

Frequently Asked Questions/730 Expert Panel

How am I appointed?

The names, addresses and telephone/fax/pager numbers for all members of the expert panel are provided to each courtroom and most of the Children's Court agencies (DCLS, CASA, County Counsel, etc.) When it appears to the court that expert evaluation may be required by the court or by counsel for minors or parents, an expert may be appointed on the motion of counsel for these parties or on the court's own motion under Section 730 of the Evidence Code. If the parties cannot reach a stipulation on a given expert, the court will appoint one. The court's order of appointment is reflected in the minute order of the proceedings.

What information/documents should I expect to receive?

The attorney who made the motion, or an attorney directed by the court, will complete an Order Appointing Expert form, setting forth the names of the parties to be interviewed, the name of the case social worker, and the basic issues to be addressed by the expert. The expert should receive the following items by mail: (1) copy of the appointing minute order; (2) copy of 730 questionnaire; (3) two separate documents to initiate payment through the court's Professional Appointee Court Expenditure (PACE) Appointment Declaration and Payment Claim Form; (4) case studies may be included with initial appointment paperwork, or by social workers or attorneys.

In the event that the appointment documents are not received, or are incomplete, the expert should not hesitate to contact the social worker, the attorney identified with the case, or the attorney designated on the order form, to obtain the necessary material.

What if I need clarification about the appointment or what the report should contain?

Procedures differ between courtrooms. You should contact the courtroom clerk of the individual courtroom to determine the preference of the judicial officer.

How do I get paid? What forms do I fill out?

Complete the two PACE documents you will receive and return them by mail to PACE Management. After PACE has reviewed the forms for complete ness, they will forward them to the judicial officer for approval. The paperwork is then forwarded to the PACE office for payment.

What payment should I expect?

You will be paid \$500 per party evaluated in each report. Should you be called as an expert witness, you will be paid \$250 for a half-day and \$400 for a full day of testimony.

Change of Address or Phone Number; Notice of Unavailability

Changes of office or phone number should be reported to the Dependency Court 730 Expert Panel Secretary, Lydia Foster, at 323-307-8157, so that our records can be updated. Experts frequently fail to notify the court of such changes, which causes delays when the court seeks to appoint them on a matter. Similarly, if you find that you are backlogged or unable to accept further appointments for a given period of time, please notify Ms. Foster at the above number. She will notify the bench officers to make no further appointments until you are available to accept them.

To whom do I send the report? What if other parties ask for copies?

Your appointment under 730 E.C. was made by the judicial officer, and it is therefore appropriate to submit your report to him or her. At least five copies should be provided. The report should be available to the court on the date designated on the Order Appointing Expert. This is generally three days before the next scheduled hearing.

If the social worker or an attorney requests a copy of your report in advance, you may provide one, if all other parties in the case also receive a copy. Under no circumstances should copies of reports be distributed to parents or minors, without a court order. Requests by other court or law-enforcement agencies for copies of the report require approval by the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court.

Is there a preferred format for my report?

While there is no specific format, all reports should contain, at minimum, the following elements: Names of all parties seen, date and length of evaluation; what tests were performed; interpretation and results of said tests; relationships of the parties, conclusions and recommendations. The cover sheet, or first page of the report, should include the Juvenile Court case number and the date of the next scheduled hearing.

Further information

Contact the 730 Expert Committee Facilitator at the above number.