



REAL FATHER

Advocating for Equal Parenting and Family Law Reform

Family Law Starter Pack

Prepared by Real Father – real-father.com

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Step-by-Step Roadmap of the Process

- Understand the stages: filing, service, temporary orders, hearings, trial.
- Follow a simple flowchart from start to finish.

Where to Get Free Help

- Legal Aid offices in each state.
- Self-help centers at courthouses (forms, clerks explaining basics).
- Pro bono attorney programs through state bar associations.
- Father support groups and nonprofits (like Real Father).

Court Basics 101

- Dress neatly and act respectfully in court.
- Address the judge as “Your Honor.”

- Learn how to file papers (e-filing or clerk's office).

Plain Language Custody Terms

- Legal custody = decision-making rights.
- Physical custody = where the child lives.
- Parenting plan = the visitation schedule.
- Temporary vs. final orders.

Rights Every Parent Should Know

- Right to be heard before orders are permanent.
- Right to request and present evidence.
- Right to legal representation (sometimes limited in family court).
- Constitutional protections: Due Process and Equal Protection.

Low-Cost or Free Alternatives

- Mediation programs (often free through courts).
- Online parenting courses that are free or low-cost (see our course guide).

Practical Survival Tips

- Keep a journal of parenting time.
- Save receipts for child-related expenses.
- Never miss hearings or deadlines.
- Stay polite and professional in communication.

Mental Health & Support

- Counseling and support groups for fathers.
- Stress management tips.
- Reminder: kids need dads who take care of themselves.