

## Policy for Divorced or Separated Parents

Our highest priority is the care of our patients. It is our intent to work cooperatively with parents in accordance with any legal orders that are in place. We ask that you please remember separation is hard on children and your cooperation with each other is very important to your child's mental and physical health.

**Custody:** Custody decisions are made between parents with the help of the courts or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. In order to avoid any confusion for our staff, and to make sure we are managing your child's care appropriately, we require legal documentation of any provisions the court has set forth in regards to custody and communication with our office.

In the absence of legal orders, we expect that both parents will cooperate with each other in the best interest of the child. We are unable to restrict communication with any parent without court documentation or documentation from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

**Communication:** We ask that both parents reach an agreement regarding major health decisions before visiting the office as we will not mediate disagreements. We expect parents to communicate with each other regarding appointment scheduling, insurance, and any changes in medical care or treatment plans.

**Billing:** Copays will be collected at the time of service by the parent accompanying the child. If the court agreement states the other parent is responsible for copayments, it is the accompanying parent's responsibility to pay at the time of the visit and collect reimbursement from the responsible parent. We will be happy to provide a receipt.

**Disputes:** The providers and staff will not get involved in disputes between parents. If disputes regarding your child's medical care interfere with our ability to care for your child, we reserve the right to ask you to transfer care to another practice.

**Medical Records:** Any truly objective information we have regarding the child would be documented in that child's medical record maintained by our office. Each parent has a right to a copy of that record, unless otherwise prohibited by the court. If there are documented problems with one parent in the medical record, that written record is the stronger evidence and we would simply affirm that this was our entry at the time. If there is no documentation in the record, we would be unable to testify otherwise.

**Court Appearances:** Our rate for court appearance is \$400 an hour for a minimum of four hours, to be paid in advance. Court appearances typically require the cancellation of an entire half day of office appointments when travel time and wait time are included. It is a burden on us but an even greater hardship on the children whose medical appointments must be cancelled for that day and rescheduled.

**Depositions:** If a copy of the medical record is deemed insufficient, we would like to propose a less costly option than that for a court appearance. Our rate for a deposition taken in our office is \$250 per half hour.