Divorce and separation are legal, financial, and family change events. In 1990, a Minnesota family law attorney named Stu Webb created Collaborative Practice, designed to help couples divorce outside of court using a respectful problem solving approach. From a two-attorney model, this approach quickly evolved to become multi-disciplinary, and is known as Collaborative Team Practice (CTP). CTP is now practiced around the world, each practice group has its own regional flavor. The core principles of Collaborative Practice that will be shared in this Friday Forum.

In Minnesota and the upper Midwest, specifically trained mental health professionals are core members of Collaborative teams, in the roles of neutral coach, neutral child specialist and neutral family specialist. Descriptions of these roles and their functions will be one focus of this forum. This will include the essential paradigm shift from providing therapy or psychological evaluation to providing facilitative neutral services centered around the relationship, parenting and child issues – all key parts of family restructuring during a divorce or separation. This forum will provide and overview of how CTP differs from other divorce/separation processes for whom CTP is likely to be effective. It will also address red flags for when this process may not be appropriate.

Participants will be able to:
1. Identify the core principles of Collaborative Practice of family law
2. Recognize the paradigm shift for mental health professionals to ethically and skillfully work as neutral coaches in Collaborative Practice
3. Identify protocols for providing neutral child specialist services

About the Presenters:

Deborah Clemmensen, M.Eq., L.P., received her doctoral level training in the Psychology in the Schools Program at the University of Minnesota, interning in the Montgomery County Maryland Public Schools. For over 40 years, she has provided individual and family therapy, psychological evaluations, mental health consultation, training and research, focusing primarily on child and adolescent mental health. In 2000, Deb received training in Collaborative Team Practice, and has since provided Neutral Child Specialist services for families going through divorce or separation. She now has a full time private practice in Edina providing out-of-court, child-inclusive dispute resolution services. Deb is currently on the Board of the Collaborative Law Institute of Minnesota, she has twice served as Co-President. She is also a member of the CLI training team, providing regional training on multidisciplinary Collaborative Practice.

Louise Livesay-Al, J.D, is an attorney focusing her practice on out-of-court family laws settlement the Collaborative Process, Mediation and other ADR options. She received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. from Hamline University School of Law. She has been practicing family law for almost 20 years. Twice, Louise has been Co-President of the Collaborative Law Institute of Minnesota, a multi-disciplinary organization focusing on educating the public and professionals about the Collaborative Process for dissolution.

Deborah Clemmensen, M.Eq., L.P, has reported the following conflicts of interest: She is the past co-president and current board member of the Collaborative Law Institute of Minnesota. She receives no compensation for these activities. CLI of Minnesota is a nonprofit organization of professional members.

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