
What educators should be doing to keep themselves from getting “caught in the middle”

Here is a list of just some of the things that educators should be doing to help children of separation and divorce.

- ❑ **They should not interpret a court Order or take the word of any one parent.** If a court Order does not say that a parent cannot see one of their children at school, then they should not assume this. Educators should promote healthy involvement of any parent with their child.
- ❑ If there appears to be some kind of conflict between the parents, educators should tell the parents to obtain the services of a neutral third party, such as a family referee or mediator. They should try to keep the school out of direct negotiations between parents.
- ❑ **They should never assume that a parent is a "risk" to their child.** No educator should be denying contact between a child and any one of the parents at school without a court Order specifically stating so. Parents of separation or divorce should be treated no differently than any other parent.
- ❑ **They should be encouraging parental involvement at the school.** Studies show that parent involvement at school, especially with non-custodial parents, can have a positive impact on a child's performance at school.
- ❑ **They should participate with local organizations that help** bring about positive change for children and families affected by divorce or separation.
- ❑ **They should question the motives of any parent who insists that the school keep the other parent away.**
- ❑ **Educators should learn about parental alienation and the effects it has on children and their families.**

Educators can play a vital role to reduce conflict in families going through separation or divorce by maintaining neutrality and respecting the rights of children to have a meaningful relationship with both parents and their extended family members

Let educators in our community know that schools are a place where a child's education comes first and that schools are not going to be used as another tool in a divorce war by hostile and controlling parents.

For further information about the rights of children of divorce, contact the local organization indicated below

Unwarranted Interference in family relationships by school officials

Helpful information for separating or divorcing parents who want to stop this form of abuse against their children and to

FIGHT BACK!

Get Informed!

Every year, thousands of educators get caught “in the middle” of a custody and access dispute involving children at their school.

Educators have been made participants of families’ conflicts, some willingly, and some unwillingly. Many educators, acting without clear policy and with little understanding of the dynamics of family conflict, have often reacted in a biased and unfair manner, which has only served to intensify the family’s conflict, create bad feeling between the parent and school and further cause emotional harm to children. The lack of awareness by teachers and school officials of how to effectively and fairly deal with the growing problems of families of separation or divorce has been responsible for harm to a great number of children.

The vast majority of problems involving children of separation or divorce at school are created when one parent, usually the custodial one, will attempt to manipulate teachers and school officials into a position that supports them in their attempts to destroy a child's relationship with the other parent or members of the other parent's extended family. Minimizing a child’s contact with other family members is the strategy most often used.

Often, the parent who is attempting to manipulate the education system is doing so out of anger and revenge against the other parent. Seldom are they acting in the interests of their child.

Teachers and school officials must be vigilant to ensure that they don’t get drawn into the conflict by taking sides and reacting in a manner that is damaging to the child or acting outside of the law. They could face civil prosecution, as well as end up losing their jobs.

What can you do to make school officials accountable and to fight back for your children’s rights

- Obtain the services of a third party advocacy group in your community to help you deal with the school. A local advocacy group, familiar with matters affecting children of divorce can be very effective in helping you fight the bias and discrimination shown by some school officials.
- Obtain copies of applicable government legislation that deals with the rights of you and your children. Also obtain a copy of school board policies.
- Meet with the principal and teachers involved to discuss matters and take a neutral third party as a witness to the discussions.
- Provide school officials with information about parental alienation, hostile parenting and the importance of involvement of the non-custodial parent with the child’s school.
- Use a tape recorder whenever you speak to school officials over the phone or in person. Reasonable and fair educators will have nothing to be concerned about, but those who deliberately interfere with your child’s relationship with their family will have their own words come back to haunt them – maybe even in a court of law or disciplinary hearing.
- If you find that the school officials you are dealing with continue to cause interference, then be prepared to **fight back!**. Hire the services of a good legal professional trained in these matters and be prepared to launch a lawsuit against those school officials involved, as well as the school board for discrimination based on marital status and violation of the rights and best interests of your children. Most parents in a

community would be appalled at school officials interfering with a child’s relationship with a parent, so local school official will not like this kind of publicity in their community.

Parents who involve school officials to help them interfere with a child’s relationship with another parent are perpetrating a form of **CHILD ABUSE**. Educators must make themselves aware of parents who alienate children.

Some signs of an alienating and controlling parent:

- Requests that the non-custodial parent not be allowed to visit the child while the child is at school (such as lunches and recesses, even though the custodial parent is not able to be there themselves).
- Tries to prevent the other parent from participating on school trips, classroom activities or other events.
- Insists that report cards and other school documents be given to them and not the other parent.
- Makes comments about the non-custodial parent, which are not relevant to the best interests of the child, in an attempt to put the other parent in a bad light.
- Claims that the child says that they do not want to see the other parent (Never accept the word of only one parent)
- The controlling parent will try to keep the non-custodial parent isolated from teachers and school officials. These parents will attempt to prevent educators from seeing the truth about the child’s relationship with the non-custodial parent. They will attempt to impede any routine communication between educators and the non-custodial parent.