

PREPPING FOR CHILD CUSTODY



WHAT TO KNOW FOR YOUR CUSTODY HEARING

When a judge decides who should get custody of children, they focus on **the best interest of the child**. The judge will look at which parent can provide the best home and care. To win your custody case, you'll need to show the judge that it's best for your children to live with you. The judge will carefully look at how you parent and interact with your children every day. Just saying you are a good parent isn't enough—you'll need proof, like documents and statements from people who know you.

Keeping detailed records is really important in custody cases. You need to be ready to show the judge how much you have cared for your kids. Since so much is at stake, you should also keep track of any issues with your spouse that could affect the custody decision.

PROVING YOU ARE A GOOD PARENT

- Record activities with your children on a daily basis to help show that you are heavily involved in your children's life on a continuing basis. (Keep a calendar - print it to use as evidence).
- Attend all (or as many as you can) school activities, such as parent-teacher meetings, assemblies, school plays, and events. Try to interact with your child's teacher and office support staff in an ongoing manner. Keep record of all the activities that you attend.
- Be the parent who takes your child to the doctor and dentist. This will help support that you are a nurturing parent, plus provide witnesses that will testify that you are the parent who brought the children in most often.
- Foster your child's involvement in family activities and church. This will help prove that you are providing for your child's moral upbringing.
- Take your children on vacations and outings to show that you spend quality time with them. If possible, take pictures and keep mementos for extra documentation.
- Find witnesses who have observed you interact with your child over a long period of time to support that you are a good parent.
- This includes relatives, teachers, doctors, child-care workers, neighbors, and friends.
- Ask witnesses if they would be willing to attend the hearing and testify for permanent hearings and modifications.
- Provide your child with a clean, safe environment. Take pictures of your home, your child's bedroom, your yard, and items they may play with (such as bikes, scooters, swing sets, computers, video game systems, etc.).
- Create a custody calendar - documenting when you and the other parent have time with the child.
- Keep a copy of all texts, emails, and Facebook (or other social networking) posts of the other parent. Write down comments the other parent makes in a journal to preserve for evidence.
- Gather anything else you may think is helpful, but not irrelevant or overburdensome.
- Provide all of the above to your attorney at least three weeks before the scheduled date for your hearing.