

National Parents Organization Make Shared Parenting the Norm

Shared parenting is a solution that prominent and respected experts in child development have shown through research that children ardently desire; makes them happier; improves their schooling; decreases delinquency, gang violence and trouble with the law; decreases substance abuse and teen pregnancy; increases child support compliance; and diminishes parental conflict and domestic violence. In addition to multi-state efforts making headway in legislatures, including, among them California, Ohio, Georgia, Connecticut, Washington, and Kentucky. **86% of Massachusetts voters** endorsed shared parenting as recently as 2004.

The Problem for Our Children

The fact of the matter is that a vast and rapidly growing number of children are being raised in households where the mother and father no longer live together. The family court system is naturally adversarial, creating a disincentive for parents to mediate. It discourages parents from being parents, and ultimately harms children.

The Center for Disease Control, the Department of Justice, and the Bureau of the Census report: 30% of children who live apart from their fathers will account for 63% of teen suicides; 70% of juveniles in state operated institutions; 71% of high-school dropouts; 75% of children in chemical-abuse centers; 85% of rapists; 85% of youths in prison; 85% of children who exhibit behavioral disorders; and 90% of homeless and runaway children.

Children want both parents. Linda Nielsen, professor of Women's Studies at Wake Forest University in Illinois reports seventeen studies showing that children of divorce want shared parenting. There are currently no studies supporting findings which would indicate that children of divorce only want one parent to raise them.

Shared parenting after divorce is best for children. Decades of social science research clearly establishes that, except in rare cases, children are more likely to experience healthier socio-emotional-psychological development if both parents, following a separation or divorce, share in the day-to-day responsibilities of rearing the children.

That's why Dr. Michael Lamb, Head of the Section of Social and Emotional Development at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, of the National Institutes of Health, has written, "...Parenting plans that allow children to see their fathers every Wednesday evening and every other weekend clearly fail to recognize the adverse consequences of weeklong separations from noncustodial parents... Instead of promoting parenting plans that marginalize one of the parents, custody evaluators should promote continued involvement by both parents..."

Shared parenting is the only measure that reliably increases child support compliance. Researcher Sanford Braver of Arizona State University found that when shared parenting is awarded, child support compliance increased to 97%.

Sole custody is a societal issue. In stark contrast to NOW's traditional agenda, Karen DeCrow, the former president of the National Organization for Women says, "If there is a divorce in the family, I urge a presumption of joint custody. Shared parenting is not only fair to men and children; it is the best option for women. After observing women's rights and responsibilities for more than a quarter of a century of feminist activism, I conclude that shared parenting is great for women, giving time and opportunity for female parents to pursue education, training, jobs, careers, profession and leisure." "Most of us acknowledge that women can do everything that men can do. It is now time to acknowledge that men can do everything women can do."

Mission

National Parents Organization improves the lives of children and strengthens society by protecting every child's right to the love and care of both parents after separation or divorce. We seek better lives for children through family court reform that establishes equal rights and responsibilities for fathers and mothers.