



# Time to Put Kids First

*A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization*

*Homelessness is not the problem. Guns are not the problem. Drugs are not the problem.  
Mental illness is not the problem. Murder/ suicide is not the problem.  
These are a RESULT of the problem.*

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## SUBJECT: ORGANIZATIONAL ENDORSEMENT OF EQUAL PARENTING

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The breakdown of the family is an issue that impacts every single person in the United States, yet there is little discussion around how detrimental this is to our children, state, and our country as a whole. There are more than 24 million children (more than 1 in 3) raised in single parent homes. This increases exponentially as more than 2,400 couples divorce daily, and 90% of child custody decisions in family court award primary custody to one parent, creating yet another family to add to the count.

This is now a national epidemic. The issue has caused, or at least contributed to, every single societal issue that exists today. For decades, the *U.S. Census Bureau* and the *Center for Disease Control* have reported on the negative effects of single parent homes; meanwhile, family courts continue to award a custodial and non-custodial parent in the large majority of child custody cases, without any data or evidence to show that this decision is what is in the best interest of a child. On the contrary, 85% of all children who show **behavior disorders** are from single parent homes. They also make up 90% of all **homeless** and **runaway children**, 75% of all adolescent patients in **chemical abuse** centers, 71% of all **high school dropouts**, and 63% of **youth suicides**. The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency reported that the most reliable indicator of **violent crime** in a community is the proportion of fatherless families.

It seems common sense that a child would naturally fair best being raised by both of their parents, particularly since equal parenting most closely reflects the child's caregiving and living arrangements before separation or divorce; however, the custodial/ non-custodial arrangement which has been improperly favored by family courts, has necessitated the need for research proving that **equal parenting is in the best interest of a child**, many studies of which have been available for over twenty years! Most recently, one hundred ten world-wide experts have concluded this fact: equal parenting is linked to better outcomes for children of all ages, including **improved emotional, behavioral, and physical health**, throughout childhood and into adulthood. Shared parenting preserves children's relationships with both parents, and both parents' relationships with their children; it allows them the valuable influence of both sides of their extended family and increases their chance for a **successful marriage**. Studies also conclude that equal parenting is what adult children of divorce and separation prefer.

It is no longer debatable if 50/50 custody is in the best interest of a child as it is backed by irrefutable evidence, both studies and statistics that show the detriments of single parent homes and those that show the better outcomes for children with shared parenting arrangements. In fact, there are numerous undeniable benefits of equal parenting.

Equal parenting provides a **clear, consistent guideline** for judicial decision-making, it **decreases parental conflict and litigation**, and it provides an incentive for inter-parental **negotiation**, mediation and the development of parenting plans. It addresses **social justice imperatives** regarding parental equality, autonomy, authority, and rights and responsibilities, helping to enforce limitations on judicial discretion when neither parent has been found unfit, reducing gender discrimination, and leveling the playing field for those without unlimited funds or political affiliations. It **discourages legal abuse**, where perjury and false claims are currently used to gain the upper hand in family court, parents, now as equals, are leveraged to **work together** as opposed to being pitted against each other in court for years. Equal parenting enforces what is already our inalienable right and what is already protected as a **fundamental right** under the Due Process clause of the 14th Amendment.

When considering any argument opposing shared parenting, you must consider the reliability of the source, which takes into account any motives for opposition. For example, *Judges, Commissioners, the Bar Associations, Lawyers, and court-affiliated*



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'professionals' such as *Psychiatrists* and *Case Workers*, all **profit from family law** cases, particularly when there is high (& increasing) conflict, and when one parent's time is limited with a child. *Feminist organizations* benefit by preserving the **inequitable advantage** mothers currently have over fathers in family court, whereas mothers are awarded primary custody in approximately 80% of family court decisions. *Custodial parents*, in general, risk losing time, control, and leverage if they become equals with their child's other parent. Supporters of shared parenting, on the other hand, do not receive any financial incentive or inequitable leverage. Along with motives in support or in opposition, common myths should also be considered.

Shared Parenting Myths	Shared Parenting Facts
Claims of needing to protect a child due to domestic violence or child abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are criminal claims which must be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately, <u>whether a couple is separated or together</u></li><li>• Criminal claims shall be tried in a court of law, not a court of equity (&amp; criminal charges already have a standard of evidence which is "beyond a reasonable doubt")</li><li>• This justification infringes on the rights of the majority, and it encourages conflict and false allegations in order for one parent to gain the upper hand</li><li>• A <i>rebuttable</i> presumption of 50/ 50 will address concerns related to parental fitness</li><li>• Children are exposed to the highest risk of abuse/ neglect when raised in single parent homes</li><li>• Shared parenting prevents family violence and reduces the risk and incidence of child abuse</li></ul> <p>Further, in regard to violence, 80% of rapists with anger problems and 85% of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes; single parenting is the most reliable indicator of whether or not a child will grow up to be a murderer. Girls living with non-natal fathers are at higher risk for sexual abuse than girls living with biological fathers. In regard to sexual promiscuity, teenagers with both parents are less likely to have ever had sexual intercourse, have had on average fewer sexual partners, are less likely to report an STD, and are less likely to have ever experienced a pregnancy or live birth.</p>
Children need stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most stable environment reflects the child's caregiving and living arrangements had the parents not been separated or divorced, which includes a consistent relationship with both parents and with extended family members</li><li>• Equal parenting often decreases the need for non-familial childcare providers</li><li>• All studies show that children fair better as a result of equal parenting; there is no data to support that a single-parent home is more stable or is in the best interest of a child</li></ul>
Parents want to get out of paying child support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents are in fact much more likely to pay when they have more time with their children</li><li>• Most shared parenting supporters are willing to continue paying their current child support in order to have equal time with their children</li><li>• Current legislation allows for child support regardless if there is a 50/50 timeshare</li></ul>
High conflict separations cannot do shared parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared parenting decreases parental conflict</li><li>• Shared parenting is more important during high conflict relationships where parents do not commonly encourage their child's relationship with their other parent; in fact, equal parenting is often required in order to combat parental alienation in these cases</li></ul>

Equal parenting is what is right and just, and it is best for children, parents and the future of our families. It will make our communities, state, and our country, stronger and safer, and it will help to unify us all. Please refer to our website for additional information, data and sources, and feel free to reach out to our organization with any questions.

Respectfully,

*Debra M. Childs*

Debra M. Childs, President  
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