

SENATE BILL 222

D4
SB 25/25 – JPR

(PRE-FILED)

6lr0797
CF HB 137

By: **Senators Carozza and West**

Requested: September 8, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Family Law – Child Custody Evaluators – Qualifications**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing qualifications for an individual to be appointed by a court
4 as a custody evaluator; and generally relating to child custody and visitation.

5 BY adding to

6 Article – Family Law

7 Section 9–109

8 Annotated Code of Maryland

9 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

12 **Article – Family Law**

13 **9–109.**

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

16 (B) ON MOTION OF A PARTY OR CHILD’S COUNSEL, OR ON ITS OWN
17 INITIATIVE, A COURT MAY:

18 (1) ORDER AN ASSESSMENT TO AID THE COURT IN EVALUATING THE
19 HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OR BEST INTERESTS OF A CHILD IN A CONTESTED
20 CUSTODY OR VISITATION CASE; OR

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



4 (C) A COURT MAY NOT ORDER THE COST OF AN ASSESSMENT TO BE PAID, IN
5 WHOLE OR IN PART, BY A PARTY WITHOUT GIVING THE PARTIES NOTICE AND AN
6 OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT.

7 (D) A COURT MAY NOT APPOINT AN INDIVIDUAL AS A CUSTODY EVALUATOR
8 UNLESS:

13 (E) (1) A CUSTODY EVALUATOR MUST BE:

14 (I) A PHYSICIAN LICENSED IN ANY STATE WHO IS
15 BOARD-CERTIFIED IN PSYCHIATRY OR HAS COMPLETED A PSYCHIATRY RESIDENCY
16 ACCREDITED BY THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR GRADUATE MEDICAL
17 EDUCATION OR A SUCCESSOR TO THAT COUNCIL:

18 (II) A MARYLAND-LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST OR A
19 PSYCHOLOGIST WITH AN EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE:

20 (III) A MARYLAND-LICENSED CLINICAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
21 THERAPIST OR A CLINICAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST WITH AN
22 EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE:

26 (v) 1. A MARYLAND-LICENSED GRADUATE OR MASTER
27 SOCIAL WORKER WITH AT LEAST 2 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN:

B CONDUCTING CUSTODY EVALUATIONS: OR

1 C. ANY COMBINATION OF THE EXPERIENCE DESCRIBED
2 IN ITEM A OR B OF THIS ITEM; OR

5 (VI) A MARYLAND-LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL
6 COUNSELOR OR A CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR WITH AN EQUIVALENT
7 LEVEL OF LICENSURE IN ANY OTHER STATE.

11 (F) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (G) OF THIS SECTION, A CUSTODY
12 EVALUATOR MUST HAVE:

(1) COMPLETED A TRAINING PROGRAM THAT CONFORMS TO
GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS;

15 (2) COMPLIED WITH THE CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL
16 REQUIREMENTS OF THE CUSTODY EVALUATOR'S FIELD:

19 (4) DEMONSTRATED KNOWLEDGE OF AND EXPERIENCE IN THE
20 FOLLOWING TOPICS:

21 (I) DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE:

22 (II) CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE, INCLUDING SEXUAL ABUSE:

23 (III) CHILD AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT:

(IV) TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS:

(v) FAMILY DYNAMICS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

26 (vi) DISABILITY-RELATED ISSUES; AND

27 (VII) THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE AND SEPARATION ON CHILDREN
28 AND ADULTS.

1 (G) A COURT MAY WAIVE THE REQUIREMENTS IN SUBSECTIONS (E) AND (F)
2 OF THIS SECTION FOR A COURT EMPLOYEE OR AN INDIVIDUAL UNDER CONTRACT
3 WITH THE COURT WHO:

4 (1) CONDUCTED CUSTODY EVALUATIONS FOR AT LEAST 14 YEARS
5 PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 2025;

6 (2) HAS COMPLETED A TRAINING PROGRAM REQUIRED BY
7 SUBSECTION (F)(1) OF THIS SECTION; AND

8 (3) COMPLETES AT LEAST 20 HOURS PER YEAR OF CONTINUING
9 EDUCATION RELEVANT TO CONDUCTING CUSTODY EVALUATIONS.

10 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
11 1, 2026.