**SECTION 211 ASSESSOR.**

***Ms. Emma. L. Thompson – Psych (Dr)***

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Member of The Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology (U.S.A.)

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 Family Mediation Canada (FMC)

 ***Verified to practice as a licensed Clinical Psychotherapist in Canada***

***Section 211 Assessor.***

***Professional Office:***

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***WHAT IS A SECTION 211?***

The primary purpose of a Section 211 report is to assist the court in making informed decisions that prioritise the child’s best interests. The report evaluates several factors, including:

* **The child’s needs**: Physical, emotional, and psychological needs are assessed to ensure the child’s well-being.
* **The child’s views**: Their preferences and opinions depend on age and maturity.
* **Parenting abilities**: The report examines each parent’s ability and willingness to meet the child’s needs.

This assessment provides the court with a detailed and unbiased perspective on the child’s best interests, which is the guiding principle in all family law decisions.

**MY ROLE**

The Section 211 Report is prepared by a qualified counsellor or psychologist with experience and training in working with children and families. I will meet with the child, and sometimes with the parents, to gather information and understand the child’s perspective. The process will involve interviews and observations.

**THE PROCESS.**

The process of preparing a Views of the Child Report involves several steps:

**1) Court Order:** A Section 211 report can be ordered by the court on its own initiative or upon request by one of the parties involved in the dispute. The requesting party must demonstrate that the report would be beneficial in determining the child’s best interests. The court order will specify the scope of the assessment and any issues that need to be addressed.

**2) Interviews and Observations**: I, the assessor, will conduct interviews with the child and, in some cases, with the parents. These interviews are designed to be child-friendly, creating a comfortable environment where children can express their views freely. I may also observe the child in various settings, such as the home or school, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their situation.

**3) Gathering Additional Information**: I may gather additional information from other sources, such as teachers, counsellors, or medical professionals, to provide a well-rounded view of the child’s needs and circumstances. All unrelated material will be excluded.

**4)** **Report Preparation**: After gathering all necessary information, I will prepare a detailed report that outlines the child’s views, the observations made during the assessment, and any recommendations for the court to consider. The report will be submitted to the court and shared with both parents. I will ensure the process is transparent.

**COURT DECISIONS**

The Section 211 Report can significantly impact the court’s decisions regarding custody and parenting time. While the child’s views are not the sole factor in determining the outcome, they are essential. The court will weigh the child’s preferences alongside other factors, such as age and maturity, the parent’s ability to meet the child’s needs, and any potential risks to the child’s well-being. While the Section 211 Report is a valuable tool, it has challenges. Some of the considerations include:

1) **Child’s Age and Maturity**: The weight given to their views will depend on their age and maturity. Younger children may have a limited understanding of the situation, while older children may have more informed and considered opinions.

2) **Influence and Pressure**: There is a risk that a child may be influenced or pressured by one parent to express certain views. Assessors such as myself are trained to recognise signs of undue influence and to ensure that the child’s true views are accurately represented.

3) **Emotional Impact**: Discussing their views and preferences can be emotionally challenging for the child. The assessment must be conducted in a sensitive and supportive manner to minimise potential distress.

**GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS**

If you are involved in a family law dispute and a Section 211 report has been ordered, here are some practical tips:

* **Be Honest and Cooperative**: Provide accurate information and cooperate fully with the assessor.
* **Prepare Your Child**: Explain the process to your child in an age-appropriate manner to help them feel at ease.
* **Focus on the Child’s Best Interests**: Remember that the report aims to determine what is best for your child. Keep this in mind throughout the process.

**AND FINALLY …**

The Section 211 Report plays a crucial role in family law proceedings by ensuring the child’s voice is heard and considered in decisions affecting their lives. The report helps the court make informed decisions that prioritise the child’s best interests by providing an independent and comprehensive assessment of the child's views and needs.

The assessment process can be lengthy, potentially delaying court proceedings. It’s essential to start the process early to avoid delays.

***Section 211 meetings***

My clinical practice is located at ***The Couch, 12-1822 Comox Avenue, Comox, Vancouver Island, BC V9M 3M7.***

My office is located on the bottom/first floor of the building, with wheelchair access. You may park at the back of the office building in the car lot by The Church St Taphouse or on Comox Avenue, on the front side of the office building.

**I prefer to offer face-to-face appointments and assessments that involve the children, parents, and professionals directly.**

**\* I require a 48-hour notice to cancel or reschedule an appointment.**

**\*Please note that I do not offer a reminder service for appointments.**

**\*If you are 15 minutes late for an appointment or more, you will be considered a no-show. You may be offered an alternative appointment on a different day and time.**

**I practice in my clinical office on** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. My last appointment of the day is usually at 4 p.m.

**At the end of each meeting, we will discuss a suitable time to meet in the future.** The timings of future appointments will be based on the family's needs, other commitments, and my available clinical time, excluding any periods when I am away from work.

Meetings with the child or children and their parents may also be held at the parents' homes.

My professional costs and time are charged by the hour, and I keep a log of all the minutes and hours I spend on the process.

***\*\*\*Consent to Release Confidential Information\*\*\****

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

PLEASE GIVE NAMES OF CHILD AND ALL GUARDIANS - consent to Ms ***EMMA.L. THOMPSON*** to release any information about me/my child/children to the agencies/persons indicated below. I also permit the mentioned sources to publish data and documentation regarding my care, or the care of my child or children, as applicable.

€ Department of Children and Families ***YES OR NO***

€ School, Educational or Childcare Provider ***YES OR NO***

€ Attorney /Lawyer ***YES OR NO***

€ Mental Health Agency/Professional/s ***YES OR NO***

€ Your Physician(s) ***YES OR NO***

This authorisation is valid for two years from the date of this letter. I will regularly check in regarding informed consent to treatment. I understand that I may revoke this consent by providing written notice to Ms. Emma L. Thompson.

***Parental {and/or Guardian} Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

***Please print the Parental and/or Guardian’s legal name:***

***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

***Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

**Ms. Emma L Thompson.**

***A Guide to Hear the Child, Views of the Child, and Full Section 211 Reports in BC Family Law***

When parents separate or divorce, one of the most critical questions is how to make parenting decisions in the best interests of the child. In British Columbia, the courts can consider the child’s views, but without putting them in the uncomfortable position of testifying in court.

There are three main tools courts use to hear from children:

* **Hear the Child interviews** – a brief, neutral conversation that captures what the child says, without interpretation.
* **Views of the Child reports** – an interview that includes some expert analysis of the child’s statements.
* **Complete Section 211 parenting assessments** – a comprehensive report that includes the child’s views, needs, and an evaluation of each parent’s ability to meet those needs.

Each report type offers a different level of depth, cost, and time commitment. Understanding the differences can help parents make informed choices about what best supports their child.

**How Do These Reports Give Children a Voice?**

Section 211 of the *Family Law Act* allows a judge to appoint a professional to assess:

* The **needs** of a child.
* The **views** of a child, and/or
* A parent’s **ability and willingness** to meet the child’s needs.

If the focus is solely on the child’s perspective, a “Views of the Child” report may be ordered. If more context is required, especially regarding parenting ability or family dynamics, a Full Section 211 assessment is used. Parents also have the option to commission a Hear the Child interview, which records the child’s words without expert opinion.

**Comparing the Report Types**

A helpful way to understand these three options is through metaphor:

* A **Hear the Child** interview is like a **microphone** – it captures the child’s voice as-is.
* A **Views of the Child** report is like a **spotlight** – it highlights the child’s views and includes expert commentary.
* A **Full Section 211 assessment** is like a **full-stage production** – it presents the entire family story, along with recommendations for what happens next.

| **Feature** | **Hear the Child Interview** | **Views of the Child Report** | **Full Section 211 Parenting Assessment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | Captures the child’s voice with no added opinion | Includes interpretation of the child’s views | Comprehensive analysis of child’s needs and parenting ability |
| **Prepared By** | Trained neutral  | Clinically trained, court-approved professional | Specialist such as psychologist or clinical assessor |
| **Interviews** | One or two with child only | Several with child and limited collateral checks | Multiple with child, parents, and others, including home visits |
| **Report Content** | Verbatim statements | Summary and analysis of the child’s views | Full narrative with parenting plan recommendations |
| **Cost** | ***$500–$3,000 ($275 an hour)*** | ***$2,500–$5,000 ($275 an hour)*** | ***$10,000–$30,000 ($275 an hour – bill log implemented)*** |
| **Timeline** | A few days to weeks (up to 6 months publicly) | 6–10 weeks  | 4–8 months privately |
| **Intrusiveness** | Low – conversational | Moderate – multi-session, some testing possible | High – full evaluation  |
| **Legal Basis** | Admissible under FLA s. 202(a) | Admissible under FLA s. 211(1)(b) | Admissible under FLA s. 211(1)(a)-(c) |

**When to Consider Each Option**

**Hear the Child Interview**

Choose this option when:

* Your child is mature and comfortable sharing their views.
* Both parents trust the child’s independence and judgment.
* A quick, low-cost solution is needed.

This is best suited for lower-conflict cases involving older children who can articulate themselves clearly.

**Views of the Child Report**

This may be right if:

* You want professional insight into the child’s statements (e.g., whether the child is being influenced).
* The case is moderately complex but doesn’t require a complete family analysis.
* You can wait a couple of months for the results.

This type is helpful when you want context and guidance on how much weight to give the child’s preferences.

**Complete Section 211 Parenting Assessment**

Consider this when:

* There are serious concerns, such as mental health, special needs, or family violence.
* Many parenting issues are in dispute, and a thorough evaluation is needed.
* You’re preparing for trial or need clear, detailed recommendations.

This option is the most thorough and is usually reserved for complex, high-conflict parenting disputes.

***SECTION 211 PARENTING ASSESSMENTS***

**Section 211 Parenting Assessments**

***(also known as Custody & Access Assessments)***

**STARTING AT: $10,000.00 / Incidental Expenses / ESTIMATED TIMELINE (FROM COMPLETION OF INTAKE PROCESS & DEPENDENT UPON PARTIES): 4-6 MONTHS**

Section 211 Parenting Assessments pursuant to [Section 211 of the British Columbia Family Law Act](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/11025_10) are conducted by a neutral party who provides a comprehensive written report following: interviews with the child(ren), their parents and/or guardians, the spouse(s) or partner(s) of the parents and/or guardians, any other adults that may reside in the home of either party or regularly interact with the child(ren), and a pre-determined and equal number of collateral or references for each parent and/or guardian (options of four collateral reference interviews per person, or six collateral reference interviews per person); home visits to observe the child(ren) interacting with their parent/guardian and other adults that may be present in their natural home environment; and, the review of information both parties and their legal counsel present for consideration in their case that directly pertain to parenting (text message communications, e-mails, letters, online or social media information, supporting evidence such as affidavits, agreements, judgments, orders, etc.…), in addition to any Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) disclosures and/or Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and/or municipal/tribal police disclosures. The interviewer does not actively research, solicit, or point out information that has not been provided by either party or their counsel, unless directed to do so (e.g., a party mentions a publicly available social media post). The final report includes a Hear the Child Report for each child involved, along with recommendations on how parenting of the child(ren) should proceed from a primary residency, logistical, and fundamental perspective. The assessment component provides further detail regarding a parent or guardian’s ability to adapt and learn, as well as their capacity as a parent. It offers an interpretation and opinion on parenting arrangements. More generally, Section 211(1) of the Family Law Act reads:

*211(1) A court may appoint a person to assess… one or more of the following:*
*(a) The needs of a child in a family law dispute;*
*(b) The views of a child about a family law dispute;*
*(c) The ability and willingness of a party to a family law dispute to satisfy*
*The needs of the child.*

Before commencing the process to prepare a Section 211 Parenting Assessment, both parties must complete the intake form, approve a formal estimate, and sign a Professional Services Agreement and a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

**Please note that payment of the retainer in full is required before service commences, and any outstanding balances upon completion must be remitted before deliverables are provided.**

A preliminary timeline will be established for conducting interviews and provided to the parties and/or their legal counsel. Please note that firm submission/completion dates are never provided, as many factors can contribute to delays such as: the willingness and cooperation of the parties/legal counsel to participate in the report preparation process; the availability of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews; the physical location of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews where travel may be required; court proceedings that may hinder or cease report preparation activities; and, timely receipt of documentation and supporting information from parties throughout the report preparation process.

**The process for a Section 211 Parenting Assessment is as follows:**

**1. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian A (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in the Comox Valley.)***

**2. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian B (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**3. Formal Interview with Parent/Guardian A (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**4. Formal Interview with Parent/Guardian B (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**5. Formal Interview with Partner/Spouse of Parent/Guardian A (2 hours)**

***(if applicable, and can take place via Zoom if the parties are not located in CV)***

**6.Formal Interview with Partner/Spouse of Parent/Guardian B (2 hours)**

***(if applicable, and can take place via Zoom if the parties are not located in CV)***

**7. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**8. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**9. Observation/Home Visit while Child(ren) are present during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (1 hour)**

**10. Initial Interview with Child A (during Home Visit) during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (2 hours)**

**11. Observation/Home Visit while Child(ren) are present during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (1 hour)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if it cannot be completed during the Home Visit or if the parties are not located in CV)***

**12. Review Session with Child A (during Home Visit) during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if it cannot be completed during the Home Visit or if the parties are not located in CV)***

**13. Interview(s) with Adults Residing in the Home(s) or with Regular Access to Child(ren) (45 minutes each)**

***(These can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV)***

**14. Collateral Interviews (45 minutes each)**

***(These can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV)***

**15. Legal File & Disclosure Review**

**16. Additional Interviews/Consultation with External Professionals**

***(at the discretion of the report writer)***

**17. Submission, Transcription & Question Period**

***(submissions from the parties of supplemental information/evidence as noted above, any additional questions or clarification required during transcription, or the preparation of the body of the assessment)***

**18. Preparation of the Final Report & Submission to Parties & Legal Counsel & Court Filing**

For multiple children and/or adults, the process is similar, and sessions can take place back-to-back for efficiency purposes.

This reporting is typically ordered by courts and/or through the parents’ legal counsel. Section 211 Parenting Assessments are **not** mental health assessments. They follow an entirely neutral process that cannot be swayed or influenced by either parent or their legal counsel.

**Section 211 Parenting Assessments must be consented to by all parents/legal guardians of the child(ren) involved, and in the absence of consent or agreement, must be ordered through legal counsel and/or by an order of the court/consent agreement.**

***VIEWS OF THE CHILD REPORTS***

**Views of the Child Reports**

**PER REPORT: $2,000.00 / Incidental Expenses**

**INITIAL RETAINER REQUIRED: $2,000.00 (PER REPORT – FORMAL ESTIMATE TO BE PROVIDED)**

**ESTIMATED TIMELINE (FROM COMPLETION OF INTAKE PROCESS & DEPENDENT UPON PARTIES): 1-2 MONTHS**

Views of the Child (Views) Reporting is conducted by a trained neutral child interviewer, who provides a written verbatim (word-for-word) report **per child** to the courts and/or legal counsel, arbitrators or mediators in disputes concerning custody, access, relocation, or like issues typically prior-to, during, or after divorce and/or separation. The interview and process differ from Hear the Child reporting in that they focus on topics agreed upon by the parties involved or defined in a court order, and **also** include an evaluative component by the interviewer. This addresses the child’s maturity and ability to express themselves, the strength and consistency of the child’s views, and the extent to which the child’s statements reflect the child’s actual preference(s). Because of these added components, parties and the court(s) often find a Views of the Child Report more valuable than a traditional Hear the Child Report when considering the child’s views in their decision-making.

Before commencing the process to prepare a Views of the Child Report, both parties must complete the intake form, approve a formal estimate, and sign a Professional Services Agreement and a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

**Please note that payment of the retainer in full is required before service commences, and any outstanding balances upon completion must be remitted before deliverables are provided.**

A preliminary timeline will be established for conducting interviews and provided to the parties and/or their legal counsel. Please note that firm submission/completion dates are never provided, as many factors can contribute to delays such as: the willingness and cooperation of the parties/legal counsel to participate in the report preparation process; the availability of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews; the physical location of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews where travel may be required; court proceedings that may hinder or cease report preparation activities; and, timely receipt of documentation and supporting information from parties throughout the report preparation process.

**The process for a Views of the Child Report for one (1) child is as follows:**

**1. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian A (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**2. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian B (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV)***

**3. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**4. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**5. Initial Interview with Child A in-person at Emma’s offices during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**6. Review Session with Child A in-person at Emma’s offices during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**7. Transcription & Question Period**

***(Any additional questions or clarification required during transcription, the preparation of the body of the report, or the preparation of the evaluation component)***

**8. Preparation of the Final Report & Submission to Parties & Legal Counsel**

**For multiple children, the process is similar, and sessions can take place back-to-back for efficiency purposes.**

This reporting is typically ordered by courts and/or through the parents’ legal counsel. Views Reporting is **not** a mental health assessment, nor a parental assessment. It is an entirely neutral process that cannot be swayed or influenced by either parent or their legal counsel.

**Views of the Child Reports must be consented to by all parents/legal guardians of the child(ren) involved, and in the absence of consent or agreement, must be ordered through legal counsel and/or by an order of the court/consent agreement.**

***HEAR THE CHILD REPORTS***

**Hear the Child Reports**

**PER REPORT: $1,500.00 / Incidental Expenses INITIAL RETAINER REQUIRED: $1,500.00 (PER REPORT – FORMAL ESTIMATE TO BE PROVIDED)**

**ESTIMATED TIMELINE (FROM COMPLETION OF INTAKE PROCESS & DEPENDENT UPON PARTIES): 1 MONTH**

Hear the Child Reporting is conducted by a trained neutral child interviewer, who provides a written verbatim (word-for-word) report **per child** to the courts and/or legal counsel, arbitrators or mediators in disputes involving children, typically before, during, or after divorce and/or separation. The interview and process differ from child to child. Still, they are completed one-on-one, with fair and standardised questions addressing life at home, activities, school, and their thoughts on the divorce and/or separation proceedings, as applicable. The report does **not** include an evaluative component by the interviewer, and as such is found to be less valuable in proceedings than a [Views of the Child Report](https://www.leannetoews.com/services/votc-reports/) when considering the child’s views in their decision-making. For an additional $500.00, the report can include an evaluative component addressing the child’s maturity and ability to express themselves, the strength and consistency of the child’s views, and the extent to which the child’s statements reflect the child’s actual preference(s). Because of these added components, parties and the court(s) often find a Views of the Child Report more valuable than a traditional Hear the Child Report when considering the child’s views in their decision-making.

Before commencing the process to prepare a Hear the Child Report, both parties must complete the intake form, approve a formal estimate, and sign a Professional Services Agreement and a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

**Please note that payment of the retainer in full is required before the commencement of services. Any outstanding balances upon completion must be remitted before deliverables are provided.**

A preliminary timeline will be established for conducting interviews and provided to the parties and/or their legal counsel. Please note that firm submission/completion dates are never provided, as many factors can contribute to delays such as: the willingness and cooperation of the parties/legal counsel to participate in the report preparation process; the availability of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews; the physical location of parties and/or collateral(s) for interviews where travel may be required; court proceedings that may hinder or cease report preparation activities; and, timely receipt of documentation and supporting information from parties throughout the report preparation process.

The process for a Hear the Child Report for one (1) child is as follows:

**1. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian A (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**2. Intake Phone Call with Parent/Guardian B (45 minutes)**

***(This can take place via Zoom or Phone if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**3. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**4. Meet-and-Greet Session via Zoom at a neutral location (i.e. library, counsellor’s office) with Child A during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (15 minutes)**

**5. Initial Interview with Child A in-person at Emma’s offices during Parent/Guardian A’s parenting time (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**6. Review Session with Child A in-person at Emma’s offices during Parent/Guardian B’s parenting time (2 hours)**

***(This can take place via Zoom at a neutral location if the parties are not located in CV.)***

**7. Transcription & Question Period**

***(Any additional questions or clarification required during transcription or the preparation of the body of the report)***

**8. Preparation of the Final Report & Submission to Parties & Legal Counsel**

**For multiple children, the process is similar, and sessions can take place back-to-back for efficiency purposes.**

This reporting is typically ordered by courts and/or through the parents’ legal counsel. Hear the Child Reporting is **not** a mental health assessment, nor a parental assessment. It is an entirely neutral process that cannot be swayed or influenced by either parent or their legal counsel.

If you have any further questions about the differences between a Hear the Child Report and a Views of the Child Report, please do not hesitate to contact Leanne using the contact form on this site.

**Hear the Child Reports must be consented to by all parents/legal guardians of the child(ren) involved, and in the absence of consent or agreement, must be ordered through legal counsel and/or by an order of the court/consent agreement.**