

REAL FATHER

Advocating for Equal Parenting and Family Law Reform

Family Law Navigation Guide

Prepared by Real Father – real-father.com

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Why This Guide Matters

Family law can feel confusing and unfair. This guide will help you understand the process, prepare for court, and protect your rights as a parent.

Family Law Basics

- Custody = who makes decisions and where the child lives.
- Visitation (Parenting Time) = when the child spends time with each parent.
- Child Support = money to help raise the child.
- Every state has its own rules, but most judges use the “best interest of the child” standard.

Preparing for Court

- Keep Records: Save texts, emails, call logs, and notes about parenting.
- Documents Matter: Bring pay stubs, housing info, school records, and medical info.
- Stay Organized: Judges respect parents who are prepared and calm.

Custody & Parenting Time

- Courts look for stability, safety, and the child’s relationship with both parents.
- Joint custody = both parents share rights and duties.
- 50/50 parenting time is becoming more common, but you may need to push for it.

Your Rights & Responsibilities

- You have the right to be a parent if you are responsible and safe.
- Both parents should be equal under the law, regardless of gender.
- Responsibilities: supporting your child emotionally, financially, and physically.

Emergency & Protective Orders (EPOs/POs)

- A Protective Order can limit or stop your visitation temporarily.
- Sometimes they are necessary for safety — but sometimes they are misused.
- If you face an order: request a hearing quickly, provide evidence to challenge false claims, and ask for findings from child services or neutral investigations to be reviewed.

Mediation vs. Court

- Mediation: parents meet with a neutral person to make a plan.
- Usually faster, cheaper, and less stressful for kids.
- If mediation fails, you go to trial.

In the Courtroom

- Dress neatly, speak respectfully, and stay calm.
- Focus on your child's needs, not your anger at the other parent.
- Don't interrupt the judge.
- Judges respect parents who put children first.

After Orders Are Made

- Follow the court order — even if it feels unfair.
- Keep records of parenting time, expenses, and communication.
- If things change (new job, move, health issues), you can request a modification.
- If the other parent refuses to follow the order, you can file to enforce it.

Resources & Support

- Court websites: Each state's court system posts forms and instructions.
- Parenting classes: Free and low-cost courses (see Real Father's guide).
- Support groups: Fathers' rights groups, legal aid, nonprofits.

Final Thoughts

- Family law is tough, but you don't have to fight alone.
- Be prepared, stay calm, and stand firm for your child.
- Real Father is here to help push for fair laws and equal parenting rights.