

CHILD CUSTODY IT'S COMPLICATED!

1. **Good Legal Advice is Critical.** Child custody is a complicated area of law. The first thing you should do is seek out an attorney, making decisions without objective legal advice can be a huge mistake.
2. **There are two ways to handle a disputed custody arrangement.** The first is an agreement between the parties, whether it's a visitation schedule or shared parenting. Clearly this option is the least stressful on the kids and the parties. The second option is to plead your case and let the judge decide what is in the best interest of the children. This can be costly and an emotional time, however, in some cases it's necessary.
3. **If you are unwed, the Mother holds all the cards!** Even if the father signed the birth certificate Ohio Statute, R.C. §3109.042 states that an unmarried mother is the "sole residential parent and legal custodian..."
4. **What does an unwed father do?** If you are unwed, you are considered a "putative father" and you must assert your parental rights and other responsibilities in the child (or children) via motion to the court. In addition to the motion there are other documents required by local rule and the Supreme Court of Ohio.
5. **What if I pay child support already?** Well, that's a start and it's helpful when pleading your case; however, if you were unwed (and the father), you still have to take the steps in #4 of this cheat sheet to assert your rights to visitation, medical records, school events etc.
6. **If I assert my rights to visitation will I pay child support?** Short answer; Yes. Child support in Ohio is set via a statutory calculation. However, it can be deviated up or down depending on circumstances.