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Collaborative Family Law

A child specialist's role

Divorce can't happen in my family!" exclaimed a 10-year-old girl. "I can't possibly deal with what Jenny had to go through!"

Separation and divorce are difficult for the parents, but can be traumatic and unsettling for the child.

Most children will tell each parent what they think that parent wants to hear. Some children attempt to resolve the conflict and disputes between their parents by aligning themselves with the parent they perceive to be most powerful or resource-rich.

Many separating parents are so upset and busy trying to adjust to changes that they forget to adequately listen to their children's questions, wishes and fears. This can be remedied by using a child specialist.

Child specialists in the Collaborative Family Law team are able to answer questions about how to best arrange a separation to minimize the disruption for children. Child specialists are trained to listen to children in a child-oriented environment and child-focused manner. The child specialist is a neutral advocate for children who gives a voice to their interests and who has expertise in child development, clinical experience involving therapy and assessment, issues of divorce and the effects on children, and how families interact and develop. Child specialists listen to children in an age-appropriate manner to determine their needs and best interests in a safe place where children can share their story without worry of being seen as taking sides or disappointing either parent.

After meeting with a child (one or more visits), the child specialist shares appropriate information with the parents and their counsel to help the children through the separation and divorce process.

The child specialist helps parents make knowledgeable and well-informed decisions. Families are assisted in making decisions about their future while minimizing conflict and expense, and making a commitment not to go to court.
