

10 Steps Fathers Must Take to Make Sure They Are Equal Parents

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Going through any custody/visitation litigation, whether incident to divorce or not, can be very trying. For fathers who want to try and maintain equal time with their children, this process is ripe for mistakes. The following are steps that you can take right now to ensure that you do not end up an every-other-weekend father:

1 Plan

Proper planning prevents poor performance. As your case is getting started, it is important to decide what you want the outcome of the case to be and then plan backwards from there. If you want to have equal time with the children it is a good idea to not move across the state, if possible.

2 Stay in the Marital Home

If going through a divorce, if possible, stay in the marital home. The easiest way to have equal time with your children is to continue to live with them throughout this process.

3 If You Have to Move Out, Stay Close

If you have to move out of the marital home, stay as close as you can. Try to stay in the same school district or within a few miles. Being close to your children is an easy to make sure that visitation on not too onerous on them and that you are able to stay involved in their lives.

4 Be Careful Who You Move In With

If you have to move out of the martial home, or there is no marital home, be careful about who you are living with. When you are living with someone else during any sort of custody/visitation litigation, that person's background will become a part of the case.

5 Stay Involved, Or Get Involved

You must stay involved in your children's lives, even if the mother is trying to block that involvement. Make sure you are in contact with the children's doctors, their school, teachers, and any other activities they may be involved in. If the mother has tried to block your access, talk to the appropriate people, and make sure to sign up as a parent. You can't rely on the mother to tell you everything and you can't use her not telling you as an excuse to as to your lack of involvement. Find other avenues of sourcing information about your children's lives and stay involved.

Don't Accept a Visitation/Custody

6 Schedule That You Do Not Like

If there is no court order, you do not have to allow the mother to dictate everything. You have equal rights to your children; and as such, you have the right to have your children whenever you want, until a court order is put in place. If you have agreed to something you don't like, work on changing that.



7 Don't Get Your Children Involved

If your children are old enough, it is important to talk to them about what they want; But you do not want to put them in the middle of any disagreement. While this may be a nuanced difference, it is important to remember. You never want to say things to your children like, "Your mother is doing this to me" or "Your mother is the one keeping you away from me."

8 Don't Try to Spy on the Mother

Frequently, we will see guys trying to hire private investigators or use other resources to show that the mother is not acting correctly. This generally backfires, especially in situations where the father has left the home, left the children in the home with the mother, and is now trying to claim that the mother is a bad parent—the court will always use the reasoning of, if it was so bad, you should not have left your children there.

9 Be Careful What You Put In Writing

Anything that you put in writing can be printed off and used in litigation. So, if you say mean things about the mother, or to the mother directly, she can print that out, bring it into court, and then use it against you. However, if the mother is being unreasonable, you will want to make requests in writing so you can show her being uncooperative.



10 Don't Give Up

This process is hard and trying. You may feel like you are losing and want to just give up and let the judge decide. If you do that, the judge will be able to see that you gave up and will likely give you an amount of time with your children commensurate with your overall effort.

If you, or another father you know, is going through a custody/visitation issue whether incident to divorce or not, go through this checklist and make sure that you have everything on track. If you need help going through these items, contact the attorneys at Melone Hatley, P.C. who can help guide you this process and protect your family.