

## Child Custody Check Sheet

- Determine if you should be the first to initiate the suit or if it could be settled without a judge deciding.
- Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses. (Be fair and honest!) Your attorney will be the only one that is privileged to this information.
- Make a list of the other person's strengths and weaknesses. (Again, be fair and honest!)
- List the strengths in your overall position from the view of the judge (job, economics, help from parents, etc.) and list the strengths of the other person in his or her overall position.
- Write out a draft custody plan that you can eventually have incorporated into your [separation agreement](#). List everything that you want for your children. Even though you might not get everything, writing what your expectations are is a good idea.
- Make a list of the negotiable points in your draft custody plan. In that list put a side note of things that you can bargain with.
- Decide when you should start negotiating with the other person.
- Decide if you need to work out a temporary custody plan with the other person until one is successfully committed in writing.
- Find out what criteria your family court looks at when awarding custody. Your [attorney](#) will be familiar with the judges in your county.
- Find out if the other person is using alienating strategies and if they are; put into effect a plan to counteract these strategies.
- Decide if the other person may make false allegations in court. What would they be and how would you refute any false allegations?
- Make a list of witnesses that you have to refute potential allegations.
- Write down, for each witness, how they should dress and act in court.
- Decide how you should act and what you should wear to court. Consider how it would help the other person if you did get angry in court or in the presence of someone that could testify against you.
- Be cautious of dating and/or moving in with your new significant other. It may have an adverse effect on custody should the other person want to make a case against your new partner's lifestyle or background. **(VERY IMPORTANT!)**

- ❑ Make a list of the marital assets and include in the list when and how each asset came into the marriage.
- ❑ Calculate how much medical insurance is in force that would go to you and your child and calculate how much you and your child actually need.
- ❑ Write down the education plans for your child and yourself. Consider if your child is in a private school (uniform, book, tuition costs, etc.)
- ❑ Make a list of your future potential earnings while thinking about what could happen to increase or decrease your future earnings potential.
- ❑ Make a list of the other person's estimated future income and write down any special earnings potential of the other person.
- ❑ Consider if your child is being bribed. If yes, decide on a course of action to counteract these bribes.
- ❑ Make a list by subject of the important things you have not told your lawyer. You don't want any surprises in court. List arrests, bankruptcy, affairs, fights -- everything!
- ❑ Consider if there is a sickness or disability involved.
- ❑ Make a list of any of the ways that you can help [control legal costs by having a legal services plan that could discount your costs by 25%](#).
- ❑ Decide what to do if the other person wants to relocate and decide if you may want to relocate, now or later.