

**Potential Costs associated with a Custody Action
in the Court of Common Pleas of Elk/Cameron Counties**

Once a Complaint for Custody or a Petition to Modify a Custody Order is filed with the Prothonotary's office, a custody conciliation conference is scheduled before the conference officer. Generally, the action must be filed in the county in which the child(ren) has/have lived for the past six (6) months.

Unless a party is granted in forma pauperis (IFP) status, the party filing the complaint or petition is responsible to pay:

- Filing fee for a new Complaint for Custody: \$134.00 (Elk)
\$69.00 (Cameron)
- Filing fee for a Petition for Modification of Custody \$25.00 (Elk)
or Petition for Custody Contempt \$25.00 (Cameron)
- Initial conciliation conference before conference officer: \$100

If an agreement is not reached at the conciliation conference, additional evaluations may be ordered before the case continues in court before the Judge. These evaluations may include, but are not limited to, any combination of the following:

- Psychological/custodial/bonding assessments: \$350-500 per person
 - Appearance of an evaluator to testify at hearing: \$350-1,500
- Drug and/or alcohol evaluation: \$100 per person
- Home studies: \$350 per residence
- Attorney appointed to represent the minor child(ren): \$80 per hour
- Pennsylvania State Police criminal history for *the party AND all adult household members*: \$10 each (<http://www.psp.state.pa.us>)
- Protection From Abuse Database check for *the party AND all adult household members*: cost may vary (<http://www.pfad.state.pa.us>)

The fees or costs referenced above are subject to change.

The Court determines where the parties shall go for the evaluations. The parties are responsible for paying all assessment costs and fees, regardless if they were granted IFP status. The Court determines how the costs and fees shall be shared between the parties, and all costs and fees must be paid before the evaluation results are released to the Court. Generally, the evaluator requires a deposit of half of the estimated cost of the evaluation prior to scheduling an appointment. The evaluation process can take several weeks, so it is important to schedule an appointment following the guideline set forth in a court order. Should either plaintiff or defendant fail to comply with the evaluation requirements, including payment, the Court may consider the sanctions provided at Pa.R.C.P. 1915.8 (c).

In addition to any evaluations that may be ordered, each party must submit a Custody Pretrial Memorandum prior to a custody settlement conference scheduled before a senior judge, and if the matter is not settled at the custody settlement conference and proceeds to a custody hearing, each party must also submit a proposed Parenting Plan.

At the time of a custody settlement conference and at time of hearing, if necessary, each party must submit a current Pennsylvania State Police criminal history *and* a Protection from Abuse Database report *for themselves AND each adult member of their household*. These reports may take 2-4 weeks to obtain; therefore, it is important to take the steps necessary to complete these requirements in a timely manner.

