

TODAY'S DADS

2019 Edition, Issue 2

December, 2019



104TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION HAS MANY SHARED PARENTING BILLS IN PROCESS

In 2019 we have leveraged our participation in the **Legislative Study Committee** and the bills coming from the committee. You can see all of the bills that came out of the study committee here: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc_study/2018/1785. We promoted them (*lobbying on June 6th by 6 members of WFCF*) to the majority of legislators on the committee's (27) that are involved in the bills moving forward. The overwhelming response from the legislators was that the bills made sense and would be supported. We also promoted a bill that mandates for co-parenting education for **both** parents, and an

additional bill that streamlined paternity declarations leading to custody and placement actions. All these bills can be read at (*on left side of screen*): <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/advocacy.htm>

All the bills from the study committee have made it through the public hearings (*early in June*) and also the **Assembly Family Law committee** voted them out of committee, early in September. AB 93, 94, 95, 96, 99, and 102 passed unanimously. AB 97 and 98

passed 7-2 with Reps Brostoff and Emerson voting no. The next step is for the bills to receive a full Assembly vote. This should happen soon. These are the bills that WFCF was primarily interested in:

AB 95- modifications to legal custody or physical placement contingent upon a future event.

AB 97- involvement and cooperation of both parents in a physical placement schedule.

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USING CHRISTMAS PURCHASES ON AMAZON TO DONATE TO WFCF

WFCF solely survives on donations to continue to provide our newsletter, helpline service, and FNO meetings in 10 areas in WI, each month. Donations also make it possible for WFCF to continue educating our legislators on the benefits of **shared parenting for our children**, and for their par-

ents, as well as for society as a whole.

There are several ways to help us (WFCF) continue to provide these services.

The first way is easy most of us right now, are making many of our Christmas pur-

chases through AMAZON.

Using this link you can have **Amazon donate to WFCF** with every purchase.

Use this link: smile.amazon.com and they will make a donation to Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families

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We are Wisconsin's Oldest "Father's Organization" having been formed in 1988. We have been hosting our Monthly Support and Network Father's Night Out Meetings since 2000 and are a 100% volunteer organization that has always and will always believe that

Kids NEED BOTH Parents

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT *Tony Bickel*

Father-advocacy group promotes bills requiring parent-



ing classes, custody cooperation: Reprint from: [Emily Pyrek La Crosse Tribune](#) Oct 9, 2019

When Tony Bickel was divorced in the late 1990s, he and his ex-wife weren't required to attend parenting classes, and conflicts quickly bubbled to the surface.

It wasn't until the court intervened and ordered they attend courses that the former spouses were able to co-parent in peace and focus on their kids rather than their fights.

Seeing the value in the experience, Bickel, president of Madison-based Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families, approached Rep. Jeffrey

Mursau, R-Crivitz, about mandating such classes statewide. Last spring, Assembly Bill 209 was introduced, and on Sept. 24, a public hearing was held. The bill now awaits a vote by the Family Law Committee.

the involvement and cooperation of both parents regarding the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the child is in the best interest of the child."

"This could really help (parents) avoid some of the problems you have where there are two households," Bickel said. Bickel, who brought the organization's Father's Night Out meetings, held in 10 cities, to La Crosse in October 2016, is not only advocating for required parenting classes in all counties but pushing to change a state law preventing the modification of custody placement in the first two years. Assembly Bill 95 was introduced in 2017 by Rep. Jessie Ro-

driguez, R-Oak Creek, and reintroduced after 2018 Legislative Study Committee meetings, with members including Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families.

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Also heard by the public on Sept. 24, the bill would allow for changes in legal custody or physical placement to be made "upon the occurrence of life events of the adult parties or child, or

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONT'D

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developmental and educational needs of the child, that are reasonably certain to occur within two years of the date of the stipulation.”

The bill will now be taken to the Assembly for vote.

Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families also took part in AB 97, which is also set for Assembly vote. The bill calls for the **involvement and cooperation** of both parents in a physical placement schedule, adding the statement to current law that “among the general provisions for custody and placement that any allocation of physical placement, as ordered by the court, presumes that the involvement and cooperation of both parents regarding the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the child is in the best interest of the child.”

Among the other causes Bickel and Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families have taken up is the right of noncustodial parents to be privy to their children’s school records. In 2016, Wisconsin Fathers for Children and

Families conducted a survey, receiving 77 responses to the question “Does your district or school have a written policy regarding students of divorced, legally separated, or unmarried parents?” Fifty percent of schools reported there was either a policy in place or believed there should be one in place. “We also very much promote parents getting involved in their children’s academics and making sure they get all school info,” Bickel said. “Typically one parent registers the children and many times does not share the contact info for the other parent. And too often the other parent doesn’t take the steps to get their contact information added. All parents, including parents that don’t have legal custody, **have a right to be connected with their children’s school info.** When both parents are talking with the kids about academics and other associated school things like sports, kids thrive.”

Bickel said Wisconsin ranks highly in equal placement custody arrangements (*with divorced parents*), with a 2018 Custody X Change study finding Wisconsin ties with 19 other states for

highest percentage at 50 percent. The national average for father custody time is 35 percent.

In terms of child support collection rates, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families notes that in 2013, Wisconsin ranked fourth nationwide in the percentage of court-ordered current support collected.

In 2018, the child support collection rate in Wisconsin was 75 percent, with 65 percent of arrears — money owed — being paid on.

“Wisconsin leads in both financial obligations and two parents being involved in their parents lives,” Bickel said.

“That’s a great thing, but obviously we always want to do better.”

Bickel encourages parents to reach out to government officials if AB 209, AB 95 and AB 97 reach the legislative floor.

“If people feel those are good ideas, certainly contact your local representative,” Bickel said. **“Supporting those bills would be advantageous for families.”**

WFCF NEEDS YOU, YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS...PLEASE PAY IT FORWARD

We **need** a new Today's Dads newsletter editor ASAP!

WFCF benefitted greatly from board member Kevin Monahan's skills over the last three years with our **Today's Dads** newsletter. Kevin singlehandedly brought our newsletter from a mid-90's old look to a new, modern, attractive current look. Kevin now has a large amount of things on his plate, and needs to step down as our newsletter editor. We need a **new person** to step up, that has *Microsoft Publisher* experience, and can

Kentucky now leads the nation in protecting children's best interests when parents' divorce or separate.

donate an hour or two each month toward helping WFCF continue to publish a quarterly or triannual newsletter. Our newsletter goes to all members of WFCF via email, and is also published on our Facebook page and website platform, and is mailed to all legislators and over 100 other groups and organizations.

Our newsletter helps educate people on what is going on legislatively in Wisconsin that affects separated parents and their children. It also

promotes shared and cooperative parenting as it applies, to the best interest of our children when their parents are separated. You can see our previous issues at this link: <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/media.htm>

Please send an email to wfcftreasurer@outlook.com to apply for this position.

WFCF needs more volunteers no matter how much or how little you can give your experience and contribution can make the difference for someone else..

A small contribution from more people truly makes it easier for everyone to continue the mission of WFCF.

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/volunteering.htm>

Shared parenting: Children can't get enough

Reprint :Special to the Kenosha News Sep 28, 2019

As Wisconsinites, we can be proud of how separated Wisconsin parents address and fulfill their financial obligations for their children. According to the Department of Children and Families website dialog box of current support obligations, Wisconsin parents ranked high compared to all 50 states. Although Wisconsin isn't at 100% yet, the rate has been trending upward for years now.

Many studies have been done on the value of shared parenting and its positive effects on children, including emotional stability, academic success and significant reductions in drug use and juvenile delinquency.

Recently, the **National Parents Organization** put out a report

card rating each of the 50 states on the prevalence of shared parenting statutes for children with separated parents. Wisconsin received a B-

Although this is above the average, it is a reminder that we must continue to strive for improvement and education on meeting the needs of children in homes without both parents living together.

Our Wisconsin statutes clearly define that it is in a child's best interest for their parents to have joint custody. Custody is joint decision-making for decisions like school choice, religious choice, extracurricular activities and other major deci-

sions. Our statute also clearly iterates that it is in the child's best interest for both parents to be involved in these decisions.

Wisconsin continues to be in the upper tier of states on the issue of joint decision-making by both parents.

Physical placement for children of separated parents is another area where Wisconsin should look to join other leading states that have passed legislation stating that shared placement is in a child's best interest if it is possible and safe. Currently, the legislation states a child's placement time with each parent should be

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maximized (Chapter 767 in WI statutes).

The effect of the wording maximize on placement decisions in Wisconsin has been to improve situations for children with separated parents. As of 2011, children with divorced parents had equal shared placement time with both parents 35% of the time and unequal shared placement 15% of the time, which means 50% of these children, are benefiting from shared placement. This is definite progress. Please consider that the remaining half of children with divorced parents only have time with one of their parents every other weekend or less. As previously stated, this also means that **half of the children of divorced parents could be at a higher risk** of emotional and academic problems, truancy and a higher chance of drug misuse.

Children with separated parents who were never married fare much worse with the application of the word maximize than children with divorced parents. Only 19% of the time did these children have the opportunity to share time with both parents, and a whopping 81% of the time they saw one parent only every other weekend or less. This puts the vast majority of these children at a much higher risk of significant trouble in life compared to children with a shared parenting experience.

We owe it to these children, their parents, their teachers, local police and society as a whole to do everything we can to offer children the best chance at being successful in life. Everyone benefits.

A recent study by the Pew Research Center found that **shared parenting and a legal presumption of shared parenting is supported by 70 to 80% of Americans**. We implore our Wisconsin legislators to move forward with a legislative mandate to our Family Court system, to separated parents (**both** parents) and to Wisconsin lawyers that society wants what is clearly best for all Wisconsin children — including those children with separated parents.

Shared parenting with two involved parents positively benefits children, in so many ways. Although some situations do not make this outcome possible for all children based on factors outside of their control, shared parenting should be Wisconsin's starting point for the vast majority of our children. The best situation is **shared parenting** and, in

our opinion, **children can't get enough.**

HELP WFCF / SHARED PARENTING BILLS / DEFAULT CUSTODY/PLACEMENT

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You have to initially **select** your charity (Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families is one of the non profit options) and place an order like you normally would.

They (*Amazon*) donate .5% (half percent) of the item amount. Shipping and Taxes DO NOT factor in. That means for every \$100 they donate 50 cents. VERY EASY to do, and costs the purchaser nothing. Please consider doing this.

Another way to **help WFCF** is year end, tax deductible donations directly to WFCF.

Use this link, and scroll down to **HELP us FINANCIALLY.**

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/join.htm>

You can donate any amount, and you will receive a donation receipt for your records.



(Continued from page 1)

AB-98- factors relating to the physical placement of a child.

SB 586- Allowing military personal to have a placement order, even though they may be called up.

The Co-parenting education mandate bill (**AB 209**) had a public hearing on Sept 24th. WFCF was there and we had a number of board members testify in favor of this bill. There was a slight amendment added that did not have the mandate apply to solely paternity declarations. If placement and custody are requested by both parents, the education mandate will apply. We (WFCF) feel strongly that education on co parenting responsibilities and considerations regarding both parents involvement is paramount for the children's best interest to be served. The next step is to be voted on, by the full Committee on Family Law. After that a full Assembly vote can happen.

Let your Assembly person know why they should support these bills. You can find out who your assembly person/senator is and their contact information here:
<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

On the right side is a "**who are my legislators**" section where you can type in your address and it will identify your Assembly representative.

You need to call them, send a letter, or send an email.

When a baby is born in WI to unmarried parents as is in most other states, unmarried mothers and fathers are treated very differently.

Custody and full placement automatically defaults completely to the mother.

Financial obligations for the newborn conversely are immediately shared **jointly by the mother and the father**. In the vast majority of cases this means the father automatically has a child support obligation assigned.

In WI it is in a **child's best interest** to have the benefit of **both parents jointly being custodians. 767.41(2)(am)**. We need to work on **changing the default to joint custody for both parents**. Too many fathers are unaware of the need to file paperwork associated with establishing legal custody of their child. They assume, that by declaring paternity this means they are custodial. It doesn't.

And I would also suggest we strongly consider adding **shared placement** as a default as well as joint custody. Certainly there are situations where joint custody is not appropriate, nor shared placement.

In these situations where it isn't appropriate, simply filing a form

with the reasoning and proof that it is not appropriate should suffice. This situation represents a very small number of instances, especially compared to the number of instances where **joint custody and shared placement is clearly in the child's best interest.**

The default should represent the most common outcome. Historically that may have been sole custody/placement, but since 1990 that has been changing and is no longer the case in the majority of situations. The Dept. of Children and Families has mentioned currently over half of the separated parents in WI now use the shared parenting calculator for support obligations.

This is something that WFCF and NPO will be working on legislatively going forward.

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WFCF Lifetime Membership Application

Name					
Date of Birth		Gender <small>(This data may be used in reporting membership population)</small>	Male	Female	Prefer Not to Disclose
Physical Street Address					
City		State		Zip	
Mailing Address <small>(If Different than Physical Address)</small>					
City		State		Zip	
County of Current Residence					
Relationship to Child(ren) Affected					
Phone					
Personal E-Mail Address					
Check Here to be Contacted about Volunteer Opportunities with WFCF					

Applicant Demographics

Wisconsin Family Court Case(s) Information (Optional, If Applicable)

County of Court Action	
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Qty	Description	Unit Price	Extended Cost
1	WFCF Lifetime Membership ★ Includes E-Mail Subscription to "Today's Dad's Newsletter"	\$30.00	
	3 x 11 ½ in. Removable Vinyl WFCF "Kids NEED BOTH Parents" Bumper Sticker	\$3.00	
	1 ¼ in. WFCF Logo Lapel Pin	\$5.00	
1	One Time Donation to WFCF 501(c)(3) Not for Profit Organization		
<i>\$ Membership Fees and Donations are IRS Tax Deductible \$</i>		Total	



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MONTHLY FATHER'S NIGHT OUT MEETINGS

WFCF IS NOW OFFERING **120 MEETINGS** IN PERSON MEETINGS
ACROSS THE STATE PER YEAR

Milwaukee:

4th Saturday of the month
8 AM - 9:30 AM at:

Milwaukee market

400 Water St, Milw/ upstairs mezzanine

Madison:

Third Monday of the month
6:15 PM at:

World Buffet at South Town Mall

2451 W Broadway, Monona, WI

Fox Valley:

Third Tuesday of the month
6:30 PM at:

El Jarpeo Mexican Restaurant

1727 Freedom Rd, Little Chute, WI

Central WI:

Second Monday of the month
7:30 PM at:

Korner Kitchen

4890 Hwy H, Edgar, WI

NW WI (Eau Claire):

Third Thursday of each month
6:30 PM at:

Taquera La Poblantia

2436 London Rd, Eau Claire, WI



Green Bay/NE WI:

First Wednesday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Townline Pub

2544 Lineville Rd, Green Bay, WI

La Crosse:

Second Thursday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Sheninigans

2100 Dawson Ave, La Crosse, WI

Janesville:

Second Thursday of the month
6 PM at:

Denny's

2020 Milton Ave, Janesville, WI

Racine:

Third Friday of the month
7:30 PM at:

Asian Buffet

3701 Durand Ave, Racine, WI

Fond du Lac:

Second Monday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Schmitty's Oar House Bar and Grill

N7044 Winnebago Dr, Fond du Lac, WI