

**June 2016**

### **The Normative Parenting Project**

**On the heels of my most recent blog, "Find a Better Way", which reminded us legal and mental health professionals of the importance to innovate in our respective fields, my colleagues and I recently initiated the *Normative Parenting Project*. This project represents a continuation of the efforts begun four years ago to introduce to the legal and social services communities, first conceptually and then practically, a new approach for understanding, defining and measuring what we mean by *good* and *bad* parenting. We who practice in the field of family law must move from subjectivity towards objectivity, from haphazardness towards consistency, and from obfuscation towards transparency.**

**It is critical to begin addressing the concept and practice of parenting more scientifically. Presently, we find it difficult to answer even some of the most basic questions about parenting, such as...**

- What is normative parenting?**
- How do we reliably differentiate between good and bad parenting?**
- Are some parenting behaviors more critical than others, and if so, which ones?**
- What are the key components of effective co-parenting, and how do we best measure it?**
- Are there reliable predictors of parental alienation?**
- Are there culturally driven differences in parenting behavior?**

**Each day, Family Court judges must render long-term and life altering decisions for divorcing families about parenting time and decision-making authority in consideration of what is in the best interest of a child. Yet, there remains a lack of clear understanding about what constitutes proper parenting for a given family, and a reliable and predictable way of determining which of the litigating parties can**

**provide responsible child management. The mental health profession thus far has failed to offer sound and useful informational tools that can assist the judiciary in this decision-making process.**

**We believe that this project represents at least a first step in the right direction. The project initially will consist of a series of validation studies, set to begin in the fall. This will be preceded by a completion of the first version of a parenting skills inventory, initially introduced as the Parenting Profile©.**

**Not to worry, concurrent with the onset of this project, our clinic will continue to offer our existing range of consulting services to the family law community, including:**

- Advanced, tailored parenting capacity assessments**
- Specialized custody, parenting & visitation case investigations and assessments**
- Therapy in high conflict divorce cases, including anger management**
- 604 and 215 report analyses**
- Custody evaluation preparation**
- Litigation support and deposition/trial preparation**
- Parenting skills training**

**We look forward to sharing with you further insights on related topics, and preliminary study results when they become available, in future blogs.**

**Sincerely,  
Mark D. Mosk, Ph.D.**