

Parenting Plan Evaluator's Cognitive Error Checklist¹

Bias	Problems	Solutions
Self-interested biases	Is there any reason to suspect that the report contains recommendation of errors motivated by self-interest?	Review the report with extra care, especially for over optimism and/or harsh criticism.
Any over commitment to your recommendations	Have you fallen in love with your recommendations?	Look for evidence that does not support your recommendations.
Groupthink	Were there dissenting opinions within the sources of data? Were they explored adequately?	Look for evidence from collateral sources that do not support the common views, and explore how these may impact your overall analysis.
Bias of memorable data	Could your data analysis be overly influenced by an event or situation that you consider to be a memorable success or failure?	Consider how your thoughts of the case may be guiding your analysis.
Confirmation bias	Are credible alternatives included along with the recommendation? In California, the evaluation report must include information that does not support the conclusions of the evaluator.	The presentation of differing information should be separated both in the analysis and in the presentation of findings.
Anchoring bias	Do you know how the data was anchored? Can there be: unsubstantiated numbers? extrapolation from history? a motivation to use a certain anchor?	Re-anchor with figures generated by other models or benchmarks, and then conduct new analysis.
Halo effect	Are you assuming that a person, organization, or	Eliminate false inferences by seeking additional comparable examples.

¹ Drozd, Olesen & Saini (2013). Parenting plans and custody evaluations: Using decision trees to Increase Competence and Avoid Preventable Errors. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

	approach that is successful in one area (and is your favorite, perhaps) will be just as successful in another?	
Ways that your professional history with similar cases may be impacting your analysis	Are the recommendations overly attached to a history of past decisions/past behaviors?	Consider the issue as if you were a new evaluator assigned to the case.
Overconfidence and optimistic biases	Are the recommendations overly optimistic about the future?	Consider how the family will manage without court monitoring and/or involvement of professionals.
Disaster neglect	Is the worst case bad enough?	Imagine that the worst has happened, and develop a story about the causes and potential solutions to mitigate the risks.
Loss aversion	Are the recommendations overly cautious?	Realign recommendations to share responsibility for the risk or to remove risk.