



## Custody Glossary of Legal Terms

**Conservatorship:** The legal term used in Texas for custody. A managing conservator is typically the custodial parent.

**Possession Order:** The legal schedule that dictates when each parent has time with the child.

**Reunification:** A process, often court-ordered, for restoring the relationship between a child and an absent parent.

**Best Interest Standard:** The guiding principle the court uses to determine what arrangement serves the child's overall well-being.

**Motion to Enforce:** A legal action filed when one parent is not complying with a court order.

**Civil Standby:** When law enforcement is present during a custody exchange to prevent conflict.

**Contempt of Court:** A finding by the court that someone has willfully violated a court order. Can result in fines or jail time.

**Modification:** A request to change an existing court order due to significant changes in circumstances.

**Temporary Orders:** Court orders issued to govern custody or support while a case is ongoing.

**Final Orders:** Permanent court orders issued at the conclusion of a case.

**Pro Se:** Representing oneself in court without an attorney.

**Guardian ad Litem:** A court-appointed advocate for the child's best interest in a legal proceeding.

**Supervised Visitation:** When parenting time must occur in the presence of an approved supervisor.

**Parenting Plan:** A written agreement or court order outlining custody and visitation arrangements.



**Service of Process:** The legal delivery of court documents to notify someone of a legal action.

**Petition:** The initial legal document filed with the court to start a case, such as for custody or modification.

**Respondent:** The person who must respond to the petition filed in court.

**Petitioner:** The person who initiates a legal case by filing a petition.

**Affidavit:** A written statement of facts sworn to be true, often submitted as evidence.

**Ex Parte:** A court hearing or motion where only one party is present, usually for emergency relief.

**Protective Order:** A court order issued to protect someone from harassment, abuse, or threats.

**Order to Show Cause:** A court order requiring someone to appear and explain why the court should not take a proposed action.

**Subpoena:** A legal document ordering someone to appear in court or produce documents.

**Continuance:** A request to postpone a court hearing to a later date.

**Jurisdiction:** The authority of a specific court to hear a particular case.

**Venue:** The specific location or county where a court case is heard.

**Family Code:** The body of law governing family matters such as custody, divorce, and child support.

**Mediation:** A process where a neutral third party helps parents reach an agreement outside of court.

**Litigation:** The process of resolving disputes through the court system.

**Case Number:** A unique identifier assigned to a court case for tracking and reference.

**Court Order:** A legally binding directive issued by a judge.