

Is This Work Right for You?

The Nature of the CFI Role



CFIs are authorized *only* by virtue of court orders of appointment, which compel families to cooperate. Families may feel that CFIs are thrust upon them. Because court orders authorize CFI involvement, families view CFIs as part of the court system. The reality of serving as a court appointee and perceptions of the CFI role place enormous weight and responsibility on and power in CFIs.

Critical to the mission of the Colorado Courts is providing a ***fair and impartial system of justice*** that ***protects rights and liberties and assures equal access to the courts***. The Comment to Practice Standard 1 in Chief Justice Directive 04-08 directs CFIs to be “mindful of the diverse nature of families and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.” Practice Standard 2 requires CFI’s to maintain objectivity and to ask the court to terminate the CFI appointment if the CFI becomes aware of an insurmountable bias or prejudice in dealing with a case. CFIs must be neutral and impartial. CFIs must be sensitive and cautious in all their work – every interaction, word choice, tone and assumption.

Our professional and personal experiences shape how we view the world, not to mention implicit biases of which we may be unaware. Consider how the following experiences may impact the work of CFIs:

- One’s own divorce or custody experience (as a child or adult);
- One’s personal/professional experience with domestic violence;
- Professional experience as a parent’s, father’s or mother’s rights lawyer;
- One’s experience as a clinician (for mental health professionals) or advocate, rather than as an information gatherer and reporter;
- The cultures and environments in which we were raised, including education, financial circumstances, race, ethnicity, religion, mental health, etc.;
- Views about parenting and child discipline;
- Experiences with substance use and/or abuse; and
- Views about gender roles and family composition.

Consider your motivation for CFI work. Do your beliefs and experiences support the court mission of providing a fair and impartial system of justice that protects rights and liberties and assures equal access? Realize that you may work with families who look, live, think, believe, act and decide very differently from you. CFI work is not for everyone, just like being a prosecutor, defense attorney, respondent parent counsel, or judge is not for everyone. Is this work right for you?