

THE DADVOCATE

THE NEWSLETTER OF
HOUSE OF DAVID, ADVOCATES FOR FATHERS, INC.

The end of summer brings adjustments for



everyone. The end of summer camp days filled with fun activities, a flexible schedule not driven by the time crunch of homework, dinner preparation and bath times, followed by strictly enforced bedtimes, which always result in high level negotiation sessions which rival any Middle Eastern peace talks. Here are a few tips to make this transition easier during the first week of school.

Clear your own schedule. If possible, postpone all after work functions; be free to help your child acclimate to the school routine of a new school year.

Make lunches the night before school. Older children should help or make their own, with the option to buy lunch in school if finances permit.

Set alarm clocks. Have school-age children set their own alarm clocks to get up, give praise for prompt response to morning schedules.

Leave plenty of extra time. Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast, and get to school.

After school. Review with your child what to do after school. Be very specific, put a note card in their backpack with the name(s) and number(s) of a neighbor who is home during the day with a number where you can be reached.

Review your child's schoolbooks. Talk about what your child will be learning during the year. Share your enthusiasm for the subjects and your confidence in your child's ability. Encourage your child to be patient, attentive, and positive.

Send a brief note to your child's teacher. Let the teachers know that you are interested in getting feedback, attend back-to-school night and introduce yourself to the teachers. Find out how they like to communicate with parents (e.g., notes, e-mail, or phone calls). Convey a sincere desire to be a partner with your children's teachers to enhance their learning experience.

Familiarize yourself with the other school professionals. Make an effort to find out who it is in the school or district who can be a resource for you and your child. Learn their roles and how best to access their help if you need them. This can include the principal and front office personnel; school psychologist, counselor, and social worker; the reading specialist, speech therapist, and school nurse; and the after-school activities coordinator.

NOTES FROM THE DESK:

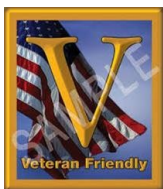
Anyone who follows issues in Baltimore City could easily point a finger to things that don't quite seem to work or make a difference.

However, Baltimore City's Drug Court is the exception. As a city resident, I often find myself questioning the effectiveness of so many initiatives. While executing the strategic plan to increase House of David's reach, I

targeted Baltimore City's Drug Court and reached out to the point of contact listed, expecting either no response at all, or a half interested response. Much to my surprise, I promptly received an email response from the Coordinator of Problem Solving Courts accepting my request for a meeting. This meeting quickly led to a follow up meeting, where I was invited to present House of David's services. After enthusiastically discussing my thoughts of how a tentative partnership could be structured, I anxiously awaited their response, expecting skeptical questions and scenarios. What I experienced was, in fact, a battery of questions; however, they were received from a team of true professionals consisting of the Case Managers, Probation Officers, Prosecuting Attorney, and Public Defender. I quickly realized that this was truly a team of individuals with a shared goal and mission.... providing an effective, realistic alternative to incarceration. I was given the opportunity to remain in the judge's chambers afterwards and witnessed a discussion of the most pressing cases and the well being of a few individuals of note. I was so impressed with this team's approach and genuine concern for the defendants, that I decided to stay for the morning session.

Court began with an "eye opener" hearing in which the presiding judge systematically addressed the defendant's failure to adhere to the conditions of his program and was led away to be incarcerated. The judge's demeanor and firmness, combined with his firm expectations and concern for the individual's well being left even the defendant fully aware and cognizant of his failure. As they quickly moved through the docket, I witnessed a presiding judge who was firm, yet understanding; painfully clear, yet open to discussion; and approachable, yet clearly operating in the best interest of the community and the individuals before him. I experienced the disappointment of immediate incarceration, along with congratulatory remarks for those who were progressing towards recovery. Naturally, the highlight of my visit was the release of a defendant and the eye contact and smiles he shared with a young child who was present in the courtroom. There may be many things that are not effective in Baltimore City; however, Drug Court is not one of them. This judge, this staff, this branch of the local judicial system are providing those who have fallen exactly what they need to remain in the lives of their children....a second chance.

All My Best,
David J. Clements
Executive Director



SUPPORT OUR FATHERS IN THEIR SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT

Consider requesting that your company consider hiring an ex-offender or felon. These citizens returning to their communities have paid the price for their crime and are now simply in need of employment in order to meet their parental obligations and responsibilities.



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LAW & ORDER

Master P Loses Custody of His Kids

Master P (hip hop artist, businessman and entrepreneur) lost custody of his children not because he was unfit or unstable but because he failed to show up for the hearing in which the mother was awarded sole legal and physical custody.

I usually do not include my personal experience or situation in my emails, however this matter hit close to home as I can relate first hand. Hence, why I do the things I do which is all about advocating, educating and helping others so that we can create a solution and fix these problems for us all. The strength and power is within us to rise above all obstacles, struggles and challenges so that we can succeed and move forward through it!

Now I don't know why Master P didn't show up for the hearing or if he even knew about it. However, I can totally relate to the situation because as the primary parent of my children, I also lost full custody of my children not because I was unfit or unstable but because I didn't show up for a hearing that I didn't even know about or never receive any notice of (due process) in which the unfit mother was awarded sole legal and physical custody in my case.

First off "no due process" is a constitutional right violation, a civil right violation, and a judicial violation on the courts to allow that to happen. Also, these judges need to stop automatically changing custody on ex parte hearings and awarding sole custody to the other parent when one parent fails to show up especially when there's no due process. **THE CUSTODY OF A CHILD SHOULD NEVER CHANGE ON AN EX PARTE HEARING WHEN JUST ONE PARENT IS PRESENT!** *(Unless there is some form of proven abuse and emergency actions are needed to safeguard the children.)

I don't believe this type of decision making falls under the "best interest" standards or within the custody factors either!

We must bring forth awareness if we want to make a difference for change! This is just another reason why I support a rebuttable presumption of equally shared parenting. This would work and help to protect and secure the child/ren and the fit parent while allowing the option to rebut the parent who's unfit or not doing what's in the best interest of the child/ren.

*David W. Smith, Sr.
(Father, Parent, Educator, Advocate & Activist)
Co-Founder/Co-Director of the Children's Rights Fund
Founder/CEO of CaFE - Children and Family Equality*

Do you have an article, picture, or thought you'd like to share? Send to: AdvocatesforFathers@house-of-david.net.

FATHER IN FOCUS: Norm Wiley



The hardest part of being a father: Watching your kids make some of the same mistakes you made and not being able to prevent them. Some things happen in life that no one can prevent, *i.e.*, the death of a love one, divorce, loss of a job, health issues. These things are hard for a caring father to watch his children go thru.

The best part of being a father: Watching your grandchildren grow up and mature into intelligent, productive young adults. You try to help them have a more successful life than you had --you hope that they will one day realize the sacrifices that you made for them. You are proud of their accomplishments and you try to console them with their setbacks. You pray daily for their safety and happiness.

Words of wisdom: Life seems long and slow when you are young and waiting to grow up, to graduate, to get your driver's license, to leave home and be on your own. Then one day you realize that you have responsibilities that someone else (your Father/Mother) was doing for you and now you have to get a job, pay the bills, take your kids to the doctor, etc...in other worlds...LIFE HAPPENS. Then one day you wake up and realize that the days and weeks and years are speeding by and you try to make the best of the time that GOD has allotted to you on earth.

The First International Conference on Shared Parenting was recently held in Bonn, Germany. This gathering of scholars, practitioners, and non-profit organizations from around the world made significant presentations in the field of co-parenting. Given the significant cultural differences, and legal practices, the conference arrived at a groundbreaking body of work consisting of 6 major consensus statements:

- 1) Shared parenting is a viable parenting arrangement optimal to child-development and well-being, including the children of high conflict parents, with a minimum of one-third time with each parent including weekday and weekend schedules.
- 2) Shared parenting is to be defined as consisting of both shared parental authority and parental responsibility for the daily welfare of the children.
- 3) National family law should include the possibility of shared parenting orders, despite the protest of one parent.
- 4) Shared parenting should be the assumed optimal arrangement for children of divorce and in their best interest.
- 5) Barring situations of substantiated family violence and child abuse, shared parenting should apply to the majority of children.
- 6) Family supportive services and the network of family relationship centers are critical to the implementation of shared parenting plans.

The next annual conference is scheduled for May 28-30, 2015 in Bonn, Germany, with an emphasis on the intersection of shared parenting and family violence.

Conclusions of the First International Conference on Shared Parenting published on July 28, 2014 by Edward Kruk, PHD in Co-Parenting After Divorce