



Center for Parental Responsibility

Problem: Fatherlessness

The problem has been well documented for decades:

- **School Drop-outs.** Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school. 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. (Sources: US Dept. of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics. Survey on Child Health. Washington, DC, 1993. Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, quoting from a recent study by Men Against Domestic Violence).

- **Adolescent Substance Abuse.** Fatherless children are at a dramatically greater risk of drug and alcohol abuse. 75% of all adolescents in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes. (Source: US Dept. of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics. Survey on Child Health. Washington, DC, 1993).

- **Teen Pregnancy.** Children in single-parent families are more likely to get pregnant as teenagers than their peers who grow up with two parents. (Source: US Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics. "National Health Interview Survey." Hyattsville, MD, 1988).

- **Teen Suicide & Runaways.** Three out of four teenage suicides (75%) occur in households where a parent has been absent. 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes. (Sources: Elstain, Jean Bethke, "Family Matters: The Plight of America's Children." The Christian Century, July 1993. Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, quoting from a recent study by Men Against Domestic Violence).

Yet Family Law & Court Practice Has Not Changed:

- In 2002, women received physical placement in 84.4% of the cases and men 15.6%. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, released February 2005).

- About 85% of custodial parents are mothers. (Source: Journal of Family Psychology. 2003, Vol. 17, No. 2, 206-219).

The majority of fatherlessness is caused NOT as much by fathers who willfully abandon their children, as it is by current family law practices that arbitrarily remove one fit loving parent (usually the father who would otherwise be as equally involved as possible), artificially labels them a non-custodial parent, and needlessly restricts access.

Social Science Research and Legal Authority Confirm: Joint Physical Custody is Better For Children

SUPPORT THE SOLUTION

Best Interest of Children & Equality - An Effective Legal Starting Point



Joint Physical Custody and Equal Shared Parenting

Current Law in Minnesota (Year 2011):

- ✓ There is a presumption of **joint legal custody**.
Joint legal custody means that parents are allowed to share in decision making for medical, education, and religious decisions and access to those records.
- ✓ There is no presumption of **joint physical custody**.
Joint physical custody means two parents share responsibility for residence and care of their child(ren).
- ✓ There is a presumption of **unequal parenting** with a presumption of 25% **parenting time (minimum)** for one parent and 75% time for the other parent.
The child(ren) is restricted access to one fit loving parent often without just cause. The limited parenting time is not enforced when the other parent obstructs it.
- ✓ When parents are no longer together, parenting time can be effectively outlined in detailed **parenting plans**, which reduces conflict and establishes stability and consistency for parents and children.

Minnesota Citizens Believe in Equality: Minnesota citizens believe their government should allow a rebuttable presumption of joint physical custody and equal shared parenting, as a starting point. A "presumption" is not a mandate. An equal playing field creates a legal environment and sends a social message that both parents are equally important and both parents are equally responsible. It also establishes an equitable baseline for negotiating a customized win-win agreement between the parents that will be in the best interest of children. Let's celebrate the diversity of each parent and both tolerate and protect a child's right to both parents.

Minnesota Citizens Want the Best For Children: Minnesota citizens believe children need and deserve both parents in their lives. There will always be outliers, so exceptions to JPC/ESP are built-in to protect children.

Children require a champion to fight on their behalf. When children look in the mirror, they see half their mom, and half their dad. When one parent is ripped from their life, that child is ripped apart inside. When it's done in family court, without just cause, children and parents lose confidence in the judiciary and lose respect for other authority figures, including their government, which was designed to protect them.

Most parents will do anything for their children. When a fit parent faces a custody battle in family court, the impending doom and fear of losing your kids due to the current out-dated and lop-sided "winner-take-all" custody model, exacerbates conflict. The roles of individual parents have changed as gender roles have expanded, but family law has not kept up with the times.

The U.S. Supreme Court has never hesitated to repeat that the parent-child relationship is a fundamental right protected by the U.S. Constitution, prohibiting government from unwarranted intrusion, allowing intervention only with strict scrutiny and the highest standards of evidence.