

Case #3

Seven-year-old Kenny is the only child of Martin and Sheila, who were married for ten years and have been separated for 8 months. Kenny has always been highly active and has occasionally struggled to pay attention in class and to complete his homework. Two prior teachers raised concern that he might have ADHD, but neither parent wanted to consider medication for him.

His behavior problems at school have recently escalated, as the parents were recently told that he had 30 homework assignments missing and he has been involved in a fight at school resulting in a two-day suspension. He is also struggling with peer relationships. Sheila and Martin currently have a 2-2-5-5 parenting plan, which Sheila believes is making it more difficult to manage Kenny's behavior. During a brief "recheck" appointment after Kenny had an ear infection, Sheila mentioned the teacher's concerns to Kenny's GP. The physician provided forms that were completed by Sheila and Kenny's teacher, assuming that Sheila would obtain Martin's input. She then initiated referrals to evaluate Kenny for possible ADHD. She and the teacher also suggested that Kenny needs consistency in his environment, which Sheila interpreted to mean that a joint parenting plan is not in Kenny's best interest and that she should have custody of Kenny all week and every other weekend. No one communicated with Martin. *Martin was furious when he learned of this, and instructed the physician not to prescribe anything to Kenny. He believes that Sheila just doesn't have the parenting skills to manage Kenny, and that she went to the doctor without telling him and deliberately sought this diagnosis so that she could seek sole custody of Kenny. He also spoke to the pediatrician, who did not tell him that Kenny's parenting plan should change. He views Sheila as "wildly overreacting" to Kenny's behavior, while she views him as being "in denial." Each is coming to court to stop the other's preferred treatment plan. Both professionals are overwhelmed.*

