



## Divorce, Separation, Foster Care, & Custody Agreements Policy

Zöe Pediatrics is dedicated to the health and well-being of our patients. Because our patients are children, we rely on parents and other supportive adults to assist us in their care. Children of divorced or separated parents sometimes present our practice with unique challenges; therefore, we established a policy to avoid any misunderstandings going forward:

1. Although both parents have a right to their child's medical information, we will not **REPEAT** information given at a visit. We request parents share medical information with one another. If Mom or Dad has a **Court Order** that restricts the other parent's role, you are required to provide a copy of that legal document, along with a letter from your attorney that describes our office's legal obligations.
  - a) **Only parents (or legal guardians)** may consent to treatment for their children, **unless** they have given advance written parental authorization to another person.
  - b) "Joint Custody" means that each parent has equal access to the child's medical record. Without a court order, we will not stop either parent from obtaining their child's medical records or their child's test results.
  - c) We will not call the other parent for consent prior to treatment

### Who can consent for treatment when a child has been removed from the custody of his/her parents?

When a child is entrusted to a local agency (such as DFCS) without termination of parental rights, the healthcare provider needs to know who is consenting to nonemergent medical care for the child. DFCS will need to provide you with a "**Placement Letter**" that include the state of GA / AI letterhead, so that it can be given to us for consent to treat. If the parents retain the right to consent to medical care, then the DFCS agency does not have the authority to make health care decisions for the minor (except in the case of emergencies). If DFCS is not absolutely certain of its authority to grant consent, or if the healthcare provider is not comfortable, then the entrustment agreement or court order should be examined.

In the case of treating a foster child, either a Judge or DFCS Agency of the county that has custody of the child has the right to consent to health care treatment needed by the foster parent.

- a) There is NO provision that gives that right to the foster parent. So, if a foster child shows up with his/her foster parent(s), the foster parent(s) must produce either written authorization from the applicable DFCS office or an Order from the court before providing treatment or medical information.

A person standing as *guardian ad litem* for consent purposes may **only** have access to the health information of the child as it relates to the treatment, he/she has authorized.

- If a step-parent, or other adult, should bring your child in, we must have a Parental Authorization on file within the past year, and care will be given. In circumstances when it is unclear whether or not the attending adult has the right to consent to treat, we will call you to obtain a one-time authorization.

## Zöe Center for Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, LLC

210 Hannah's Mill Rd \* Thomaston, GA 30286 \* 706-938-0990  
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- The parent authorizing treatment and bringing the child in for an appointment is *responsible* to ZÖe Pediatrics for payment. All payments are due when services are rendered.
  - a) In the case of contracted insurance only, copay, co-insurance and/or deductible may be due at the time services are rendered. Subsequently, all charges deemed parent responsibility by the contracted insurer are due to ZÖe Pediatrics **by the parent who authorized treatment.**
  - b) If the separation/divorce decree requires the other parent to pay all or part of the treatment costs, it is the authorizing parent’s responsibility to collect from the other parent.
  - c) Please **DO NOT** ask our office to collect payments from a parent who is not at, or maybe unaware of, the visit.
  - d) We cannot mediate financial disputes between parents. Any disputes about reimbursement for medical expense need to be settled between the parents.
  - e) In the case of self-pay families, all payments are **DUE WHEN PATIENT IS SEEN.**
  - f) If the account is not resolved in a timely manner, the authorizing parent’s information will be submitted to our collection agency.
  
- Other situations that are not in the best interest of your child and will not be tolerated:
  - a) One parent making appointments and the other one cancelling them.
  - b) A parent who asks us to write or say negative things about the other parent.
  - c) If the natural parents cannot agree to consent to treatment and ZÖe Pediatrics is brought into a domestic situation, both natural parents will receive a letter stating we will not provide further (non-emergent) care to the child until the natural parents work it out amongst themselves and provide a letter signed by both natural parents indicating who can consent to treatment.
  - d) Any other behaviors which interfere with our ability to provide excellent medical care to all of our patients.

**Should the issues that come between parents become disruptive to our organization or there is non-compliance with this policy, we will immediately terminate the patient/physician relationship.**

I have read the Divorce, Separation, Foster Care, & Custody Agreements policy of ZÖe Pediatrics and I understand and agree to this policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient/Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to patient

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