

16 “Do’s & Don’ts” of COURT Related Letters



Let's go ahead and start with the “Do’s”

- Do decide whether or not you or your practice will be providing court related letters.
- Do have a clear court policy implemented in your clinician packet.
- Do be clear regarding sessions attended, start dates, end dates etc.
- Do decide whether or not you will be charging a fee for letters (DO!)
- Do understand that when you are the therapist you should rely upon your scope as a therapist.
- Do decide whether or not you will be providing updates and what is requested or ordered to be included
- Do “be clear” if the letter is referencing a minor, that you have consent to release information as you would also be careful to gain consent for treatment in the 1st place
- Do get a copy of the court order for a letter if there is one, otherwise it may be upon your client’s request alone
- Do have a colleague review it before sending it out

Let's dig in to the “Don’ts”

- Don't agree to give an opinion, never forget you're a fact/percipient witness.
- Don't go outside of your scope of practice
- Don't write a novel, keep it on topic and to the point.
- Don't make a recommendation in regards to visitation or custody/parenting time of a minor (only a court appointed child custody evaluator can do that)
- Don't forget about bias, it's not always a bad thing, but it does influence our work as therapists as it relates to our therapeutic alliance with our clients
- Don't assume that your letter won't be read in court or admitted into evidence
- Don't think that your letter is not considered testimony, be careful