

**Eighth Judicial Circuit Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG)
Minutes of August 25, 2008**

The FLAG met on Monday, August 25, 2008 at the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center. Present were: Kathrin Brantley, Tom Dikel, Pete Enwall, Bill Farley, Cody Galloway, Helen Gyllstrom, Leslie Haswell, Arlene Huszar, Judge Ysleta McDonald, Judge Mark Moseley, Myrna Neims, Judge James Nilon, Jackie Orlando, Bill St. Amour, Judge Frederick Smith, and Jean Westin.

Program

Our speaker was Dr. Tom Dikel discussing the MMPI. He started by recommending the book, The MMPI, MMPI-2, and MMPI-A in Court: A Practical Guide for Expert Witnesses and Attorneys, by Kenneth Pope, James Butcher, and Joyce Seelen.

Jackie Orlando noted that there is a great deal of information available online about the MMPI including the questions themselves. People are now studying for the test.

Judge Nilon asked what psychologists are measuring with the test. He also asked if the test is really objective or if there is subjectivity in scoring it. Judge Smith noted that we will probably deal with this first in a motion for psychological testing in a family case. The test is usually used in custody evaluations although there are exceptions.

Dr. Dikel said that the test is an empirically-based measure but there is a degree of subjectivity in the administration, scoring, and writing up of results. The test measures "personality" which, in this case, means the psychological makeup of a person compared to normed subject groups. There are a number of validity scales to show if someone is faking good or bad. These scales identify how a person approaches the evaluation. The test can show what kind of person someone is but it cannot tell if allegations in a case are true or false.

The MMPI should never be used by itself. Other data is needed to get the full picture. When deciding whether to order a psychological evaluation, the court should consider whether or not it will do any harm. The test just looks for gross pathology. A custody evaluation should be backed up by objective data.

FLAG members had quite a few questions and it was decided that, at another meeting, there should be a program about what pieces make up a custody evaluation. Judge Smith also wanted information about how to determine the maturity of a minor as the court is required to do in termination of pregnancy cases.

The next meeting of the FLAG will be Monday, September 22, at 4:00 PM.