE CORE PROBLEM OF A BIAS OF**
22 **PRESUMPTION OF COACHING IN CUSTODY CASES AND THAT ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**
23 **ARE FALSE;**

24 **(IX) INFORMATION ON HOW SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**
25 **MAY PRESENT INFORMATION IN A MANNER THAT DOES NOT CONFORM TO GENERAL**
26 **EXPECTATIONS FOR CREDIBILITY;**

27 **(X) BEST PRACTICES TO ENSURE THAT REASONABLE AND**
28 **FEASIBLE PROTECTIVE MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO REDUCE THE RISK OF**
29 **TRAUMATIZATION OR RE-TRAUMATIZATION BY THE COURT PROCESS ON THE CHILD,**
30 **INCLUDING AVAILABLE METHODS TO OBTAIN RELEVANT INFORMATION WITHOUT**
31 **THE NECESSITY OF REPEATED, DETAILED INTERVIEWS OF THE CHILD;**

32 **(XI) BACKGROUND AND CURRENT RESEARCH-INFORMED**
33 **LITERATURE REGARDING PARENTAL ALIENATION, ITS INVALIDITY AS A SYNDROME,**
34 **AND THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ITS USE IN CHILD CUSTODY CASES;**

1 (XII) THE LIMITATIONS OF SEXUAL OFFENDER EVALUATIONS
2 AND RISK ASSESSMENTS IN THE ADJUDICATORY PHASE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
3 CASES AND THE ETHICAL PROHIBITIONS ON THE USE OF THESE ASSESSMENTS TO
4 DETERMINE LIKELIHOOD OF OFFENDING;

5 (XIII) TOOLS THAT CAN HELP ASSESS THE CREDIBILITY OF A
6 CHILD WITNESS AND INFORMATION ON HOW METHODS SUCH AS CHILD THERAPY
7 AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS ARE LEGITIMATE THERAPEUTIC TOOLS TO MEASURE BOTH
8 THE DEGREE OF TRAUMATIC IMPACT AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THERAPEUTIC
9 AND SYSTEM INTERVENTION;

10 (XIV) THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND
11 CHILD PORNOGRAPHY;

12 (XV) APPROPRIATE STANDARDS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE,
13 EXPERIENCE, AND QUALIFICATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE EVALUATORS AND
14 TREATMENT PROVIDERS AND THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF
15 ALLOWING OR RELYING ON UNQUALIFIED EVALUATORS AND THERAPISTS TO
16 PRACTICE OUTSIDE THEIR FIELDS OF EXPERTISE; AND

17 (XVI) HOW THE INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION OF THE BEST
18 INTEREST OF THE CHILD STANDARD CAN HARM CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM ABUSE
19 AND THE NECESSITY OF WEIGHING THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF
20 THE CHILD BEFORE WEIGHING OTHER BEST INTEREST FACTORS.

21 (2) FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE INITIAL TRAINING
22 REQUIREMENTS UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, IN ORDER FOR A
23 COURT TO CONTINUE TO APPOINT OR APPROVE AN INDIVIDUAL AS A CUSTODY
24 EVALUATOR, THE INDIVIDUAL MUST COMPLETE 5 HOURS OF CONTINUING
25 EDUCATION AND TRAINING EVERY 2 YEARS.

26 (D) IN ANY ACTION IN WHICH CHILD SUPPORT, CUSTODY, OR VISITATION IS
27 AT ISSUE, A COURT SHALL PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE PARTIES REGARDING THE
28 ROLE, AVAILABILITY, AND COST OF A CUSTODY EVALUATOR IN THE JURISDICTION.

29 (E) BEFORE ENGAGING IN THE CUSTODY EVALUATION PROCESS, A
30 CUSTODY EVALUATOR SHALL PROVIDE, IN WRITING, INFORMATION REGARDING THE
31 POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FEES AND COSTS FOR THE EVALUATION.

32 (F) THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS MAY ADOPT
33 PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
2 1, 2022.