

Assault in the City

The chief asks Dr. Johnson to conduct a competency to stand trial (CST) evaluation and a criminal responsibility evaluation, referred to as the mental state at the time of an offense (MSO), of the defendant. Dr. Johnson must report her findings to the court. She has already seen media publicity suggesting the prosecutor is going to play “hard ball” and wants to try the young man as an adult and seek the longest possible prison sentence.

The chief recommends a CST evaluation and an MSO evaluation so, as he says, “nothing will come back to bite them” after the trial. Although she finds the young man’s alleged behavior reprehensible, she feels confident she can conduct an objective evaluation.

She has interviewed the individual and understands his low intelligence quotient (IQ) and dysfunctional family background as mitigating factors. Although she does not wish to advocate for the defendant, she feels he may not be competent to go to trial. She prepares to conduct the CST and MSO evaluations. However, the day before the examination is scheduled, her fifteen-year-old daughter tells her the man was a “friend” on her computer social network. She recognized his face from the news and told her mother after her mother mentioned she was working on this case.

The daughter denies having ever met the man and states her page is set so “anyone can be my friend; it doesn’t mean I know them!” Dr. Johnson must now conduct the evaluations objectively, although she feels her daughter may have been threatened. She realizes this connection is insufficient to withdraw from the case.