

To: Judges, attorneys, and parents considering a
Co-Parenting Assets and Improvement Review (C.A.I.R.)

From: Charlie Asher

Re: Understanding the C.A.I.R. approach

If you are considering asking me to serve as a guardian ad litem (GAL) to investigate and speak for the best interests of children in a family case, I ask that you be aware of my approach. It differs from that of many other GALs, and it is the only approach I use.

I consider that if it's my duty to speak for children's best interests, my approach itself should minimize any harm (including polarizing parents further) and maximize quality outcomes for the children involved (including giving parents the chance to build better cooperation). As a consequence, I use an approach that (1) emphasizes parents' strengths and capacity to improve their parenting and teamwork with each other and (2) asks a great deal of parents in terms of preparation and openness to helpful changes. Parents wishing merely to complain about each other and their circumstances should not choose a *Co-Parenting Assets and Improvement Review (C.A.I.R.)*.

Before choosing this approach, parents should be aware that they will have both the opportunity *and the obligation* to do several hours of what should be interesting work on an interactive website and on two Intake Booklets. The goals in the C.A.I.R. approach include better parenting by each parent, better co-parenting between them, and parental resolution of many problems—rather than continuation of the problems and attempts merely to say who is more responsible for them.

Before recommending or ordering this approach, attorneys and judges should (1) help parents understand the goal and work involved in it and (2) satisfy themselves that the parents are ready, willing, and able to commit themselves to it.

Additionally, unnecessary litigation (including hearings and threats of hearings) should be avoided while this process is under way. Attorneys should probably not recommend a *Co-Parenting Assets and Improvement Review* if they intend to carry on litigation during the process. In fact, if I am retained to act as a GAL, the attorneys should agree that absent an emergency or special danger making consultation impossible, they will have a meeting or teleconference with each other and me before any motions are filed.

For the clearest understanding of the C.A.I.R. approach, parents should do the work on the website fitting their circumstances (www.UpToParents.org for divorcing or divorced parents and www.ProudToParent.org for never-married parents), see how comfortable they are with the general ideas we offer there, and answer honestly whether they wish to choose *serious work and a focus on their children and the future over conflict with each other and a focus on their complaints and the past*. I ask that their attorneys, their counselors, and even their judge do their best to ensure that this is the parents' focus before using this approach. I will be happy to answer any of your questions about the C.A.I.R. approach.