

**Superior Court of Washington, County of King**

In re:

Petitioner:

VERONIKA GOODNIGHT,

And

Respondent:

MATHEW RALIDAK.

No. **20-3-03830-3 SEA**

Sealed Confidential Report  
(Cover Sheet)

(SEALRPT)

☒ Clerk's action required.

*For use in Family Law and Guardianship cases.*

**Sealed Confidential Report (Cover Sheet)**

Check the reports you are attaching to this cover sheet to be sealed. Only the following parts of these reports are confidential and should be attached:

- Detailed descriptions of material, or information gathered or reviewed;
- Detailed descriptions of all statements reviewed or taken;
- Detailed descriptions of tests conducted or reviewed; or
- Analysis to support the conclusions and recommendations.

*(A public version of the report without the confidential parts may be filed separately.)*

- ☒ Parenting evaluations (UPDATE)
- ☐ Domestic Violence Assessment Reports (from Family Court Services or a court-appointed expert)
- ☐ Risk Assessment Reports (from Family Court Services or an expert)
- ☐ CPS Summary Reports (from Family Court Services or directly from CPS)
- ☐ Sexual abuse evaluations
- ☐ Report from a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- ☐ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: ☐ Petitioner or lawyer ☐ Respondent or lawyer ☒ Other: Parenting Evaluator

▶ Matthew Jolly

Sign here

Matthew Jolly, WSBA #23167

Print name (if lawyer, also provide WSBA #)

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**SEALED**

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON  
FOR KING COUNTY**

In re:

**NO. 20-3-03830-3 SEA**

Petitioner:

**PARENTING EVALUATION –  
UPDATE FOR TRIAL**

VERONIKA GOODNIGHT,

**[SEALED DOCUMENT]**

And Respondent:

MATHEW RALIDAK,

**I. APPOINTMENT AND BACKGROUND**

This is an action to establish a parenting plan for the parties' three children: Elora (age 6), Aidan (age 5) and Raina (age 3). The evaluator previously completed an evaluation in this matter on April 30, 2021 and made recommendations for a final parenting plan. The parties have been unable to resolve these issues in settlement and the matter is scheduled for trial (recently continued to December 6, 2021). At the request of counsel, the evaluator is completing a brief update to provide information to the court regarding developments for the family since the prior report. In addition, the prior report recommended the mother obtain secondary evaluations regarding substance use and mental health and this report will follow up on the status of those recommendations. Accordingly, this report should be read after reading the prior Parenting Evaluation and as a supplement thereto. This is not intended as a full, second evaluation.

**II. INFORMATION FOR THE REPORT**

This Parenting Evaluation is based on the following information:

- A. Video Interview with Mathew Ralidak – September 17, 2021
- B. Video Interview with Veronika Goodnight – September 22, 2021

- C. Document Review (see below)
- D. Telephone Interview with C.J. Ellsworth – October 11, 2021
- E. Written Interview with Monica Bonilla Gonzalez – October 11, 2021

### III. INTERVIEW WITH MATHEW RALIDAK

Mathew Ralidak was interviewed via Zoom on September 17, 2021. The following is based upon his self-report.

Mat continues to reside in Everett with his girlfriend, Monica. After a period of unemployment, he was re-hired by his previous employer as of the beginning of August 2021. His new position is Client Solutions Director. This position is more administrative and has less travel. He works from home. He has not had to travel yet for the job and has no travel scheduled. However, he expects that he may have to travel to event sites or to meet with clients in the future and described it as “maybe 20% travel.”

Elora and Aidan are attending school in Carnation. Elora is in first grade and Aidan is in kindergarten. The classes are in person. Mat reports that the drive to their school from his house in Everett is about 45 minutes each way. The children have attended for 2 weeks. It is the first in-person school experience for both kids. Aidan has the same kindergarten teacher that Elora had (for her virtual class). School seems to be going fine. Mat reports that he and Veronika were in disagreement about what school the children should attend. He preferred to enroll the children in Everett (where he lives) and Veronika wanted the children to attend in Carnation (where she lives). Mat wanted to enroll the children both in Carnation and Everett to cover both options. Veronika did not agree. He learned two weeks prior to school starting that she had not yet enrolled Aidan in kindergarten in Carnation which resulted in some last-minute scrambling to get them enrolled.

Elora does not have her vaccinations for school. Veronika is opposed to vaccinating the children on the traditional vaccination schedule. Mat supports traditional vaccination of the children. Veronika has claimed a religious objection but the Mormon church is not opposed to vaccination. Mat said that Veronika touts the children’s health without western medicine when selling her MLM products. He sees his more mainstream approach to health care and education decisions as being a potential source of conflict between the parents going forward.

Mat has not seen any direct evidence of Veronika abusing alcohol since the prior evaluation. There was an incident at the pool when Veronika took the kids to Las Vegas to visit her sister. Elora reported being left in charge of Aidan in the pool (Elora is 6 and Aidan 5). Aidan struggled in the pool and had to be pulled out. Elora reported that her aunt was angry at Veronika for leaving the kids without an adult in the pool. Mat was concerned by Elora’s report and wondered if it meant Veronika

1 was drinking. Mat reports that he continues to use marijuana but states he only uses  
2 it when the children are in Veronika's care.

3 Mat has not seen the ABH alcohol evaluation that Veronika obtained. He did  
4 not recall ever being contacted by an evaluator from ABH. He is not aware of  
5 whether Veronika has begun a mental health evaluation but he has not been  
6 contacted by an evaluator. Mat reports that he was contacted by a counselor at Sea  
7 Mar who has seen the children and diagnosed them with an adjustment disorder. He  
8 is not sure if they are in regular counseling or were only assessed. He spoke to the  
9 evaluator who reported that Aidan said that "daddy kicked mommy out of the house"  
10 but that Veronika then corrected Aidan and said that was not true. Mat suspects this  
11 was something Aidan overheard Veronika say previously.

12 The shared schedule is not something children struggle with. However, Mat is  
13 concerned about the fact that the two households are so different. He reports that  
14 his home has structure, routine, and supervision. He thinks that Veronika does not  
15 provide structure, routine, or supervision. Elora reports being left unattended and  
16 that she and a 9-year-old friend are allowed to cook on their own. Aidan reported  
17 watching a horror video with Eli (the son of Veronika's boyfriend who is about the  
18 same age) which left him frightened. Mat reported that Veronika acknowledged that  
19 the kids were often unattended while she worked on the farm and that was why  
20 Aidan saw the video. Elora reported that her mom told her she was having a biopsy  
21 and Elora was worried about Veronika. Mat is concerned that Elora is being made to  
22 feel like she needs to worry about and care for her mom rather than the other way  
23 around.

24 Mat is concerned that the children call Veronika's boyfriend "Daddy Joseph."  
25 They refer to Monica by her name and do not call her "mommy." Mat reported that  
he listed the couple's former neighbor as a witness for trial because the witness said  
he was willing to help. After the list was given to Veronika, she contacted the  
witness. The witness then called Mat and said Veronika had threatened to ruin him  
and to sue him. The witness then backed out of testifying. Mat reminded the  
evaluator that Veronika had a history making inflammatory claims about him on social  
media and that the neighbor was aware of that history.

Mat continues to believe that the children are better served by being placed in  
his primary care during school days and moved to school in Everett. He believes that  
he is able to provide structure, supervision and financial stability and questions  
whether Veronika can (she is still not working).

#### IV. INTERVIEW WITH VERONIKA GOODNIGHT

Veronika Goodnight was interviewed via Zoom on September 22, 2021. The  
following is based upon her self-report.

1  
2       Veronika began by reporting that she broke her leg while going down a slide  
3 with one of her children. She is not currently driving due to this injury. She still  
4 resides at the same location. She plans to remain there but anticipates moving out in  
5 4 years so she can have her own place.

6  
7       Veronika is not working outside of labor she does on the farm where she  
8 resides. Due to her injury, Veronika is no longer driving for UBER Eats. She  
9 reported that she was unable to afford her former car and it was repossessed but she  
10 was gifted a van by a member of her church. Veronika wanted to correct what she  
11 thought was a misimpression from the prior report regarding her past employment.  
12 Veronika reports she has never been fired. She quit Trader Joe's and reports that  
13 the door is still open for her to work as a school bus driver. She said that she has an  
14 offer to train as a paralegal with a local attorney. However, she would need to put  
15 Raina in pre-school to take the position. She located a free/subsidized pre-school  
16 and suggested enrolling Raina to Mat but he did not respond. Veronika also said it is  
17 still her goal to earn money as a surrogate.

18  
19       When asked how she managed her finances given the lack of traditional  
20 employment and a regular income, Veronika reported that she has consolidated her  
21 debts and/or let them go to collections. She does not pay rent or utilities (her church  
22 pays them). She has EBT for groceries for the children. She also receives child  
23 support but that money mostly goes to pay her attorney. She does not have many  
24 expenses and therefore does not need a lot of income.

25  
26       Elora and Aiden are attending school in Carnation. They love school and  
27 enjoy riding the bus. Veronika does not believe the shared schedule is working well  
28 for the kids. For example, Elora got upset when the parties moved the weekly  
29 exchange date and Elora was scheduled to spend an extra 5 days with Mat. She  
30 said she hated going to Dad and Monica's, that she does not feel comfortable there,  
31 and asked why she and her siblings could not live with their mother. Veronika  
32 reported that Elora said, "I just wish my dad was dead."

33  
34       The prior counselor for the children moved to New Zealand. Veronika took  
35 them to Sea-Mar so that they could get new counselors. The children have been  
36 evaluated and counselor selected for each child. However, they have not had  
37 counseling sessions as the counselors want the sessions to be in person and  
38 Veronika is not driving.

39  
40       Veronika also contacted Sea-Mar for an assessment and counseling. She  
41 reports she was diagnosed with PTSD. She is in counseling with Monica Bonilla  
42 Gonzalez and sees her weekly. She finds the counseling helpful.

1 In response to the recommendations of the parenting evaluation, Veronika  
2 obtained a substance abuse assessment from Associated Behavioral Health. The  
3 evaluation was twice delayed when two assigned evaluators left ABH. She  
4 eventually obtained the completed assessment which recommended she complete  
5 an education program of classes. She reports that there is a dispute about whether  
6 she needs to do a whole new evaluation and she does not have the money for that.  
7 She has not yet enrolled in the recommended class. Currently, she is not drinking  
8 alcohol at all. When asked about pain medications for her broken leg, Veronika  
9 reported she was prescribed Oxycodone. When her prescription ran out and she still  
10 had pain, she asked for it to be renewed but the doctor declined. She takes Advil  
11 and Tylenol. She did also take some CBD.

12 The evaluator asked Veronika about making negative social media posts  
13 about Mat. Veronika said she did tell the story of her failed relationship with Mat on  
14 Facebook at the time of separation for the purpose of raising money. She did not  
15 identify Mat in those posts and referred to him as her "ex." She did not include  
16 pictures. She then left Facebook and most social media except TikTok. When asked  
17 about the specific TikTok posts that Mat shared, Veronika did not dispute them.  
18 However, she noted that she continues not to identify Mat. She says her posts raise  
19 awareness of domestic violence and she compared Mat monitoring her social media  
20 posts to stalking. Veronika described herself as having "escaped a Gabby Petito or  
21 Chris Watts situation<sup>1</sup>." She said she sought a restraining order from the court when  
22 she and Mat separated but the court denied it due to the lack of any physical abuse.  
23 Veronika denied making negative statements about Mat or Monica to the children.

24 The evaluator asked Veronika about vaccinating the children. She said she  
25 read a book about vaccination during her relationship with Mat. Both she and Mat  
decided not to vaccinate the children. Now Mat has changed his mind which  
Veronika attributes to Monica. She continues to oppose vaccinating the children and  
reports having friends whose children died as a result of vaccinations. Veronika  
reports she obtained a religious objection and note from her doctor to allow the  
children to attend school unvaccinated.

The evaluator asked Veronika about the report that she was failing to  
supervise the children and Mat's report that Raina had nearly drowned unsupervised  
in a pool. Veronika says she supervises the kids and that they do her farm chores  
with her and are not left alone. She reports that there are witnesses who can attest  
to this. She did take the kids to Las Vegas for a wedding and to visit family.  
Veronika's mom was watching Raina in the pool. She helped Raina get out of the  
pool and remove her floaties. Veronika's mom then got distracted and Raina got

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<sup>1</sup> Gabby Petito is a woman who is suspected to have been murdered by her fiancé. Chris Watts murdered his wife and children.

1 back in the pool. Veronika was only 5 steps away and noticed immediately and  
2 Raina was pulled out of the pool and was okay.

3 Veronika supports the parenting plan recommendations in the prior evaluation  
4 even if she does not agree with all the information in the report. She has tried to  
5 comply with those recommendations including going to ABH and Sea Mar. She  
6 added however that she would like to have sole decision-making for the children as  
7 she believes Mat is incapable of co-parenting with her. She stated she would still  
8 include him in the decision-making process even if she were empowered to make the  
9 decisions.

## 7 **V. DOCUMENT REVIEW**

### 8 **A. Substance Use Records**

9 ABH Substances Abuse Evaluation (5-27-21). In response to the  
10 recommendations of the prior report, Veronika obtained a substance use assessment  
11 from Associated Behavioral Health. The evaluation was performed by Shawna  
12 Mokler. The assessment included a diagnostic interview with Veronika, collateral  
13 contacts, UA test results, and a review of her criminal history. In the report, Veronika  
14 states that she is retired and that she is not taking medications. She reports limited  
15 drinking (5 times in the previous year). Veronika reports use of illegal drugs as a  
16 teen and young adult including significant use of meth amphetamine from 18 to 22.  
17 Veronika reports a diagnosis of PTSD but no other current mental health concerns.  
18 The evaluator states she reached out to Mat by email and phone and that he failed to  
19 respond or provide a questionnaire response. The evaluator spoke to two other  
20 witnesses (friends of Veronika) who reported no concerns. Veronika passed three  
21 random and monitored UA tests. The report concludes that Veronika does not meet  
22 the clinical criteria for diagnosis with a substance use disorder and recommended  
23 she complete an early intervention program including an 8-hour class and four one-  
24 hour group or individual sessions together with random UA testing.

18 UA Tests. Veronika complete UA testing as follows:

- 19 • 6/3/21. Negative for all tested substances including alcohol, opiates,  
20 marijuana, and illegal drugs.
- 21 • 6/4/21. Negative for all tested substances including alcohol, opiates,  
22 marijuana and illegal drugs though the sample is flagged as dilute.
- 23 • 6/18/21. Negative for all tested substances including alcohol, opiates,  
24 marijuana and illegal drugs.

1 **B. Mother's Medical Records**

2 Sea Mar Behavioral Health Clinic Records. These records were forwarded by  
3 counsel for the mother. The evaluator noted the following:

- 4 • Veronika had an initial mental health assessment on May 25, 2021. She is  
5 meeting with a therapist at least once a month and is in compliance with  
6 her treatment as of September 14, 2021.
- 7 • In a letter dated September 14, 2021, Diana Fix, LMHC, confirms that she  
8 provided therapy for Veronika from October 2020 to February 2021. Ms.  
9 Fix states Veronika made good progress and it was mutually decided she  
10 could graduate from therapy.

11 Veronika's Sea Mar Mental Health Assessment (5/25/21). These assessment  
12 notes were provided by Sea Mar Community Health in response to a request from  
13 the evaluator. Veronika came in on May 25, 2021 reporting that she is in a major  
14 legal battle with Mat and that "he's more abusive now that I'm out of the situation."  
15 She reported jumping when she hears sounds and sweating when she hears Mat's  
16 name. She also described having nightmares related to Mat or court proceedings.  
17 She described her then current mood and energy positively but reported suffering  
18 from PMDD. Veronika disclosed her past diagnosis with borderline personality  
19 disorder to the evaluator and that she took medications in her early 20s. She  
20 described her past relationships as having been abusive and attributes this to poor  
21 treatment from her father. She states that Mat engaged in verbal, emotional and  
22 financial abuse. She also reported sexual abuse but states she did not remember  
23 that until re-processing forgotten memories in therapy. Veronika talks positively  
24 about all the support she has in the community. She reports no current use of  
25 alcohol or drugs but does disclose a history of drug and alcohol use (consistent with  
what was reported the evaluator and to ABH). Veronika talks specifically about  
positive things she does with her children and the strength of their relationship. The  
assessment describes Veronika as reporting "symptoms of PTSD related to abusive  
ex-partner which include flashbacks, nightmares, physical sensations in response to  
anxiety (sweating, jumpy, tearful) and heightened anxiety." The assessment states  
Veronika appears to be successfully coping with these symptoms but would benefit  
from low-intensity therapy.

21 BHUC Clinical Assessment (5/13/21). Veronika came into the Behavioral  
22 Health Urgent Care Center "to address needing a mental health evaluation." She  
23 reported seeking the evaluation in response to the recommendations from the  
24 undersigned. Veronika denied any suicidal ideation or intent at the time of the  
25 evaluation. She reported a history of trauma exposure as a child and adult and that  
her main concern was her PMDD. She reported a family history of mental illness and  
addiction. The report notes that "prognosis is hopeful as patient seems to be resilient  
and has an ability to apply coping tools, as well as has resources to re-establish short



1 term counseling for continued support.” The report recommends she contact Sea  
2 Mar.

3 Letter from Dr. Bowker (9-22-21). This letter reports that Veronika consulted  
4 with Dr. Bowker about non-narcotic pain management in connection with her broken  
5 leg. She was referred for possible use of CBD and medical marijuana products for  
6 pain management (non-opioid). Dr. Bowker states “I believe Veronika is being  
7 proactive in taking care of herself and trying to find the best option to help her cope  
8 with the pain from her injury, so that she can be the best possible mother for her  
9 children . . . .”

10 Snohomish Valley Holistic Medicine Records. These records were forwarded  
11 by Veronika for review by the evaluator.

- 12 • Veronika consulted on September 21, 2021 re: pain management. She  
13 reported she was struggling with pain and took a Lyrica (not prescribed to  
14 her) and consumed alcohol on one occasion (when the children were not  
15 with her) to deal with the pain. She is looking for non-addictive solution for  
16 pain management. She was referred to a provider regarding use of THC  
17 for pain management.
- 18 • Veronika consulted her doctor on November 13, 2020. She denied use of  
19 alcohol or drugs. She is noted as having been diagnosed with PMDD  
20 (premenstrual dysphoric disorder).
- 21 • Veronika was seen March 23, 2020 for ear pain and conjunctivitis. She  
22 was prescribed home remedies (compress, elderberry) and anti-biotic eye  
23 drops.
- 24 • Veronika was seen on January 24, 2019 for an ear infection. She reports  
25 taking half of a dilaudid (an opioid) due to pain. She is prescribed OTC  
pain medication (ibuprofen and acetaminophen) as well as an antibiotic  
and an anti-nausea medication.

19 Katrina Ilams-Houser ND, PLLC. Veronika saw the provider on September 25,  
20 2021 regarding pain management. The provider recommended CBD for pain.

## 21 **C. Children’s Treatment Records**

22 Psychotherapy Notes for Elora (Jan 2021 – July 2021). These are records  
23 from Elora’s former counselor, Marcus Berley. These records were provided by  
24 Veronika. Marcus was initially contacted by Veronika who was looking for counseling  
25 for Elora for “adjusting to change in housing, parent’s custody issues.” Marcus began  
seeing Elora for counseling. He diagnoses her with an Adjustment Disorder,  
Unspecified. The notes are generally positive but reflect that Elora was sometimes

1 anxious and that there was “some anger.” More often, Elora was upbeat and positive  
2 during sessions. Nothing was noted about Elora’s relationship to either parent in  
these written records.

3 Medical Records from Dr. Stacy M. Bowker, ND. Dr. Bowker is Veronika’s and  
4 the children’s naturopath. These records were forwarded by Veronika.

- 5 • Letter from Dr. Bowker (11-13-20). This letter reports that Dr. Bowker has  
6 been seeing Veronika and the children since November 2018. She reports  
7 that Veronika has been the primary parent to contact her regarding  
children’s health. She has never had concerns about Veronika’s parenting  
or seen signs of medical neglect.

#### 8 **D. Communication Between or From Parents**

9 OurFamilyWizard. The evaluator reviewed communications between the  
10 parents on OurFamilyWizard or text that were forwarded by the parties and noted the  
following:

- 11 • Aug. 6, 2021. Mat requests that the children receive COVID test after  
12 Veronika took them to Las Vegas for a wedding. Veronika declined to  
consent to the children being tested.

13 Emails from Mother. The evaluator received email communications from the  
14 mother since the prior evaluation, summarized as follows:

- 15 • May 21, 2021. Veronika details disagreements she has with the evaluation  
16 and information she believes is inaccurately reported. She reports passing  
a 10-panel hair test and disputes that she was “let go” from past  
employment.
- 17 • September 15, 2021. Veronika reports she is still employed with UBER and  
18 as a school bus driver but unable to drive because she broke her leg.  
Veronika provided a sworn declaration from an attorney in Carnation who  
19 reported meeting with Veronika about employment options and “awaiting  
the outcome of her litigation to find a mutually agreeable schedule.”
- 20 • September 15, 2021. Veronika complains that she has located a pre-  
21 school for Raina at the Carnation Elementary School but Mat is not being  
22 responsive or agreeing to her enrolling Raina.
- 23 • September 15, 2021. Veronika sent a number of emails disputing  
24 information from the prior evaluation. Among other disputes, Veronika  
disputes the evaluator’s concerns that she leans emotionally on the

children, has instability in her employment history, or has a history of relationships becoming estranged.

Emails from Father. The evaluator has received email communications from the father since the prior evaluation, summarized as follows:

- July 4, 2021. Mat was late to pick up the children when he failed to realize that the parenting plan granted him the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. He left to pick them up when he realized his mistake but says that Veronika was not responsive to his communications to resolve the mistake.
- August 19, 2021. Mat reports that Elora called Veronika from his Alexa speaker in her bedroom. Mat is upset about this as he removed Veronika's name from the device after they separated. He speculates that Veronika used the children's tablets to access the account, add her name back, and encourage Elora to call her. He is also upset that Veronika talked to the children about Facetimeing her without first talking to him. Mat is concerned that Veronika discussed her surgery with Elora which left Elora scared and worried for her mother. Veronika also told the children that Mat was going to be testing them (for COVID) and that it was going to hurt which needlessly upset the children.
- August 23, 2021. Mat reports that Elora said she was asked to watch her little sister, Raina, in the pool during their trip to Vegas with their mother. She reported that Raina started struggling and had to be pulled out of the water. Elora's aunt then got mad at Veronika for not watching the kids in the pool. Elora also reported being frequently left alone at the farm with her 9-year-old friend. Mat is concerned about Elora's reports of lack of supervision by Veronika.
- October 3, 2021. Mat reports that Aidan told him that Joseph's son, Eli, put his hands around Aidan's neck and was choking him. Aidan reported that his mother was in the other room with Joseph when this happened. He texted this to Veronika who denied it and reported Eli was at his mother's house (Mat disputes this as Elora mentioned seeing Eli that weekend).

Social Media Posts. Mat forwarded some examples of social media posts by Veronika that caused him concern:

- Veronika can be seen in an image holding what appears to be a court declaration. A caption reads "this is legal abuse. To my narc ex, please leave me alone, this will not go well for you. #legalabuse #narcissisticabuse . . ."

- Veronika posts what appears to be some kind of meme of a man with a distorted face with the caption “Your Narcissistic Ex Trying to Charm The Judge But She’s Not Having It.”
- Veronika posts an image of herself looking exasperated while staring at her phone with the caption “Trying to coparent with a malignant narcissist.”
- Mat forwarded a GoFundMe post from a friend of Veronika’s. The post seeks money for legal fees for Veronika and includes a photo of Veronika with all 3 children (Mat is not in the photo). The post states as follows:

*Hello Duvall! One of our own needs your help. This is my best friend, Veronika. She is a single mother of three going through a nasty legal battle with her abusive ex-partner. They are going all the way to court. The cost of court is high and she needs help paying her bill. Veronika is one of the best people I’ve had in my life. She had made me a better person, she has that effect on people. She is a kind, caring and attentive mom. She always puts her kids first and strives to give them an amazing upbringing. I’m asking for a lot, \$30k to cover the bills. However you can help, whether it’s a donation or simply sharing the link, please do so. We need to support her. We can do it! We can end the abuse she’s enduring!*

#### **E. Court Pleadings**

*Declaration of Matthew Ralidak in Support of Motion for Temporary Order (5/28/21).* The evaluator reviewed this declaration after it was forwarded by Mat and noted the following:

- At the time of the declaration, Mat had not found replacement employment and was struggling financially. He reports that Veronika was likewise unemployed. Veronika failed to make payments on the family van she was driving and allowed it to be repossessed which frustrated Mat (whose name was on the loan).
- Mat reports Veronika contacted a witness on his witness list and was belligerent and threatening. Mat reports that the witness is now fearful of being involved. Mat reports a second witness has told him she will not testify because she is fearful Veronika will retaliate via social media. Mat reports Veronika has made negative social media posts about him including accusing him of rape and abuse.
- Mat complains that Veronika has appeared in his daughter’s Zoom classes during Mat’s residential time.

- Mat complains that he is unable to have phone contact with the children when they are with Veronika.

*Contempt Hearing Order (9-7-21).* The court found Veronika in contempt for failure to provide Mat with notice regarding taking the children to Las Vegas. The court declined to find contempt regarding other alleged violations including the allegation that she unilaterally enrolled the children in home schooling, the allegation that she denied communication with the children, and the allegation that she made derogatory comments in front of the children. The court reserved judgment on whether Veronika complied with treatment as required by the temporary parenting plan.

*Temporary Order (9-7-21).* The court ordered Veronika to obtain a substance abuse evaluation as recommended by the evaluator and comply with any recommendations (the court noted that if she already obtained a compliant evaluation it should be deemed sufficient if it meets the criteria of those recommendations). The court further ordered Veronika to obtain a psychiatric evaluation as recommended. The court ordered the children should continue at Carnation Elementary pending trial and set a schedule for scheduled calls between the parents and children.

#### **F. Other**

*Correspondence from Margeret Bender (10-26-21).* This letter was provided by Mat's attorney very late in the process. However, the majority of the concerns raised in this letter were raised by Mat in his interview. In particular, Ms. Bender raises the following concerns:

- Veronika is publicly accusing Mat of being verbally, emotionally and sexually abusive in the Duvall community and on social media. Ms. Bender argues that there is no factual support for Veronika's allegation (pointing to some of Veronika's past statements). Ms. Bender also argues that the Duvall community is now a poisoned well and Mat cannot be realistically expected to live there. She argues that Veronika's statements amount to emotional abuse and that Mat is not abusive but is rather a victim of Veronika's abuse.
- Ms. Bender discusses some of Veronika's medical records in support of the argument that Veronika did not claim Mat was abusive prior to separation. She also raises concern about Veronika making negative statements about Mat in front of the children during their counseling sessions. Ms. Bender also points to some medical records (discussed in the prior evaluation) on which Veronika discusses suicidal ideation.

- Ms. Bender points to Veronika's past statements regarding heavy drinking and use of alcohol. These statements were discussed in the prior evaluation.
- Ms. Bender reports that Mat moved because (1) he could not afford housing in Duvall and (2) he was moving in with Monica who is a supportive partner and has a positive relationship with children.
- Ms. Bender raises concern about Veronika's somewhat inconsistent statements about her employment past and future. This concern is shared by the evaluator and discussed in the prior report.
- Ms. Bender repeats some of Mat's concerns about Veronika failing to supervise the children, failing to shield them from conflict, and leaning on them emotionally.
- Ms. Bender provided a number of exhibits. Almost all of these documents had been previously reviewed by the evaluator.

## **VI. COLLATERAL CONTACTS**

### **A. Cassandra Ellsworth, M.A. – Children's Counselor**

Cassandra "CJ" Ellsworth is a Program Manager, Supervisor and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with Sea Mar Community Health. I spoke to her by telephone on October 11, 2021.

Sea Mar was approached by Veronika regarding potential counseling services for the children. CJ completed intake assessments for Elora (8/30/21) and Aidan (8/31/21). She was the supervisor for another professional at Sea Mar who completed the assessment for Raina (9/9/21). The assessment included a virtual session with the children at home. Veronika was present during the session and provided feedback. CJ also spoke separately to Mat to get his feedback and input for the assessment.

Elora was assessed as meeting the criteria for an adjustment disorder (unspecified). CJ noted that Mat did not have a lot of input regarding Elora. Elora experiences some irritability and worry around transitions between her parents. CJ recommended weekly therapy. There was some delay but counseling has recently started for Elora.

Aidan has some issues with tantrums and meltdowns, particularly associated with transitions between the parents. He was assessed with an adjustment disorder (mixed). CJ recommended therapy and work on eliminating outbursts. He has also recently started counseling.

1 Raina was assessed with an adjustment disorder (unspecified). During Raina's  
2 assessment, Veronika reported that there was a history of verbal abuse by Mat directed  
3 either towards the children or towards her in front of the children. Raina is scheduled  
4 to commence counseling shortly.

5 In general, there was nothing unusual in CJ's interaction with either parent.  
6 Veronika was the primary point of contact for all three children. She has no safety  
7 concerns regarding either parent. She believes the parents need assistance in co-  
8 parenting. They seem to struggle to communicate and make decisions. The children  
9 have questions about why the parents separated. However, none of this is unusual for  
10 a custody case.

11 **B. Monica Bonilla Gonzalez, LSWAA – Sea Mar Community Health**

12 Monica Bonilla Gonzalez is Veronika's individual counselor. I attempted to  
13 speak to her by phone but was informed by her supervisor, Cate Ryan, that Ms. Bonilla  
14 Gonzalez would only answer written questions and provide a copy of the medical  
15 records for Veronika. Accordingly, I provided written questions and the following is a  
16 summary of the responses I received on October 11, 2021.

17 Ms. Bonilla Gonzalez is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker  
18 Associate and Veronika is her client. Veronika came to Sea Mar Behavioral Health on  
19 May 25, 2021 and completed a mental health assessment. She reported she was  
20 seeking mental health services due to anxiety and legal issues with her ex-husband.  
21 The intake diagnosed Veronika as suffering from PTSD (posttraumatic stress  
22 disorder). Veronika currently attends weekly counseling sessions. She has been  
23 engaged, responsive and participatory in all of her sessions.

24 Veronika has reported that she and her children have a positive, close, and  
25 communicative relationship. She describes spending quality time with her children  
including playing board games or spending time on the farm with the animals. Ms.  
Bonilla Gonzalez has seen some interaction between Veronika and her children during  
their video counseling sessions. During these limited interactions, she observed  
Veronika to be kind and polite to her children. They appeared receptive and calm in  
response to their mother. Veronika reports she does not consume alcohol or other  
substances. Ms. Bonilla Gonzalez has no concerns about Veronika's ability to be a  
safe and effective parent for her children. Veronika appears competent and  
emotionally stable.

Veronika reports that Mat's actions have been manipulative and  
emotionally/verbally abusive towards her before, during and after the separation.  
Veronika is fearful she will lose custody of her children.

## VII. INTERVIEW WITH ELORA

The original evaluation did not include an interview with any of the children due to their age. However, both parents requested that the evaluator interview Elora as part of this update. While Elora remains quite young (6), the evaluator elected to speak with her as part of this update in accordance with the parents' wishes. Elora was interviewed twice, once at each parent's home.

### A. Interview at Mother's Home

I spoke to Elora via Zoom on October 2, 2021. Elora was at her mother's home for this interview. She was in a room by herself (after her mother introduced her to the evaluator) and appeared to be out of the sight or hearing of anyone else (see below as this later proved untrue). She was mildly shy at first but quickly warmed up and talked freely.

Elora reported she is 6 and a half years old. She is in first grade at Carnation Elementary. She likes her school and her teacher. Her favorite thing about school is seeing her friends from kindergarten who she saw last year but only on Zoom. Her best friend is Georgia who also goes to her school. She has another friend, Lizzy, who lives next door to the farm where she lives with her mother. She takes the bus to school which she likes. When she is with her Dad, he drives her to school. She said the drive takes "about an hour" which is too long though sometimes they see fun things on the drive. Elora said she is not currently doing any activities like sports or dance classes.

Elora was clear that she does not live only with her mom but instead goes back and forth between her mom and her dad's house. When asked to describe her mother, Elora said she was "nice", "kind", and "sweet" and that she had a broken leg. When asked what kind of things she likes to do with her Mom, Elora talked about playing on the farm and playing with her friend Lizzy. She is looking forward to a trip to Disneyland that her mom has talked about taking her on. Elora said her only chore at her mom's house is to take care of her cats. She really likes her cats. Elora said she never gets in trouble at her Mom's house and is not punished. Her favorite things at her mom's house are the animals (particularly the cats) and that she gets to sleep on the top bunk. Elora described Joseph as "kind" and said he was her mother's best friend.

When asked to describe her dad, Elora said he was "mean sometimes." When asked what made her say that, she said that he yells and that he once spanked her brother. However, she said he is also "kind sometimes." She does get in trouble sometimes when she is with her father and he puts her in time out "all the time." When asked how often, she said sometimes twice in one day. Elora likes to watch TV with her dad. She really loves her paternal grandmother who is "the best" and who gives her and her siblings lots of presents. She was also positive about



1 Monica whom she described as “nice” and who gave her a big lollipop. Her favorite  
2 things about her dad’s house are the big backyard and the apple tree (she likes to  
climb it and pick apples).

3 Elora then said her mom was fighting for the kids to live with her and only see  
4 their dad on weekends. When asked who told her that, she said her mom told her.  
5 When asked how she felt about that, she said she was kind of sad because she  
would not see her dad as much but that she was also kind of happy.

6 I asked Elora about her trip to Las Vegas. Elora said the trip was fun. When  
7 asked her favorite thing about the trip, she said it was swimming in her aunt’s pool.  
8 However, her sister got out of the pool and then got back in without floaties. She  
9 sank into the water and her brother pulled her up. It was scary and her sister “threw  
up” because she had drunk so much water. When asked if any adults were at the  
pool when that happened, Elora said her grandma was there.

10 After the interview, I received an email from Veronika who said she had  
11 overheard the conversation and disputed Elora’s claim that Veronika had talked to  
12 her about changing the residential schedule. Veronika said Elora was referencing a  
13 time when she told Aidan that she was “fighting for you to see me and dad the same  
14 amount of time bc that’s what you deserve.” She reported she said this to Aidan  
when he was upset he was going to spend extra time with his dad. She goes on to  
accuse Mat of lying when he reported that Aidan claimed Joseph’s son, Eli, had  
choked him.

## 15 **B. Interview at Father’s Home**

16 Elora was interviewed a second time on October 6, 2021. The second  
17 interview took place while she was at her father’s home.

18 Elora began by showing off some of her favorite toys. She has an Elsa doll  
19 that she was engaged with throughout the interview. She also showed a toy car and  
20 a rubber band she was playing with. Elora had spent the day at school (the interview  
21 took place in the early evening). Elora said she had enjoyed school because she got  
to play with her friends and because she had music class. After school, she takes  
the bus if she is with her mom or her dad drives her if she is with her dad. He also  
drives her brother but he was sick on the day of the interview so he did not go to  
school with Elora.

22 Elora’s favorite thing to do when she is at her dad’s house is to play with her  
23 two cats (she has cats at both residences). She also likes to play with her family.  
24 When asked if she had friends who lived near her dad’s house, Elora said she did not  
but then said she might have a friend in Everett but could not remember. She does

1 not have any chores she has to do at her dad's house but she has made up her own  
2 chore which is picking apples from their apple tree.

3 As in the prior interview, Elora was asked to describe her dad. She said he  
4 was "nice", "kind", and "sweet." When asked to describe her mom, she said she was  
"sweet and kind, same as my dad."

5 I asked about any trips Elora had taken with her dad. She said he had taken  
6 her camping twice. She could not remember where they went but she remembered  
7 that she went with her dad, Monica, Aidan, and Raina. I asked her what Aidan was  
8 like and she again described him as "nice" and "kind." She likes to play dinosaurs  
with him. She said Raina was also nice and kind but was "kind of mean" because  
she called Elora a name.

9 Elora was somewhat distracted and so we closed the interview by asking her if  
10 she could change anything about her life, what would she change. Elora thought  
11 about it and decided she would change it so there were rainbows every day. She  
12 had seen a rainbow that day and was excited about it. I then asked Elora if she had  
any questions for me and she asked about whether it was possible to stand on a  
cloud.

13 Overall, Elora was quite young for an interview. However, she is an engaging  
14 and adorable young girl who was unusually comfortable talking to an unknown adult.  
15 She seemed equally content in both parents' homes and had positive things to say  
16 about both of her parents, their significant others, and her siblings. Any effort to see  
whether there were unusual stresses or preoccupations related to her parent's  
separation did not reveal any specific concerns. For example, she elected to discuss  
rainbows and clouds in response to open ended questions about her life.

## 17 VIII. IMPRESSIONS AND DISCUSSION

18 This is an update to the prior parenting evaluation submitted in this matter on  
19 April 30, 2021. The purpose of this update is to provide the trial court with  
20 information on the current status of the family and what developments have occurred  
over the 6 months since the prior report was released. For reference, the prior  
evaluation summarized the family situation as follows:

21 *While the facts of this case are not unusually complex, it is*  
22 *debatable what parenting plan is in the best interests of Elora, Aidan and*  
23 *Raina. The investigation suggests that Mat is the more stable parent. He*  
24 *is more financially secure, less emotionally labile, and there are not the*  
25 *same concerns about his mental health or use of substances. He has*  
*better housing available for the children and has the advantage of a*  
*supportive partner that the children have bonded with. On the other hand,*

1 *Veronika is the parent who has historically done the majority of the day-to-*  
2 *day parenting including managing the children's health care. She is*  
3 *available to care for the children consistently whereas Mat will likely have*  
4 *to travel significantly for his employment and this takes him away from the*  
5 *children.*

6 *Mat's proposal of placing the children in his primary care comes*  
7 *with significant draw backs. Elora would have to change schools and all*  
8 *the children would have to attend a somewhat less regarded school*  
9 *district. The children would also necessarily have to spend significantly*  
10 *less residential time with Veronika who is the parent who has historically*  
11 *done more of the day-to-day parenting tasks. Mat would have to find*  
12 *solutions to caring for the children while he traveled for work which might*  
13 *mean placing the children in the care of relatives or paid providers.*  
14 *Veronika's proposal of keeping the current schedule strikes the evaluator*  
15 *as so impractical as to be effectively impossible absent one or the other*  
16 *parent relocating. Neither home schooling the children nor having them*  
17 *spend 2 hours a day driving to and from school (4 hours for the driving*  
18 *parent) makes much sense under the circumstances.*

19 *While a strong argument can be made for placing the children with*  
20 *either parent, the evaluator is required to make this difficult judgment call*  
21 *in order to fulfill his obligations under the order of appointment. The*  
22 *evaluator notes that when Veronika had to move out of the family home,*  
23 *she located housing that was reasonably close to the children's school*  
24 *and to their father. When Mat had to relocate out of the family home, he*  
25 *chose to move far from both Veronika and Carnation Elementary School.*  
26 *After careful consideration, this report will recommend that the children be*  
27 *placed in Veronika's primary care during the school year if, and only if,*  
28 *Veronika can complete the psychiatric and substance abuse evaluations*  
29 *recommended herein prior to the fall of 2021 and begin complying with*  
30 *their recommendations. Assuming she does so, the children should be*  
31 *placed in her primary care and spend residential time with their father for*  
32 *alternate long weekends. If she does not, then that schedule should be*  
33 *reversed and the children should live primarily with Mat. The parents*  
34 *should share time during the summer on a schedule of alternate weeks.*  
35 *Should one or the other parent relocate such that the parents reside within*  
36 *the same school district, then the parents should share residential time*  
37 *equally year-round.*

38 In response to the report, Veronika immediately sought and obtained  
39 substance abuse and mental health assessments. She completed a substance  
40 abuse assessment with Associated Behavioral Health. While that assessment did  
41 not include collateral input from Mat, the ABH evaluator reported that Mat was offered

1 the opportunity for input and failed to respond. The assessment included random UA  
2 testing all the tests came back negative. The ABH assessment concluded that  
3 Veronika does not meet the clinical criteria for diagnosis with a substance use  
4 disorder. It is noted that the assessment does recommend Veronika complete an  
5 early intervention program and she had not yet done so at the time of her interview.

6 Similarly, Veronika went to obtain a mental health assessment with Sea Mar  
7 Community Health (as well as a more limited clinical assessment with BHUC). The  
8 report recommended a psychiatric assessment and the evaluation that Veronika  
9 obtained was not performed by a psychiatrist. Nor was it clear that the assessing  
10 professional was provided with a copy of the prior parenting evaluation as  
11 recommended. However, the assessment did appear to include an honest account  
12 of Veronika's past psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. The assessment diagnoses  
13 Veronika with PTSD but does not reveal concerns about Veronika's ability to be a  
14 safe and effective parent for the children.

15 In short, Veronika appears to have been responsive to the recommendations  
16 of the prior evaluation. The assessments suggest that Veronika does not suffer from  
17 a substance use or mental health problem that interferes with her ability to perform  
18 parenting functions as contemplated by RCW 26.09.191. These assessments  
19 therefore appear to support the conclusion of the prior parenting evaluation that the  
20 children be placed in Veronika's primary care provided she addressed these two  
21 potential concerns.

22 In addition, the prior assessment relied on three other key factors in reaching  
23 its conclusions. The first was the history of care provision for the children. Veronika  
24 has historically been the primary care provider for the children and was a stay-at-  
25 home parent during the relationship. That history remains unchanged. Further, it is  
noted that Veronika is the parent who continues to take the lead on the children's  
medical care and who was the moving force behind finding a replacement counselor  
for the children since the prior evaluation. The second factor was one of geography.  
Mat elected to move approximately an hour away from Veronika's residence and the  
children's school. This relocation made continuing the shared residential schedule  
for the children impractical. In the judgment of the GAL, this remains a significant  
barrier to a shared residential schedule as the children are required to be in the car  
roughly 2 hours on school days when in the father's care. The third factor was the  
children's connections to Carnation, particularly their school. At the time of the prior  
evaluation, Elora was attending Carnation Elementary School and doing well. Now  
both Elora and Aidan are at Carnation Elementary. During her interview, Elora spoke  
positively about her school. She also discussed close friends she has at school and  
at her mother's home. In contrast, Elora was not able to identify friends in Everett  
where her father resides. Accordingly, this third factor continues to suggest that the  
children should reside primarily with their mother rather than move to their father's  
primary care and change schools.

1  
2 There remain some potential problems for this family. The evaluator is  
3 concerned about the parents' ability to make decisions together for the children. Each  
4 parent has a decidedly negative view of the other. Veronika has gone so far as to  
5 make social media posts describing Mat as abusive. In her interview, she compared  
6 her relationship with Mat to infamous cases where a husband murdered his wife,  
7 implicitly suggesting Mat was capable of murder. Mat also has a negative view of  
8 Veronika but has not made public negative statements about her or inflammatory  
9 comparisons as far as the evaluator is aware. Veronika is entitled to her opinions  
10 about Mat but it makes it more difficult for the parents to work together when she  
11 shares those opinions publicly. There is also the risk that she allows the children to  
12 become aware of her extremely negative view of their father which could be very  
13 damaging to their relationship with him. There is also the potential for disputes about  
14 vaccinations and health care for the children as Veronika's view on medical care for  
15 the kids (natural medicine, no vaccinations) and education (home schooling) conflicts  
16 with Mat's more traditional view. Some clear guidelines about decision-making need  
17 to be put in place. The evaluator does not support Veronika's suggestion of  
18 awarding her sole decision-making as Mat deserves an equal voice in making  
19 decisions for the children and there is no reason to limit his decision-making  
20 authority. This update will change its prior recommendation regarding dispute  
21 resolution to recommend arbitration rather than mediation and will address school  
22 choice and vaccines.

23  
24 Mat raised concerns that the children are not always adequately supervised  
25 while in their mother's care. Veronika disputed that claim. It is noted that there were  
many witnesses who attested to Veronika's parenting of the children (noted in the  
past evaluation) and Mat himself routinely left the children alone in Veronika's care  
prior to separation when he traveled for work. While the incident with Raina in the  
pool sounds frightening, the evaluator cannot conclude that Veronika was negligent  
as it appears she had reasonably relied upon her mother to watch the children based  
on her account and that of Elora.

Finally, Mat raised concerns that Veronika shares negative information or  
statements about him with the children and that she tends to put the children into the  
middle of parental conflicts. Mat's concern was supported by Elora's statement in her  
interview reporting that her mom told her she was fighting for the kids to live with her  
and only see their dad on weekends. Veronika then revealed she had been listening  
in on the interview (despite being advised specifically not to do so). This is an area  
that needs some attention to shield the children from parental conflict. This was also  
noted by the children's counselor, CJ Ellsworth, who said she believes the parents  
need assistance in co-parenting. She noted the parents struggle to communicate and  
make decisions and the children have questions about why the parents separated.  
However, she also stated none of this is unusual for a custody case.

1 The evaluator still has some concern about Veronika's lack of employment while  
2 recognizing that childcare expenses for three young children likely make full time  
3 employment impractical (i.e. her child care expense could exceed her earnings). She  
4 remains dependent on charity for her housing. Veronika reports having a potential job  
5 as a legal assistant but remains unemployed as of the time of this updated evaluation.  
6 She also acknowledges needing a plan to find independent housing with more space  
7 but is not currently in a financial position to do so. This remains a source of concern.

8 In the end, the evaluator remains supportive of the recommendations in the  
9 prior evaluation while still recognizing that a strong case could also be made for  
10 placing the children primarily with their father for the same reasons outlined in the  
11 original report. While there were some weaknesses in the substance use and mental  
12 health evaluations obtained by Veronika, the evaluator is satisfied that Veronika was  
13 attempting to comply with those recommendations in good faith and believes she  
14 should be deemed to have substantially complied with those recommendations. The  
15 evaluator is not changing his recommendations with respect to the residential  
16 schedule.

## 17 **XI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

18 The Guardian ad Litem recommends the following:

- 19 A. Substance Use Evaluation for Mother. The mother should be deemed in  
20 compliance with the prior recommendation that she obtain a substance use  
21 evaluation. The mother should comply with the recommendations of the  
22 substance use evaluation she obtained from Associated Behavioral Health.
- 23 B. Mental Health Evaluation. The mother should be deemed in substantial  
24 compliance with the prior recommendation that she seek a mental health  
25 evaluation. She should continue in individual counseling with Sea Mar  
Community Health Center at the frequency and for the duration recommended  
by her provider.
- 26 C. School Choice. The children should continue to attend school at their current  
27 public school (Carnation Elementary) and should not be home schooled  
28 unless both parents agree otherwise.
- 29 D. Vaccines. Unless otherwise agreed by both parents or ordered in arbitration,  
30 the children should be vaccinated on the schedule recommended by the  
31 Center for Disease Control and Prevention:  
32 <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>.
- 33 E. Decision-Making. The parents should make major decisions on behalf of the  
34 children jointly. Both parents shall have equal access to the children's school

1 records, teachers, doctors, and other providers. Disputes about joint decisions  
2 or about what portions of the parenting plan mean should be submitted to  
arbitration with a designated arbitrator.

3 F. Neither parent shall permit the children to refer to third parties such as friends,  
4 significant others or stepparents as “mommy” or “daddy” or similar  
designations.

5 G. The children should remain in counseling with Sea Mar Community Health  
6 until otherwise agreed by the parents. Both parents should have equal access  
7 to the counselor and have an opportunity to provide input and seek feedback  
from the counselor.

8 H. The recommendations from the April 30, 2021 parenting evaluation should be  
9 implemented except as expressly modified above.

10 Date: 10/29/2021

*Matthew Jolly*

11 Matthew Jolly, WSBA #23167  
12 Parenting Evaluator  
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