**GUIDELINES FOR LGBTQ PARENTS ENGAGED IN THE**

**COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW PROCESS**

You are to be commended for choosing Collaborative Practice as the means to solve any problems that you and your children’s other parent might have because you decided to separate. It is evident that you want the best possible outcome for your children and see this as a means of achieving it. Based on experience with families who select this method of problem-solving, it is apparent that they tend to have some very important common values. They are parents who desire to:

1. Help their children adjust to the inevitable changes that occur when parents have differences that result in their living apart, and at the same time recognize that their children’s needs will vary depending on their developmental levels and differences. **(Making Healthy Transitions)**
2. Reduce parental conflict and provide the children a conflict-free safe environment, thereby minimizing the emotionally destructive effects high conflict is known to have on children. **(Minimizing Conflict)**
3. Ensure that the children feel loved by the significant adults in their lives, most importantly, by their parents. **(Showing Love)**
4. Assure the children that it is never a child’s fault that the parents are having difficulties, struggling to resolve issues, separating or divorcing. **(Avoiding Blame)**
5. Encourage a positive and healthy parent-child relationship between the children and their other parent, thereby protecting the children from experiencing torn loyalties. **(Fostering Good Relationships)**
6. Continue to help the children “feel they are heard,” by actively listening to their opinions and preferences, while at the same time not burdening the children with parental decision-making. (Hearing the Voice of the Child)
7. Allow the children to have as normal a life as possible while the matter is being resolved, as well as in the future. **(Providing a Stable Environment)**
8. Spare the children from being burdened with parental responsibilities and roles during a time when the parents realize they are not functioning at their best, and shield them from being put in the middle and serving the role of messenger. **(Letting the Children Be Children)**
9. Recognize if a child is overly stressed by the changes in his or her life and utilize appropriate resources to help the child cope. **(Seeking Professional Help)**
10. Preserve financial resources that need to be dedicated to the children’s needs, including the future education of the children. **(Saving Money)**
11. Model healthy communication and problem-solving skills. **(Being Positive Role Models)**
12. Recognize the need for compromise in their decision making so that meeting their children’s needs remains their top priority. **(Maintaining Flexibility)**
13. Choose from all the options for parenting time and allocation of parental responsibilities those that have the greatest likelihood of the best possible result for the sake of the children, taking into consideration the unique needs of their family. **(Achieving the Best Possible Outcome)**
14. Understand that development is not a static process and that children’s needs change over time, so that decisions and plans must be adjusted accordingly if their children are going to thrive and succeed. **(Re-evaluating and Adapting to Change)**

Suggested Readings

The above is excerpted with permission by the author from a paper written by Gay G. Cox and has been published with permission on the website of International Academy of Collaborative Professionals’ website ([www.collaborativepractice.com](http://www.collaborativepractice.com)).

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