

What is involved in a custody assessment?

Many people have asked ‘what’s involved in an assessment’? For most, participating in an assessment will be the first and only time they need to participate. Therefore, it is a foreign process. An assessment is a comprehensive assessment of issues pertaining to custody and parenting time that each parent will have with the child(ren). The assessor becomes familiar with all aspects of a parent’s relationship with their child(ren) with a view to making recommendations for the court. The Children’s Law Reform Act is the legislation which governs custody assessments under Section 30 and outlines the considerations that an assessor must determine in identifying recommendations. The best interests of the child is the governing principle that overrides all work in a custody assessment.

Steps Involved in a Section 30 Assessment:

1. Teleconference with lawyers to identify the issues
2. First telephone contact with each parent/party
3. Obtain relevant legal information for review
4. First interview with each parent/party: to gather their concerns and understand the issues and to obtain social history information
5. Second interview (if necessary): to complete data collection process
6. Obtain collateral information (doctors, therapists, teachers, police, other social service agencies, CAS, friends, family members, current boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.)
7. Telephone interviews with all collaterals. Some face to face interviews will be conducted
8. Observation visit with each parent and their child: to occur in the parent’s home

9. 2nd Observation visit at assessor's office

10. Interview with the children at office (brought in by one parent)

11. 2nd interview with the children at office (brought in by the other parent)

12. Interview with both parents together, where appropriate (optional)

13. Third interview with each parent to follow up on information obtained by collateral sources

14. Final interview with each parent to share relevant information and highlight significant issues

15. Disclosure meeting with each parent and their counsel: Verbal information and recommendations presented

16. Written report provided (if requested and required)

17. Follow up meeting with parents and children, if requested or deemed to be helpful to the family.