



Legitimation in Georgia

An Online Co-parenting Class for Fathers



A Handbook and Guide for Legitimizing Fathers



Introduction

The Mediation Center has three goals for all participants of the “Legitimation in Georgia: Transitional Parenting” seminar. First, we hope to help educate fathers, young and old, about the legitimation process in Georgia. Indeed, it is a complicated law. To summarize, statute **O.C.G.A. §19-7-22** says that a biological father must file a petition in Superior court in order to establish rights to a child. That’s to say, *even* if you pay child support and *even* if your name is on the birth certificate, if you were never married to the mother of your child - you have no rights as a father. Our hope is to educate you in regards to the legitimation process.

Second, litigation often promotes conflict between parents. If you think about it, even your case name is or will be styled in such a way that says conflict; *Father Vs. Mother*. Continuous conflict has a negative impact on a child. Our goal is to help fathers co-parent children effectively in two different households. To accomplish this goal, we will be reviewing constructive communication techniques, conflict resolution skills, and how to develop an appropriate parenting plan. A parenting plan which keeps both parents involved.

Finally, in today’s society, fathers often have a bad reputation. We’ve all heard the term “deadbeat dad.” Our message to you is that fathers play an important role in the lives of their children. Children look to both parents for guidance and security; unconditional love and support; model of behavior and adulthood. The courts require all individuals with children to take the transitional parenting seminar. This particular seminar differs from others, in that the primary focus is on the positive approach to fatherhood. Why you matter as a father and why you need to be involved in the lives of your children. There are, of course, exceptions to these goals, which we will discuss during the section on domestic violence. Otherwise, today’s focus is about you (as a father and a co-parent) and your children.

Content

[A Virtual Co-parenting Class for Fathers](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Content](#)

[Legitimation](#)

[Single Parenting](#)

[Fatherhood](#)

[Struggles of a Single Parent](#)

[High Conflict Relationships and](#)

[How They Affect Children](#)

[Developmental Stages of Children](#)

[Communication](#)

[Parenting Plan](#)

[Moving On](#)

[Domestic Violence](#)

[Role Play Scenarios](#)

[Community Resources](#)

Legitimation

TITLE 19. DOMESTIC RELATIONS

CHAPTER 7. PARENT AND CHILD RELATIONSHIP GENERALLY

ARTICLE 2. LEGITIMACY

O.C.G.A. § 19-7-22 (2016)

§ 19-7-22. Petition for legitimation of child; requirement that mother be named as a party; court order; effect; claims for custody or visitation; third-party action for legitimation in response to petition to establish paternity

(a) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) "Biological father" means the male who impregnated the biological mother resulting in the birth of a child.

(2) "Legal father" means a male who has not surrendered or had terminated his rights to a child and who:

(A) Has legally adopted such child;

(B) Was married to the biological mother of such child at the time such child was born or within the usual period of gestation, unless paternity was disproved by a final order pursuant to Article 3 of this chapter;

(C) Married the legal mother of such child after such child was born and recognized such child as his own, unless paternity was disproved by a final order pursuant to Article 3 of this chapter; or

(D) Has legitimated such child pursuant to this Code section.

(b) The biological father of a child born out of wedlock may render his relationship with the child legitimate by petitioning the superior court of the county of the residence of the child's mother or other party having legal custody or guardianship of the child; provided, however, that if the mother or other party having legal custody or guardianship of the child resides outside this state or cannot, after due diligence, be found within this state, the petition may be filed in the county of the biological father's residence or the county of the child's residence. If a petition for the adoption of the child is pending, the biological father shall file the petition for legitimation in the county in which the adoption petition is filed.

(c) A legitimation petition shall set forth the name, age, and sex of the child, the name of the mother, and, if the biological father desires the name of the child to be changed, the new name. If the mother is alive, she shall be named as a party and shall be served and provided an opportunity to be heard as in other civil actions under Chapter 11 of Title 9, the "Georgia Civil Practice Act." If there is a legal father who is not the biological father, he shall be named as a party by the petitioner and shall be served and provided an opportunity to be heard as in other civil actions under Chapter 11 of Title 9, the "Georgia Civil Practice Act."

(d) (1) Upon the presentation and filing of a legitimation petition, and after a hearing for which notice was provided to all interested parties, the court may issue an order declaring the biological father's relationship with the child to be legitimate, provided that such order is in the best interests of the child. If such order is issued, the biological father and child shall be capable of inheriting from each other in the same manner as if born in lawful wedlock. Such order shall specify the name by which the child shall be known.

(2) (A) If the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that the father caused his child to be conceived as a result of having non consensual sexual intercourse with the mother of his child or when the mother is less than ten years of age, or an offense which consists of the same or similar elements under federal law or the laws of another state or territory of the United States, it shall create a presumption against legitimation.

(B) Notwithstanding Code Section 53-2-3, if the court denies a legitimation petition under this paragraph, the child shall be capable of inheriting from or through his or her father. Notwithstanding Code Section 53-2-4, if the court denies a legitimation petition under this paragraph, the father shall not be capable of inheriting from or through his child.

(C) If there is a pending criminal proceeding in connection with an allegation made pursuant to subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the court shall stay discovery in the legitimation action until the completion of such criminal proceeding.

(e) A legitimation petition may be filed, pursuant to Code Section 15-11-11, in the juvenile court of the county in which a dependency proceeding regarding the child is pending; provided, however, that if either parent has demanded a jury trial as to child support, that issue of the case shall be transferred to superior court for a jury trial. Such petition shall contain the same information and require the same service and opportunity to be heard as set forth in subsection (c) of this Code section. After a hearing, the juvenile court may issue the same orders as set forth in subsection (d) of this Code section.

(f) A superior court shall, after notice and hearing, enter an order establishing the obligation to support a child as provided under Code Section 19-6-15.

(g) A legitimation petition may also include claims for visitation, parenting time, or custody. If such claims are raised in the legitimation action, the court may order, in addition to legitimation, visitation, parenting time, or custody based on the best interests of the child standard. In a case involving allegations of family violence, the provisions of paragraph (4) of subsection (a) of Code Section 19-9-3 shall also apply.

(h) In any petition to establish paternity pursuant to paragraph (4) of subsection (a) of Code Section 19-7-43, the alleged biological father's response may assert a third-party action for the legitimation of the child born out of wedlock if the alleged biological father is, in fact, the biological father. Upon the determination of paternity or if a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity has been made and has not been rescinded pursuant to Code Section 19-7-46.1, the court or trier of fact as a matter of law and pursuant to the provisions of Code Section 19-7-51 may enter an order or decree legitimating a child born out of wedlock, provided that such is in the best interests of the child. In determining the best interests of the child, the court should ensure that the petitioning alleged biological father is, in fact, the biological father and may order the mother, the alleged biological father, and the child to submit to genetic testing in accordance with Code Section 19-7-45. Whenever a petition to establish the paternity of a child is brought by the Department of Human Services, issues of name change, visitation, and custody shall not be determined by the court until such time as a separate petition is filed by one of the parents or by the legal guardian of the child, in accordance with Code Section 19-11-8; if the petition to establish paternity is brought by a party other than the Department of Human Services or if the alleged biological father seeks legitimation, the

court may determine issues of name change, visitation, and custody in accordance with subsections (c) and (g) of this Code section. Custody of the child shall remain in the mother unless or until a court order is entered addressing the issue of custody.

HISTORY: Orig. Code 1863, § 1738; Code 1868, § 1778; Code 1873, § 1787; Code 1882, § 1787; Civil Code 1895, § 2494; Civil Code 1910, § 3013; Code 1933, § 74-103; Ga. L. 1985, p. 279, § 2; Ga. L. 1988, p. 1720, § 5; Ga. L. 1989, p. 441, § 1; Ga. L. 1997, p. 1613, § 14; Ga. L. 1997, p. 1681, § 5; Ga. L. 2000, p. 20, § 10; Ga. L. 2005, p. 1491, § 1/SB 53; Ga. L. 2007, p. 554, § 6/HB 369; Ga. L. 2009, p. 453, § 2-2/HB 228; Ga. L. 2013, p. 294, § 4-24/HB 242; Ga. L. 2016, p. 219, § 2/SB 331; Ga. L. 2016, p. 304, § 3/SB 64.

History

- Foundation of modern laws are built and rebuilt from previous laws
- Under the common law of England, a child was punished for their parents having, said child, out of wedlock
- Legitimation has always been determined through a higher court
- Starting in 1968, U.S. Supreme Court ruled on cases, which removed the legal discrimination against illegitimate children:
- Levy vs Louisiana (1968)
- Gomez vs Perez (1973)
- In 1993, the Omnibus Reconciliation Act
- In 2016, O.C.G.A. § 19-7-21.1 which previously allowed for voluntary acknowledgments of legitimation was repealed, which means the only method to legitimating a child born out of wedlock is by pursuing legal action in court



Savannah Office

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5105 Paulsen Street, Suite 125-D
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(912) 354-6686 ext. 214
Email: frc@mediationsavannah.com
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Effingham County Office

United Way Building
711 Zitterour Drive
Rincon, GA 31326

Office Hours: Mondays, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Offering Forms, Education & Information

Divorce	Adult Name Change
Legitimation	Answers
Contempt	Modification

The Family Law Resource Center (FLRC) is not a law office and therefore cannot answer legal questions or provide legal advice. Our program and team offer education and paperwork support for legitimation actions. All services are provided virtually. Individuals that need help completing or reviewing paperwork in person are asked to contact the FLRC team. To make a request, please send an email to frc@mediationsavannah.com

Single Parenting

A single father is one that is not married, living alone, cohabitating with someone or a widower

Facts about Single-fathers

- In 2011, 2.6 million single-father households in the United States
- Single fathers generally have higher incomes and less likely to live in poverty (24% of men versus 42% of women)
- 19% of single-fathers have a high school diploma
- 17% have a high school diploma
- 15% of single-parent households are headed by single-fathers (In 1960 less than 1% of single-parent households were headed by single fathers)
- Important to understand, the increase in single-father homes is a result of an increase in nonmarital births and changes in our legal system

Effects of High Conflict Relationships on Children

- Excessive worrying and sadness
- Anger
- Resentment
- Oppositional behavior
- Loyalty conflict
- Parental estrangement (child's rejection of one parent)
- Impaired social relationships
- Trouble with maintaining relationships as adults



As a parent, going through a divorce, separation, or high conflict relationship is stressful for everyone. You cannot help your children unless you can help yourself. Create a list of goals you would like to accomplish, either by yourself or with friends and family. Goal setting puts the focus on your wellbeing and helps individuals stay focus on specific tasks. This relieves stress and anxiety; redirects anger; and improves depression. This is also a great technique to use with children going through a difficult time. *Let this be a list of goals you would like to accomplish.* Model this activity with your children and turn it into fun activities. Try it!

GOALS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

The Grief Process

Recognizing the Separation as Loss	Coping Skill for Parents
Your Experience	What You Can Do
Shock and Denial	
Disbelief	Talk with family and friends

Doesn't seem real	Address your fears
Detached or numb	
Anger and Jealousy	
Blames others	Take responsibility for self
Blow-ups	Recognize feelings
Focus on revenge	Redirect thoughts/feelings
Become a victim	Take charge of choices
Bargaining	
"What if's", "If you would only..."	Face reality
I should have	Begin to think about your future
I don't understand	Anchor self
Depression and Sadness	
Tearful, cry frequently	Acknowledge grief
Feeling all alone	Seek family/friends
Hopelessness	Reach for help/counseling
Fear and worry	Share your feelings

Acceptance	
A period of detachment from co-parent	Focus on future
Focus on independence	Working on goals
Focus on children's needs	Forgiveness
	Letting go

Fatherhood

Strengths Fathers May Possess

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- Source of guidance for children
- Model of appropriate coping skills
- Source of inspiration
- Additional source of devotion and support for children
- Provide empowerment for children and their endeavors
- Dependant upon and healthy co-parenting relationship with the mother of the child

As you can see, fathers have many roles. Strengths are individualized mechanisms to achieve goals and plan for the future. As a source of guidance and empowerment for children - fathers use their strengths to pass along talents, knowledge, culture, and morals to help mold their children into healthy adults. What strengths do you possess? What values, morals, or traditions do you hope to pass along to your children?

Emotional Support for Children

- Allow children to express emotions openly, without criticism
- Acknowledge their emotions, display empathy
- Accept responsibility for actions and talk about your role in helping
- Model appropriate coping skills in regards to anger, sadness, guilt
- Communication is key
- Discuss moving on/moving forward



Ten Emotionally Intelligent Parenting Practices for Fathers

As a father, it is very important that you provide emotional support for your child. Emotions, however, are always a tough subject for men and are often avoided. The following is a list of ten emotionally intelligent parenting practices for fathers to make your job easier.

1. Find time, make time
2. Create one on one time with your child
3. Establish new family rituals and traditions
4. Express appreciation and gratitude
5. Convey hope and healing
6. Listen beyond words and respond with empathy
7. Maintain household structure and routines
8. Point out resilience role models
9. Encourage spiritual experiences
10. Engage in a community activity

Needs of a Child

Children have a variety of different needs. Based on age, maturity level, and parental involvement - the needs of a child may differ. For the most part, all children need the following from their fathers:

- Protection (Protection from parental conflict)
- Support network (Family, friends, school, faith, community)
- Healthy relationships (Between parents and children)
- Problem solving skills (Preventative interventions)
- Effective coping skills (Learning how to handle emotions)
- Engagement (Activities with family, friends, community)
- Hope, positive outlook (Supportive relationships and outward thinking)

Visit the Mental Health America's website at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/every-child-needs> to learn more about the needs of a child and how to positively influence their mental and physical health.

What Kind of Father Do You Hope To Be?

Let us reiterate, Fathers play an important role in the lives of their children. Frankly, today we are asking you to think about your future and your child's future. This is not easy. To help you, think about your legacy as a father. What values and traditions do you hope to pass along to your children? Create a plan to help yourself accomplish activities, which reinforce your values.

Struggles of a Single Parent

Misconceptions about Co-parenting

Misconceptions	Truth
It works only when parents actively cooperate	You do not have to see or interact with your ex very much in order to co-parent your children
It's bad for kids	Critics claim that co-parenting undermines kids' sense of security and stability. However, preventing either parent from contact with their children is more disruptive to a child's wellbeing
It promotes conflict between parents	Contrary to popular belief, proper co-parenting and communication skills actually increase when both parents are involved in their children's lives
It fuels children's hopes for reconciliation	In some cases, yes. Usually, though, spending time with both parent and watching them move on with their lives makes it easier for children to let go of the fantasy that Mom and Dad will get back together.

Problems Children May Face as Adults

These problems are the result of continuous conflict. It's important to realize that these results can be changed with effective co-parenting.

- Fear of the future
- Fear of going through separation again
- Fear of commitment



- People often believe children in separated families have different values towards marriage, e.g., that it's not permanent
- Children often believed to be the cause of their parents' separation
- Teens are twice as likely to drop out of high school
- Twice as likely to be exposed to drugs and alcohol as teens, resulting in dependency as adults

High Conflict Relationships and How They Affect Children

Children's Bill of Rights

Parents are concerned about their own rights when they are separating. They often go to court expecting to gain their rights. Adults often confuse their rights with their children's rights. The Children of Divorce® program encourages each parent to develop and support your child's rights after a separation. Make a commitment with yourself to live by the "Children's Bill of Rights." Your children will be significantly healthier and will have the opportunity to make the best adjustment possible.

I have the right ...

- To have my parents talk to me about the separation, without blaming the other parent for causing it.
- To know the truth about the separation, and be given simple explanations.
- To be protected from parental warfare.
- To receive love, guidance, patience, understanding and limits.
- To be free from having to choose one parent over the other.
- To be free from having to be the parent or taking over the adults' responsibility.
- To be free to have all my feelings without being put down or shamed.
- To develop and maintain independent relationships with each of my parents.
- To have a physically and emotionally safe environment.
- To maintain relationships with my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

- To be financially supported by my parents regardless of how much time I spend with either parent.
- To be reassured that the separation is not my fault.
- To avoid being told all the painful details of legal proceedings
- To avoid being made to feel guilty for loving both of my parents and wanting to spend time with each of them.
- To avoid being asked to make custody and visitation decisions.
- To expect that both of my parents will follow through with the parenting plan and keep their promises for time with me.
- To be free to concentrate on my school work, my friends, and my activities that help me to learn and grow.
- To not be asked to keep secrets from my other parent.

What Puts Children at Risk for Problems



- Disruption to their developmental tasks
- The diminished role of parenting
- The experience of rejection by one or both parents
- Failure to establish long lasting relationships as adults
- Risk for never resolving trauma

If your child is struggling because of the separation, or if you notice an increase in anger, depression or behavioral problems in school, please seek outside help. Your child may depend on it. For a list of list of resources, please ask a staff member or see the resource section in the back of this booklet.

How Am I Doing?

Check Yourself for the Level of Conflict or Cooperation

Most parents are interested in doing what is best for their children. Rate yourself 1-5. Circle the number that best describes how you feel today. One means that the statement is not true any of the time; five means it is true all of the time.

1 2 3 4 5

My child's relationship with me is good.

1 2 3 4 5

My child's relationship with my co-parent is good.

1 2 3 4 5

I make attempts to see that my co-parent has access to the children, free of open conflict and turmoil.

1 2 3 4 5

I have been able to continue, or improve, in my parenting role. I am able to give my children the attention they need and I'm able to discipline them in appropriate ways.

1 2 3 4 5

I have made attempts to see that my children can continue relationships with other family members (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5

My conversations with my co-parent focus on our child's best interest. I attempt to be courteous, honest and positive.

1 2 3 4 5

My conversations with my co-parent about money are tactful, honest and do not include threats that tie money to spending time with the children.

1 2 3 4 5

I am working through many of the changes and challenges that have come about since the separation.

I share important information about our children with my co-parent.

The “Still Face Experiment” is one of the most replicated social experiments. Go to youtube.com and type in “Still Face Experiment” to see additional examples. Note how the children all react. How can we apply the Still Face Experiment to what we already know about continuous conflict and how it affects children?

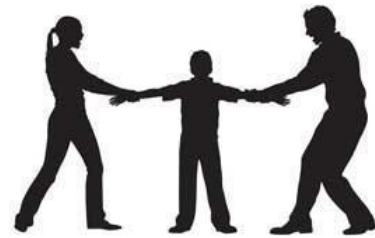
Helping Kids with Stress

Stressors for Children	How Parents Can Help
Parental conflict	Develop skills for conflict management. Stay awake and aware of how kids are hurt.
Divided loyalties	Encourage relationships with other parent. Acknowledge children’s need to be with and love other parent.
Feeling caught in the middle	Do not use kids as messengers, spies, or pawns. Don’t ask kids to choose.
Too many big changes too soon	Minimize the number of changes, school, home, community. Give time for adjustment.
Worry about their parents	Adults should seek support and guidance from other adults. Give time for adjustment.
Feeling responsible	Communication and reassurance, “It’s not your fault”. “You didn’t cause it, nor can you do anything to fix it.”
Loss of contact with one or both parents	Have a parenting plan. Honor your commitment. “Be there... be on time.”
Transitions between homes	Have kids ready. Allow kids to freely take

	toys, clothes, transition objects. Have plans for yourself.
New relationships/parental dating/remarried families	Separate your own needs from your kids needs. Be aware that dating causes stress for kids. Have empathy for kids. Give more time for kids to grieve.

What Do We Mean by High Conflict?

- A lot of yelling and arguing
- Power imbalance
- Simple communication tasks feel like war
- Abuse, whether verbal or physical, is long-term and recurring
- Using children as pawns
- Having a vengeful attitude in regards to the co-parent



Think about ways you have dealt with conflict in the past, good or bad, and write them in the boxes below on the left. Next, think of ways you can better handle these situations in the future. Make a plan on how you would handle it better the next time around. Put your responses on the left. Remember to look back through this booklet and apply what you've learned and what you've discovered about yourself in the future.

Past Attempts/Coping Skills for Disputes	Changes/Coping Skills to Use

Developmental Stages of Children

Needs of Children (Ages 0-18)

Children are affected by separation differently based on their age and temperament. Most parents have made some accurate observations about their children’s personalities and how they adjust to change. All children have important emotional steps they must complete in order to grow into happy, healthy adults. Separation, or divorce, like any trauma, has the potential for creating problems for a child, because it brings with it loss and change.

Your jobs as a parents will be to minimize the changes they must make, and maximize the continued contact with both parents.

Children of all ages need:

- Consistency, routine, predictability
- Nurturing, kind words, support
- Encouragement to try new things
- Patience with mistakes
- Clear, straightforward communication
- To belong to a family
- To be free of parental conflict

Rather than the idea of a primary parent, research indicates that children can have more than one primary caretaker. Primary is the term usually used to describe the

person(s) that care for the child on a day-to-day basis, that is, to prepare his meals, put them to bed, play with them, etc. Your child's needs will be different if he has one, two or more primary caretakers. Children who have more than primary caretaker, mom, dad, grandparent or day care worker, will probably be more accustomed to moving back and forth than the child who has stayed at home with one parent. If he/she is equally attached to both parents, that is, both have been equally involved in his day-to-day care, he has two primary parents. Parenting plans should reflect these situations.

Infants and Toddler (Age 0-3)

During the first three years children will develop the foundations for trust and relationships. During their first year will develop a primary attachment which is necessary for trust to form. Trust is essential for healthy relationships. Toward the end of the first year, language is beginning to develop and the personality is forming. The toddler years will bring a new sense of independence, making them stubborn and demanding. These are important for your child's development. How you respond to the temper outburst will determine how she/he forms future relationships. By age three, emotions should settle down and language will be more developed.

Consider the following for parenting plans:

- Children up to 18 months must have security and stability in their relationships.
- Ability to adjust to separation from one parent to be with the other can be well tolerated provided both parents have been equally involved in primary caregiver tasks. If not, we recommend that separation from the primary caregiver be slowly incorporated into the parenting plan. An example of slow incorporation might be to plan frequent, short visits with no overnight stays for six months to a year until the child can feel comfortable and secure.
- Children who are easygoing will have an easier time adjusting to the change of moving from one house to the other. You will both need to support each other and develop similar routines for your child.
- If your child is not easy going and does not handle change well, your plan should include a slow transition into the change shared parenting.
- When you are in conflict with the other parent, you child will experience a loss of security and predictability in his environment. Maintaining this is usually accomplished by initially creating a post-separation parenting plan schedule that closely resembles the pre-separation parenting schedule.

Preschooler (Ages 4-5)

At this age, children become more proficient in their language skills, and begin to understand relationships and feelings. They are curious and question everything. Learning is constant as they develop their thinking skills and friendships. If they have had nurturing parenting and have been able to develop the necessary trust, they will have good self-esteem and confidence as they move into kindergarten.

Children at this age who are afraid of losing a parent, are at risk for regression or developmental delays. These often revolve around toileting, eating, sleeping, including nightmares, and some children show temporary personality changes such as becoming aggressive, withdrawn, irritable, and show signs of low self-esteem. The changes that come with a separation can cause some children who are particularly afraid of the unknown territory of separation, to blame themselves, try to be “perfect,” or try to take care of their parents in a childlike effort to stabilize their world. Most of these are normal reactions but if your child continues to exhibit these behaviors for longer than a year, it may be an indication of more serious problems.

Consider the following for parenting plans:

- Routine, predictability, structure and consistent discipline in each home.
- Children over the age of three can usually tolerate overnights with both parents.
- This age group adjusts better to larger blocks of time with each parent so they can “settle in”. They will react to frequent transitions.
- Many children in this age group still need a primary home, especially if there was one primary caregiver before the separation. Work out a plan for the non-custodian parent to become more involved so that over time, the child will feel equally comfortable at both homes. Deciding factors will be; is the child under stress, are you and your co-parent free of conflict, are both of you able to consistently love and discipline the child
- Plan to share information about medical, social, educational, eating and sleeping with the other parent. Develop the habit of keeping each other thoroughly informed.
- If either parent is having some parenting difficulties, try to help by sitting down and resolving them as a team. Be sure to avoid criticism, sarcasm and blaming as you attempt to do this.

School Age Children (6-12)

This is a very social age. Children in this group are busy making friends, learning new skills, and exploring a bigger social world than the previous age group. They are eager to be involved in sports, dance, art music and academics. Their self-esteem has a chance to grow as they learn and excel. If their home-life is chaotic and uncertain, these

children are at risk for “giving up” academically, and can begin a pattern of poor school performance, then failing to try any longer. This age group focuses on fairness and they often have a hard time reasoning out the fairness in a separation. This is the age when your child will naturally begin to develop different relationships with both parents, preferring to do some things with Dad, and others with Mom.

Children at the younger end of this group may get sad, tearful, taking the loss of the family unit hard. Older children may get angry and take “sides”, choosing one parent over the other. This is especially true if they observe or are in the middle of parental conflict. One of the best things you can do for kids at this age, is to show a united front over parenting and disciplinary matters, and refrain from any thought, word or deed that shows anything but respect for your coparent. A child caught up in the angry feelings of one parent towards the other is at risk for losing their self-image if they become confused and overwhelmed. They will tend to take on adult responsibilities, become the peacemaker, and have loyalty conflicts if they get conflicting messages from their parents. A conflicting message is, “I don’t know why your father didn’t show up for your game. He must have had something better to do.” Then hearing from the other parent, “I called your mother four times trying to get the time and place for you game. She never called me back.” These particularly place a child at risk for severe symptoms such as tantrums, failing in school, withdrawal, aggression, sleep problems and depression.

Because this is the age that fairness is so important, they will attempt to get an explanation for the separation that “makes sense” to them, and stick to it even though it is probably not as accurate as it could be. Often this results in blaming one parent for the breakup of the family. Both parents need to be involved in making certain that this does not happen. The good feeling at being named the “good guy” is not worth the heartache and long-term problems your children will suffer if they are allowed to believe this.

Consider the following for parenting plans:

- Think about consistent and structured co-parenting at this age group. Because of the busy social and extracurricular activities most children are involved in, it will take both of you to see that they are able to be involved in as much as you feel is wise. They need to know where they will be, who is going to see that they get to their activities, and to have both of you present at their games, lessons, etc.
- The most effective parenting plans include anywhere from 35-50% of their time spent with each parent. This assumes you do not live a great distance from each other. As your child increases his social skills, he needs to be exposed to both

male and female role models. He will be watching your interaction with each other to learn how this is done, and how to resolve conflict.

Adolescents (13-18)

Adolescents tend to be moody and feel pressured by the normal tasks that confront them. They are becoming more independent, developing their life long values, standards of behavior and morals which will be the foundation of their identity. While trying to accomplish this, they become self-centered, rebellious, negative, and constantly questioning of other's values, behavior and thought processes. If adolescents are caught up in the chaos of separation, they will not be able to spend the necessary time on developing their own identity and may grow up emotionally immature, and never have a solid sense of who they are. Their major task is to separate from the family and develop emotional and physical independence.

Adolescence is the hardest of all the developmental stages. Under normal circumstances, teens naturally want to be with their friends, and may want little or nothing to do with their parents. It is important that you both realize this and be careful to include them in planning time with each parent. They will want what is most convenient for them (not you) and most teens will be very busy with school, after school activities, and maybe even a part-time job. It is not unusual for teens to use their home as a stopping off place for eating, showering, sleeping and little else. Cozy nights in front of the fireplace playing Monopoly will be few and far between.

Constant adjustment, loss of the family security and routine may place teens at risk for depression, delinquency, suicide, promiscuity or substance abuse. Teens naturally experiment with adult activities, and it is easy for a sad, insecure teen with little or no strong guidance or involvement by his parents to get off track. Teens probably need as much "babysitting" as a toddler, but, of course, in a more inclusive way.

Consider the following for parenting plans:

- Your adolescent will want a say in the parenting plan. He may prefer more time at one home than another, usually this is to avoid confusion for his friends, and maximize convenience for himself. It is important that you have the same rules for curfews, telephone time, acceptable activities and friends so that he does not choose one household over the other because there are fewer rules, and he can easily get away with stuff.

- Allowing a teen to develop a healthy separation from the family is good, but there needs to be some parental expectations that are met even if they meet with opposition. These might be spending at least one night a week with each parent, alone, so you can keep up on his activities, friends, and developing identity.
- Teens think they are ready to manage their own lives long before most of them really are. They need guidance, firm rules and consistent consequences for breaking the rules. It is easy for separating d parents, who may also be restructuring their own lives, to let these things slide. When there are two households, teens can become very manipulative if parents don't talk openly and often.
- You must provide a unified front to your teens about discipline, rules, etc. If they are grounded, they need not be able to get out of that by going to the other parent's house. Work together to see that your teen follows the rules.
- You may have more than one child and parenting plans may differ depending on their ages and needs. Make sure that they all get to spend some time together at both parent's homes.

Communication

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

We have outlined what we think are the best parenting plans for children at each age. You may have noticed that it assumes both of you will remain in close proximity to each other. To be quite frank, this is the best arrangement for your children as they are in danger of feeling alienated from a parent who moves far away. The likelihood of continuing with maximum time spent with that parent may diminish as life gets in the way of long driving times to pick up and deliver the child from one home to the other. Please seriously consider, for your child's sake, remaining within a 15-20 minute drive of the other parent. This will ensure that you can remain involved in all activities, school conferences or just be available to spend after school or evening time on the spur of the moment.

If, for one reason or another this is not possible, sit down and craft a realistic parenting plan that lets the children know you care about them. Frequent phone calls, longer periods of time spent together, calls to teachers about their progress, are a few ways to make that happen. It is important not to drift out of your child's life while you are involved in creating your own new life, and it is important not to make promises you cannot keep.

A Word About Conflict

Children who are in the middle of parental conflict are at the greatest risk of developing serious emotional problems that can carry into their adult lives. Separation is rarely accomplished without some hurt, anger and harsh words. Here are some guidelines for keeping your children out of the line of fire.

- Keep all discussions private. Do not let your children hear or overhear talks with the other parent.
- Keep your emotions about the other parent's behavior and opinions private. Never get into a discussion with your child about the hurt and anger you feel towards their other parent.
- If you cannot exchange the children without conflict, find a neutral exchange site such as McDonald's at dinner time (the crowd and noise can cut down on the possibility of a confrontation), or arrange the exchanges to be from school, daycare or a soccer game.
- Be careful about conflicting messages. Your child needs to know who he can believe and trust. Hopefully this will be both of you. Check in often with the other parent. If conflict runs high, do this by fax, leaving phone messages, or by letter. Distribute all school, vacation, activity and holiday schedules ahead of time to avoid daily interaction.
- Prolonged conflict can alienate your child from one or both parents. One parent may eventually "give up" because they are worn down by the conflict. Be aware that both of you play a part when one parent "drops out" as a result of conflict, not just the parent who does.
- Do not use your child to pass messages to your co-parent. If you have trouble communicating with them, consider hiring a parent coordinator to assist you. Most marriage and family therapists can help with this.

Helping Children with Two Homes

- Help your child and one another to make and keep the schedule
- Keep the rules for behavior in the two parental homes as similar as possible
- Provide children with "a place to belong" in each residence
- Keep the lines of communication open

Constructive Feedback Communication

Feedback

Describe the event

Describe its consequences

Say what you want

I-Messages

Talk about what's happening to you

Avoid name-calling, accusing, and blaming the other person

Broken Record

Acknowledge the other person's concerns

Repeat your agenda

The Business Model

A Plan for a Limited Partnership

The Business Model for developing a successful post-separation family is suggested by CHILDREN OF DIVORCE®. The following information describes how to communicate with your co-parent as a business partner. Although each divorce/separation is unique, many issues are similar and can be handled in a manner that is most helpful to children.

We recognize that this may not be easy at first...and may not seem fair. In the early stages of separation, communication is difficult - but with hard work and time, many parents are able to get past the rough spots. By making a real effort, you and your children are more likely to move through the separation process and become a successful family.

When parents are unable to resolve issues, it is suggested that a mediator may help bring resolution to disputes.

Communicating With Your Co-Parent Involves:

- Courtesy
- Respect
- Acceptance
- Focus

If you choose to continue your warfare with your child's other parent, you can turn your child into a war orphan.

- Gerald Hill (paraphrased)

Co-parent Won't Cooperate



- Refuse to react emotionally to difficult behavior
- Plan on difficult behavior
- Be sensitive to what your co-parent is going through
- examine your own behavior
- Exercise the golden rules
- Show good will
- Be realistic about what to expect

Solving a Problem

- **Establish an agenda.**

Ex: "I would like to meet with you sometime during the next few days. I need to discuss Kevin's summer schedule about camp, Vacation Bible School, each of our vacations, and his baseball team practices."

- **State the problem in very specific terms.**

Ex: "Next Friday Susie wants to go on a sleepover with her Sunday School class. Since she will be spending the weekend with you, she is worried that you may not be able to pick her up Saturday from the church." (Susie should not be the one to have to make it work...the adults should.)

- **Ask for what you need.**

Ex: "I am having to work late next Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Would you be able to take care of the children one of those evenings?"

- **Do not expect complete cooperation all the time. That doesn't happen in the best of business relations.**

Ex: If your ex-spouse cannot help you...for whatever reason...do not use that conversation to rehash old stuff, such as: "I should have known you couldn't help." or "I forgot...you're busy with your new family now!" A more business like method would be: "Okay, I'll make other arrangements."

- **Be cooperative.**

Ex: "Since your parents are celebrating their 50th Anniversary next week, would it help if I kept the children Saturday night and bring them to you Sunday about an hour prior to the party?" Or..."I know you are having to work the third shift the next two weeks. Would it help if we adjusted the time-spent schedule?"

- **Constantly evaluate and re-negotiate.**

Always develop the plan that is best for your children. Things change (just like the marriage) and should be re-evaluated. As children grow, their needs, expenses (braces, class trips, college tuition, etc.), and desires change. Your plans should reflect these changes. Plans should be reviewed regularly. Keep in mind both predictability and flexibility.

What are some of your own special problems? How might you solve them?

Parental Alienation

- Involves “programming” a child to denigrate the “target” parent
- An effort to undermine and interfere with the child’s relationship with co-parent
- Focuses on parental conflict, using the child instead of co-parenting
- Brainwashing
- 11%-15% of divorce involve some form of parental alienation
- Form of child abuse
- Includes badmouthing the co-parent in front of the child; limiting contact with co-parent; erasing the co-parent from the life and mind of a child; “loyalty conflicts” - forcing child to choose between parents; threats of withdrawal and/or rejection; and limiting contact with co-parents family members



Parental alienation is a form of abuse and involves one parent, preventing their co-parent from visitation or communicating with their child. Child support and visitation do not go hand in hand. If your co-parent is preventing you from seeing your child, we advise you to contact an attorney and get help.

Parenting Plan

PURPOSE OF THE PARENTING PLAN

- A long-term legal parenting plan that meets the needs of the children.
- A plan that formalizes a shared parenting relationship.
- A plan that makes both active responsible parents, who maintain two homes where the children belong and are cherished.
- A plan that gives the children a good example of how parents can resolve conflict.

Components of a Parenting Plan

All Parenting Plans Include

- **Schedule** - A schedule that is clear and specific with dates, times, locations of pickup and drop-offs for the week month, and years.
- **Who will be responsible** - When a parent is unavailable during their parenting time with children, what arrangements will be agreed upon? Examples include: first right of refusal, a baby sitter, leaving children with relatives.
- **Transportation** - Who will transport children to and from their two homes?
- **Ultimate decision making**
- **Managing disputes**
- **Financial Responsibility**
- **Education/medical needs/extracurricular activities, religious education**

“The greatest gift that you can give your child is to find a more peaceful way of dealing with your conflict”

- Philip Stahl, PhD

Tips for Peaceful Exchanges

- Give children a 15 minute reminder before they are to be picked up.
- Make exchanges quick and pleasant.
- The easiest exchanges are those where children can be picked up from an activity such as school, day-care, soccer practice, etc.
- Exchanges should not be used as a time to discuss issues with your co-parent.
- There will be clothing and other items that do not come back with the child. Don't make an issue of it. You may be angry at the other parent about that, but your child will feel responsible for the mistake.
- Be on time. It will relieve their anxiety and send your child the message that they are important.
- If there is a last minute change in plans due to unforeseen circumstances, communicate immediately. Make prior arrangements about how you will reach each other in an emergency.
- When it is your time to parent your child, let your co-parent know some general plans, especially if they need to send special clothing or toys.

Exceptions to the Parenting Guidelines

- If a parent is emotionally impaired (psychological or substance abuse issues), support the bond between this parent and the children. This will minimize the positive or negative fantasies about that parent.
- If one parent is chronically late, reduce the number of transitions. Children have difficulty waiting for their parent to remember them.
- When the child's two homes are at a great distance from each other be creative about shared parenting but remember the child's developmental needs. For example, 4-6 weeks in the summer may be too long for a child under six not to see the other parent.
- When one parent is a recognized abuser, parenting time should be carefully monitored by a trusted, neutral adult. Relatives and friends usually are biased. Even though this is a lot of effort, your child needs to have a connection with this parent that is safe.
- If one parent "drops out" of the child's life for a period of time, give the child reasonable explanations about this and reinforce that it is not because they are unlovable. Plan for and welcome their re-entry into shared parenting for your child's sake. Handle your anger (if you have any) with a therapist.

- Always remember your resolve to consider your child’s temperament when handling any parenting plan.

Copy of a Parenting Plan

A copy of a parenting plan used for all Chatham county domestic cases that involve children is in the left pocket of your folder. Use this copy to prepare for your appointment. Write on it. Make notes. Discuss it with your co-parent.

***Bring the copy you filled out to your appointment to fill out your documents at the FLRC.**

If your case is uncontested, you will have to complete a parenting plan and file with the additional legitimation paperwork. If your case is contested, you will still have to complete a parenting plan. During mediation, you and the mother of your child will sit down and discuss a proper parenting that works for everyone; father, mother, and child.

Moving On

Statistics show that approximately 80% of men and 70% of women remarry, most within five years of their divorce. Men are single an average of two years prior to remarrying, women an average of five years. Cohabiting couples have increased 1000% since 1960.

It's clear that most people move on after a separation, and include others in their lives. Although this may not seem a priority or even appealing at this point in your separation process, we have some tips for you about how you can move gracefully into the next phase of your life, and most importantly, how to make sure that your children can adjust comfortably and happily.

- When beginning the dating process, take it slow and easy. Consider your emotional needs and those of your child. Take time to heal from the separation, and allow your children time for healing too.
- The best and most appropriate time to begin dating is when your child is spending time with his/her other parent. Keep the time they are with you just for them.
- Initially approach any new relationship from a “friends only” position. Be cautious about jumping into a serious relationship too soon. Be sure to save “alone” time for yourself, and plenty of time to be with your children.

- Be aware of your own vulnerability and loneliness. This clouds our vision, and places us in a position to make quick or poor choices for new partners. A trained counselor can help you work through your feelings, to understand and resolve the issues of your previous marriage as well as support you as you enter single life.
- Your children are afraid of losing you to a new “love”. Be sure that you are serious about someone before introducing them to your children.
- It would be better for your children if you did not move in with a non-family member of the opposite sex (whether or not it is romantic) because they get easily confused about adult relationships.
- When you tell your children about your new relationship, do it yourself and without the new person being there. Encourage them to talk about how they feel.
- Proceed slowly when including your new partner in family events. Your children will miss the special time they shared with you if another adult is always present.
- Keep private time with your new partner private. Children feel left out when their parent is holding hands, snuggling or kissing someone else. Until you actually remarry, this is best left out of family time.
- Always treat your child’s other parent with dignity and respect. Refuse to make comments on their new partners or lifestyle.
- Make certain that your new partner does not step into a “parenting” role, or attempt to replace the other parent. They need to begin their own relationship with your children, and the most effective way to do this is to develop a friendship with them. Your new partner should not be involved in disciplining your children, or routinely left to babysit them while you are otherwise engaged.
- Be careful not to let your new partner “call the shots” or set rules for you and your children. If you plan to marry, invest in some pre-marital counseling with a therapist who is skilled with blended families. It will be important for you to move slowly, confidently and unified into a new family.

When Your Co-Parent Won’t Cooperate

- **Refuse To React Emotionally To The Difficult Behavior**

It takes two to tango. Set higher standards of cooperation for your own behavior and stick to them. If your former spouse doesn’t get the expected reactions, he/she may stop being so difficult.

- **Plan on Difficult Behavior**

If you know they are going to make things hard on you, decide in advance how you will handle the situation in a positive way.

- **Be Sensitive To What Your Former Spouse Is Going Through**

Try to see the separation issues from their point of view. It might be helpful to admit your own pain, to apologize for your role in the separation and let them know the separation process is painful for you Too.

- **Examine Your Own Behavior**

Think about how your comments may sound to the other person. It is possible that you are communicating in a way that puts them on the defensive? Do you make blaming statements? Could your remarks be perceived as threatening or inflammatory? Work on improving your choice of words and you might see an improvement in theirs.

- **Exercise The Golden Rule**

Talk to your former spouse the way you would like to be spoken to.

- **Show Your Good Will**

Make sure your former spouse is invited to events that are important to your child, such as performances or sports competitions. Send some of your child's artwork or duplicate photographs of an event your former spouse could not attend.

Steps to Take When Things Get Out of Hand

- **Refocus the Conversation**

When you find the interaction getting off track, turn the conversation to the critical point: how the issues affect the child's well-being. Focus on the children - not on the ex-spouse.

- **Stop, Think, Breath, & Relax**

Try taking a few deep, slow breaths, closing your eyes for a few seconds and imagining a peaceful scene or suggesting a five-minute time out. Possibly both of you need to regroup before continuing. Call for a break.

- **Try to Re-Frame the Issues**

Re-state the problem as you understand it. Clarify the other parent's feelings or objections and ask questions to show your concern about their needs.

- **Ask for Ideas and Input**

Seek the other parent's ideas about how to get past the problem, or how to solve the issue.

- **Don't Be Defensive or Blaming**

If you do find yourself engaging in defensive or blaming behaviors, stop and apologize.

- **Look for Underlying Issues**

Anger can be a mask for other feelings, such as fear, humiliation, jealousy, hurt or anxiety. Bringing out the real issues contributing to the conflict may help.

- **Recognize When Things Have Gone too Far**

Call for a time-out. Stress your commitment to solving the problem, but point out that nothing positive is being accomplished. Suggest a setting and date to try again.

- **Put the Conflict in Perspective**

Remember that you're no longer married and that you will be able to separate yourself from the conflict situation in a short time.

Domestic Violence

Some relationships end because of abuse. It is important to recognize all forms of abuse and make a safety plan for you and your children.

There are three major categories of abuse, physical, emotional and sexual. Here is a warning list that identifies behaviors typically demonstrated by batterers or abusive people. All of these forms of abuse come from the batterer's desire for power and control. This list can help you recognize if you or someone you know is in a violent relationship. Check off the behaviors that apply to you. The more checks you have made, the more dangerous the situation.

Verbal Abuse – Name -calling, accusing, blaming, yelling, swearing, making humiliating remarks or gestures.

Pressure Tactics – Intimidating you into making decisions through guilt, sulking, threatening to withhold money, manipulating the children, telling you what to do.

Abusing Authority – Always claiming to be “right” using “logic” (that which suits their own position) making big decisions without consulting you.

Disrespect – Interrupting, changing subjects, discounting your thoughts, opinions or ideas, putting you down in front of others, saying bad things about your family or friends.

Breaking Promises – Not following through on agreements, not taking a fair share of responsibility, refusing to help with childcare or housework.

Abusing Trust – Lying, withholding information

Emotional Withholding – Not expressing feelings, not giving support, attention, or compliments, not respecting feelings, rights or opinions.

Minimizing, Denying or Blaming – Not taking responsibility for the abuse. Blaming you or others for their explosive temper and poor anger management, saying the abuse did not happen, that you “imagined” it, or saying that was not what he/she said or meant.

Economic Control – Refusing to give you money, not allowing you access to the family checking account, interfering with your work, not letting you go to work, taking your car keys or otherwise preventing you from using the car, threatening to report you to welfare or other social service agencies.

Self-Destructive Behavior – Abusing drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or food. Threatening suicide or other forms of self-harm. Deliberately doing or saying things that will have negative consequences (telling off the boss or buying a large item you cannot afford).

Destroying – Possessions, punching the wall, breaking down doors, throwing or breaking things.

Threats – Making threats of harm towards you or others.

Sexual Violence – Using sex to threaten or harm you, using sex after a display of violence to “make up”, using force or coercion to obtain sex or to perform sexual acts, forcing sexual acts that you find unpleasant, frightening or violent, forcing you to have sex without protection against disease or pregnancy making degrading remarks to you, about you or persons of your gender.

Physical Violence – Being violent to you, your children, household pets or others. Punching, biting, stabbing, burning, shooting, pushing, choking, kicking, slapping, grabbing, restraining, locking you out, beating, etc.

Weapons – Use of weapons, keeping weapons which frighten you, threatening or attempting to kill or harm those you love.

If you have been in or are still in a situation that includes any of the above behaviors, and you are the victim, please get yourself and your children in counseling immediately and work out a safety plan. If you are a perpetrator, guilty of any of the above behaviors, get yourself into counseling immediately and comply with a safety plan for you and your family.

Traits Common to Children

Children are the innocent victims of family violence. In addition to fear of witnessing or experiencing violence, they often suffer from neglect due to the amount of time spent with the cycle of violence. What is the cost to them? Sadly, the cost is higher than you might think. Here are some traits common to children in violent homes.

- Fear of injury during an act of parental violence
- Traumatized by fear for their parent and helplessness at protecting the parent
- Blames self for not being able to prevent the violence
- Exhibits anxiety, stutters, school problems, sleep disorders
- Identifies with the aggressor and loses respect for the victim
- Has serious problems with temper tantrums, including fighting at school or with siblings
- Treats pets cruelly or abusively
- Attempts to get attention through hitting, kicking or choking
- Takes on adult roles prematurely
- Learns extreme behaviors, cannot effectively manage their own feelings of anger, frustration or disappointment

What Can I do if the Mother is Violent?

- Remove yourself from the situation
- Never hit back
- Call the police, get a report
- Work to avoid similar situations
 - Preferably by communicating differently, e.g. Email or text
 - Changing child pick-up location to a public area where both parties and child stay safe and in view of witnesses

What Can You Do if Domestic Violence Escalates

If you are experiencing abuse, stalking, harassment, you can get a temporary protective order. We advise that you do this, but, want you to know that there are limits to a protective order. The people who can help you with protective orders are:

- An attorney
- A shelter for battered men or women ([1-800-334-2836](tel:1-800-334-2836)) connects you with any shelter in Georgia
- The police can give you some information about how to do this yourself

A protective order is a court order (a piece of paper) prohibiting the abuser of coming within a certain distance from you, usually 500 feet. If the abuser comes within 500 feet of you, or harasses you on the phone, stalks or follows you, you can call the police and if she is still there, or if a phone record indicates a number of calls from her phone, she can be arrested.

Take steps to keep yourself safe. Contact a local shelter.

10 Things Kids Wish They Could Say to Their Parents

1. Don't say mean things about my other parent
2. When you criticize my other parent, it makes me angry at you!
3. Don't make me pick sides
4. Handle your financial conversations in private
5. Don't use money to win my love
6. Don't keep me from seeing the other parent
7. Get a counselor to help you with your problems. I need you to be strong and stable for my well-being
8. The harder you make it on my other parent, the harder you make it on me
9. Laugh and smile. I want to enjoy my life
10. If you want me to feel to feel at home in both places, please set up a full home for me, even if I am only there a few days a month

Role Play Scenarios

Trouble at School: The Harmful Way

Mom and Dad on Phone

Dad: Hey, we have a problem.

Mom: What now?

Dad: I am at the school. Sandra is in the principal's office. He says she got into a fight. He says she has been bullying another girl.

Mom: I hope you're happy. This is what happens when you tear your family apart. I told you I should have the children. Sometimes, you get what you asked for. What, you want me to come fix the damage you have caused. You created this mess.

Dad: This isn't about us. Jeez, can you please move on...

Mom: You manipulate your daughter into electing to move in with you and somehow this is MY fault. She knew she could get away with anything in your house... you have never had any rules. Now you should see the results of your "philosophy of parenting." All those years you were critical of my parenting and I never once got called to the Principal's office. Isn't that interesting?

Dad: She is fifteen. This is a tough age. The principal says Sandra is failing several classes too. I met with her teachers last week and they say she isn't turning in homework. When she moved in with me, she had no study habits.

Mom: You met with her teachers and didn't tell me?!!! She was a good student when she lived with me. Under our agreement, you're supposed to include me in those conferences!

Dad: I just showed up after school and walked into several teachers' rooms. I didn't have time to tell you.

Mom: Well, it's your problem so you fix it!

Trouble at School: The Better Way

Mom and Dad on Phone

Dad: Hey, we have a problem.

Mom: What now?

Dad: I am at the school. Sandra is in the principal's office. He says she got into a fight. He says she has been bullying another girl.

Mom: I hope you're happy. This is what happens when you tear your family apart. I told you I should have the children. Sometimes, you get what you asked for. What, you want me to come fix the damage you have caused. You created this mess.

Dad: Look, I know you are still angry with me but I need your help with our daughter. She needs both of us and I am asking you to help me.

Mom: You manipulate your daughter into electing to move in with you and somehow this is MY fault. She knew she could get away with anything in your house... you have never had any rules. Now you should see the results of your "philosophy of parenting." All those years you were critical of my parenting and I never once got called to the Principal's office. Isn't that interesting?

Dad: I do not think this is your fault. I do think we need to talk all this through because I do hear what you are saying but right now Sandra needs both of us. Can you come to school? I tried to deal with this last week by meeting with her teachers but I think this more serious than I thought. Sandra is failing several classes.

Mom: You met with her teachers and didn't tell me?!!! She was a good student when she lived with me. Under our agreement, you're supposed to include me in those conferences!

Dad: You're right. I should have let you know. I feel you are very angry with me so I did not want our issues to get confused with Sandra's need for help. Can you please come to school? Both Sandra and I need your help.

Mom: Okay. I am on my way but we need to talk after this Okay?

Dad: Okay. I agree.

Community Resources

Parenting

1. **Social Apostolate** - provides a variety of services in Savannah. Including emergency baby needs (diapers, wipes, and other baby items. Provide school

uniforms (must have a voucher from school). As well as, assisting obtaining vital documents. For more information please call (912) 233-1877.

2. **The Mediation Center** - provides mediation services for individuals that need to modify an existing parenting plan. Additional programs include the Transitional Parenting Seminar, Peer Mediation, and Children of Change. For more information, please call (912) 354-6686

Counseling

1. **Union Mission** - provides counseling service to individuals with low income. This includes anger management and domestic violence support for victims. For more information, please call (912) 236-7423
2. **Heads-Up Guidance Services (HUGS)** - A non-profit organization making professional counseling affordable to all in need. To make an appointment, please call (912) 417-4320
3. **McDaniel's Consulting & Counseling, Inc.** - provides counseling to individuals, children, and families. To make an appointment, please call (912) 349-0030
4. **Thunderbolt Counseling Services, LLC** - provide individuals, family, and group therapy services. Fees vary, but a sliding scale is used for low-income families. To make an appointment, please call (912) 433-3728

Health Care

1. **Coastal Campaign for Healthy Kids** - helps parents enroll children in Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids. Must meet the Family Medicaid Income Eligibility. Ph# (912) 661-1290
2. **St. Mary's Community Center** - provides a variety of healthcare programs to the community. For families, healthcare programs include helping apply for public assistance, as well as, providing free eye exams for the uninsured and low cost eyeglasses. (912) 443-9409
3. **Social Apostolate** - provides a variety of services in Savannah. Including emergency prescription assistance, health screenings, eye exams and eyeglasses. For more information please call (912) 233-1877.

Food/Nutrition

1. **Savannah Children's Museum**, in coordination with **Open Hands, Inc.** provide the Cooking Matters program. Cooking Matters is a national program, part of the No Kid Hungry campaign which connects kids in need with nutritious food and teaches their families how to cook healthy, affordable meals. Classes are offered for free in low-income communities and last 6 weeks, meeting once a

week. To register, or for more information, please contact Jesse Rosenblum at (912) 651-2338 ext. 218

2. **Savannah Technical College** - SNAP Outreach Specialist - Savannah Tech maybe able to help you and your children apply for SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. A federally funded program that provides monthly benefits to low-income households to help purchase good food for good nutrition. Contact the Savannah Technical College SNAP Outreach Specialist for a prescreening application at (912) 443-4151
3. **Social Apostolate** - provides a variety of services in Savannah. Including emergency grocery assistance. For more information please call (912) 233-1877.

Financial/Money Management/Employment

1. **Step Up Savannah** - provides a variety of services to help low income individuals in the community; workforce development, building wealth, advocacy and education. Ph# (912) 232-6747
2. **Consumer Credit Counseling Services** - CCCS has been making sense of finances in the community for over 50 years. CCCS provides a nationally certified team, which helps families reach their goals and take control of their financial future. Through our individual sessions or group workshops we help families manage debt, improve their credit, and build their savings. As a HUD-approved housing agency, CCCS assists families in achieving successful homeownership. Ph# (912)691-2227
3. **St. Mary's Community Center** - provides a variety of programs to the community. For adults, St. Mary's provides employment assistance which includes resume building, cover letters, job applications, job searches, interviewing, setting up an email address, and job readiness skills. Ph# (912) 443-9409
4. **Social Apostolate** - provides a variety of services in Savannah. Including employment support, which helps individuals obtain and maintain meaningful employment. For more information please call (912) 233-1877.
5. **Union Mission** - provides employment training services to individuals with low income. The Employment Training & Counseling (ETC) program prepares homeless and at-risk clients to obtain stable employment through mental health support and workforce development training. By providing support for clients to build and develop their skills, ETC helps clients overcome barriers to employment success. To register or for more information, please call (912) 236-7423

Education for Adults

1. **Future Minds Literacy and Adult Education Inc.** - is designed to offer adults 16 and older who do not yet have a diploma or high school equivalency (GED) an educational option other than being a high school dropout. Ph# (912) 596-1420
2. **Savannah Technical College** - Provides free tutoring services; online, in workshops, or by appointment. Contact Barbara McGhee, Tutor Coordinator at (912) 443-5893
3. **St. Mary's Community Center** - provides a variety of programs to the community. For preschool children, educational programs include learning through playing and focusing on language development. (912) 443-9409
4. **Moses Jackson Advancement Center** - provides adult education, GED prep courses, as well as, career path development. For more information, please call (912) 525-2166

Education for Children

1. **Deep Center** - provides free, fun, and rigorous writing workshops for underserved public school youth in Savannah, GA. Deep Center connects children with a thriving community of writing mentors - local authors, poets, and journalists - to help them share their stories. Ph# (912) 289-7426
2. **Academic Girls Empowering Success (A.G.E.S.)** - AGES provides a place where girls learn to HARVEST their potential! Programs focus on science and math. Mission is to mentor and empower young girls in the community. Ph# (912) 224-6097
3. **Performance Initiatives, Inc** - help support the creation of a positive youth culture by building healthier hearts, minds and bodies. Each child will develop leadership skills, confidence, organization skills, focus, goal setting techniques, lifetime fitness strategies, athletic performance, community involvement, integrity, and team building skills. To register your child, please call (912) 507-7106
4. **Peer Mediation** - Is your child enrolled in a Savannah public school? Does your child show great critical thinking skills and loves to help others? Check with your child's school counselor to see if their school participates in the Peer Mediation Program. If you have any questions regarding the program, please contact Crystal Commodore at (912) 354-6686

Legal

1. **The Justice Cafe** - provides low cost legal help for a variety of different actions. For more information, please call (912) 721-8496

2. **Georgia Legal Services** - Five attorneys and one paralegal serve 11 counties with more than 122,000 potentially eligible clients. The Savannah office provides special focus on domestic violence cases, reducing poverty by helping clients retain or obtain financial benefits, and addressing housing issues. Houses a Spanish-speaking attorney, and sponsors Pro Bono Hospice Program, Elder Abuse, and Elder Law Projects; also does some Community Economic Development transactions work for grassroots and other community-based organizations. For more information, please call (912) 651-2180
3. **Family Law Resource Center** - Assists individuals with paperwork to file for divorce, legitimation, modification, adult name change, contempt, and child support. The FLRC also provides pre mediation services, if you and your co-parent need help with resolving one issue, for example, child support or visitation hours. You must make an appointment online at www.mediationsavannah.com