

TODAY'S CO-PARENT

2021 Edition, Issue 2

MAY, 2021



CHILD SUPPORT ADVISORY MEETING (EVERY 4 YEARS)

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Federal law requires the evaluation of Child Support Guidelines every four years. All stakeholders are invited to be on the Advisory Committee, and WFCF has been involved in many of these committees. We were again invited to participate as a voting member of the Advisory Group in 2020.

Then the pandemic hit..... And the meetings were delayed multiple times. The hope is these meeting will take place in 2021. We (WFCF) has been preparing for participating in the committee meetings, and WFCF board member **Jonathan Koch** has put in countless hours investigating child support obligation determinations. Most if not all states use a calculation that is based on a **percentage of income**, and WI does as well. In some situations that income standard applies an appropriate obligation, in other situations it applies an obligation that is unsubstantiated in correlation to actual costs incurred. A **standard of living metric** that is directly applied to one or both parent's gross income is applied by a percentage, and is assumed to correlate with actual costs associated with the children.

There are so called **cliffs** that are incorporated into the calculations. Meaning simply changing placement of the children between parents by one percent or a small percentage amount, can lead to a huge (*nonlinear*) change in support obligations on one parent. Many middle income parents fall into those **cliff situations** and this causes frequent **conflict**. Add to that the commonly understood reality that for upper middle income parents as well as high income parents, child support obligations simply based on percentages can easily turn into functionally, support **and maintenance** obligations.

(Cont. on page 4)

WFCF solely survives on **donations** to continue to provide our **newsletter, helpline service, and monthly meetings in 10 areas** in WI, each month. Donations also make it possible for WFCF to continue **talking with our legislators on the benefits of shared parenting**

for our children, and for their parents, as well as for society as a whole.

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

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

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

DONATE: <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/join.htm> *bottom of the page for donations.*

We are Wisconsin's Oldest "**Separated Parents Organization**" having been formed in 1988. We have been hosting our Monthly Support and Network Separated Parents 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 *Tommy Bickel*

Legislatively **SB 116** Future Contingency has been signed into law by the Governor. Now separated parents can decide and agree (stipulate) on a **two stage placement experience** for the shared child. Initially with a newborn primary care might be decided to be with the mother, and then at a future stage (like 18 months) the parents can automatically have the placement order change to a **shared parenting** experience for their shared child. Without going back to family court! Without this flexibility in stipulated placement orders, many fathers are stuck with a minimal placement order that is associated with an infant, and have multiple hurdles to get over to maximize their parental involvement in their shared child's life after the infant stage. This statute change will have a significant positive impact on **decreasing** fatherlessness here in WI. Currently about half of the children with separated parents here in WI, have only one parent significantly involved in their lives.

AB103/AB105 relating to our **military members** and assuring their **parental rights** and appropriate treatment of housing allowances

have been approved in the Senate and may also be out of the Assembly and on to the Governor as well. Our **WFCF** board member **Kimberly Graff** has been instrumental in getting needs of military members' addressed by our legislators.


LRB 2400 the bill to **mandate co-parenting education** for all separated or separating parents is written and circulated and the hearings should be happening

“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of (both) parents.” - Jane Hull

very soon. About 75% of WI counties now mandate completion of this education which is an approximately two hour program. One county has reported that after implementing mandated education, **repeat court requested actions dropped by 50%! Making sure all counties require this education will absolutely help the kids with separated parents, it will help their parents, and it saves the taxpayers money required to provide the family courts. The classes are inexpensive (from \$0-\$50), online or in person and are by far the most effective action that can be taken to help the separated family process succeed for everyone involved.**

WFCF continues to provide separated parents with individual help navi-

gating the family court system and co-parenting issues. As of this letter, we have not yet reinitiated our 10 individual monthly meetings in various regions in the state due to Covid restrictions, but we do expect **in person meetings** can begin again soon. In the interim, we continue to offer **five ZOOM meetings** each month and the



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number of attendees on these meetings has been increasing. We are fortunate to have 5 different **WFCF** volunteers willing to set aside their time to help others. **B. Moore, Mary C, A. Bradt, and J. Pease** and I are the moderators on the ZOOM meetings each month. We have also had a slight increase in the number of parents coming to *(Continued on page 3)*



Join Today ~ \$30 Lifetime Membership

For *PDF* versions of our **WFCF** newsletter—email: wfcftreasurer@outlook.com

from the president cont'd /

Arkansas SB18 Becomes Law!

(Continued from page 2)

our **WFCF email helpline** as well. We have provided individual help to at least 55 parents in the first quarter of 2021.

Arkansas SB18 Becomes Law!

Reprint from NPO

On April 7, 2021, Arkansas became the second state in the nation to pass a law for a rebuttable presumption of joint custody, defined as equal parenting time. Not only that, but we became the first to require clear and convincing evidence to overcome the presumption. SB18 passed the House with a vote of 71-16 and the Senate 33-2, and gave us the strongest joint custody law in the country. Much of this success was due to the unrelenting work by our team and sponsors. However, I hope it also signals optimism toward joint custody legislation and a positive sign of things to come.

While there are many factors that went into passing the bill, there are a few main points worth highlighting. First, we started early and had a focused message and strategy every step of the way. We found our sponsors and worked on the bill well over a year before the start of our 2021 legislative session. Senator Alan Clark has a reputation for protecting the interests of children and reforming a flawed DHS system. As the Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he also has a lot of respect and influence. Representative Jimmy

Gazaway is an attorney who is passionate about this issue and could speak on it from the legal perspective. We set a goal of getting as many co-sponsors as possible to show support for the bill, and had 22 signed on by the time it was heard in committee. Throughout the session, we implemented our strategy for every committee and floor vote and were able to see things through to the end.

Second, we made extensive use of resources available through the shared parenting community. AFESP legislative training conferences provided valuable knowledge and Mark Ludwig served as a mentor along the way. We worked with AFESP's legal writing team on the initial draft of our bill. Don Hubin and Matt Hale of NPO also provided guidance and needed resources. After passing their law in Kentucky, Matt provided valuable insight on how to get our bill through the legislature and handle opposition. We commissioned a joint survey with NPO that we provided to all legislators showing public support of the legislation. While we were the boots on the ground, we collaborated with other organizations with expertise in certain areas to make a successful push toward equal shared parenting in Arkansas.

On a local level, we used personal connections to the fullest extent. Politics is just as much about relationships as it is about issues, so the importance of building connections cannot be overstated. We got to know legislators outside the Capitol before the legislative session to build relationships and gain support. We attended political events, town halls, fundraisers, and volunteered on campaigns. We had a member at the state Capitol lobbying on most days during the session. In our House committee hearing, we had 10 parents testify, each with a different

background and perspective, and each able to speak to a different demographic or profession. What we did *not* do was use social media to push the legislation.

The passage of SB18 in Arkansas is a big step toward steering family court in the right direction. Hopefully other state legislatures will see Arkansas as an example to follow. That being said, we're certainly not finished. There are many issues that need to be addressed before family court can function in the best interest of children and families. We'd like to be a resource to others, so if you need help moving things along in your state, please feel free to reach out. Here's to a good start to 2021!

Patrick Fraley, MD

Arkansas Advocates for Parental Equality

parentalequalityar@gmail.com



WFCF NEEDS YOU / **CHILD SUPPORT** (CONTINUED)

If you can **HELP** WFCF please send an email to wfcftreasurer@outlook.com

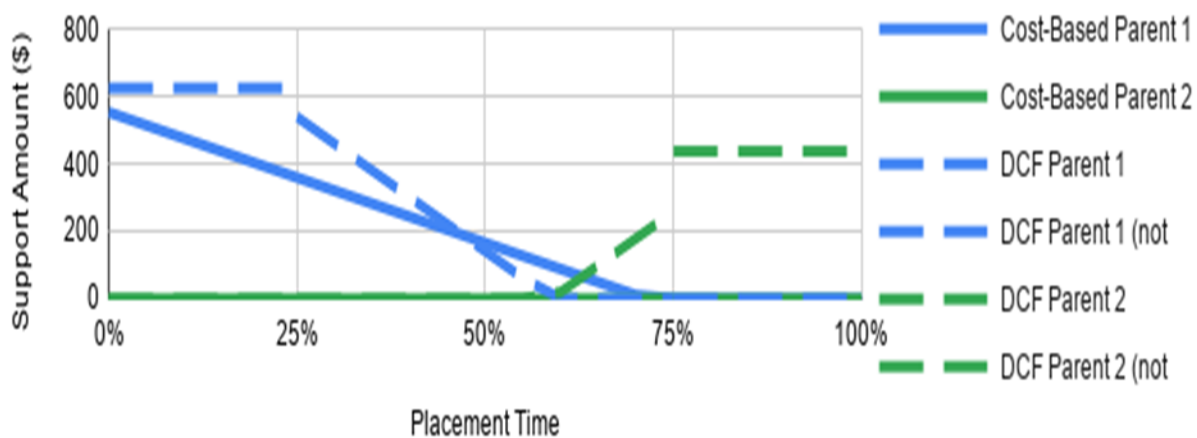


CHILD SUPPORT - *Continued from page 1:*

Too often that situation ends up leading to animosity and further parental conflict.

To address both inconsistencies Jonathan Koch has utilized the USDA report on **actual** child costs in one parent homes, and put together a **cost-based** support obligation calculation method. In WI and in most states a progressive assigning of support obligations based on disparities in incomes is an agreed upon precept. Jon's system incorporates **actual costs** associated with children, and assigns the financial responsibility **based on each parent's income capability proportionally**.

We are excited to see how this new calculation method will address support obligation requirements over a broader variation of income levels, compared to the current system. Certainly some obligations will go up and some will go down, but the overall effectiveness and appropriateness will go up significantly. We expect to improve the understanding of the system and how it works. Below is an example:



Over 60 academic studies show shared co-parenting is what's best for the vast majority of WI children



*MOM IS SO AGAINST SHARED PARENTING, HIRES A **HITMAN** FOR DAD.*

Reprint from *CHIPPEWA COUNTY, Wis. (WKBT)*

A Wisconsin mom will spend seven years behind bars for hiring a man to kill her daughter's father.

Melanie Schrader paid just \$200 to an undercover agent she thought was a hitman. Seconds later, she was under arrest as a nine-year custody battle took a near-deadly turn.

Information obtained through an open-records request into the investigation of 39-year old Schrader. The Chippewa County woman offered a \$200 down payment to an undercover agent to kill her daughter's father, Derek Gerke (*member of **WFCF***).

Law enforcement set up a meeting in a local park. Security video shows Schrader getting into the undercover officer's vehicle. After Schrader handed over the cash, two pictures of Gerke and a map to his house, a team of officers waiting nearby arrested Schrader before she could drive away. "This is no joke. It is absolutely a living hell," Gerke said.

Prosecutors charged Schrader with conspiracy to commit first-degree intentional homicide. But just before her trial was to start, prosecutors offered Schrader a plea deal to drop her prison time by more than half. "It came back, and it was a get out of jail free card," said Gerke's wife, Melinda.

During the course of the couple's custody battle, Schrader accused Gerke of sexually abusing their daughter. Chippewa County District Attorney Wade Newell said none of the allegations was substantiated. There was no proof, but Newell was afraid a parent on the jury would see things differently.

"Her argument would be I talked to law enforcement, they didn't help me. The system let me know and didn't help my daughter so I was the one who had to save my daughter." Newell said. Schrader accepted the plea and was sentenced to seven years in prison.

"We're not happy with it. I think Ms. Schrader needs more time," Gerke said. Even after she's released, Schrader cannot have contact with her daughter until the girl turns 19.

"I am grateful for that, that the courts are protecting Grace. That's hard on her, too," Gerke said. Hard for a little girl who loves both her parents and almost lost them both.

Gerke's fight for justice is not over. He's working with parenting groups (WFCF) in La Crosse and statewide, and with Wisconsin lawmakers to change custody laws and enforce civil penalties on parents who make false allegations during custody battles.

Fatherlessness in the entire US population of children now stands at **25%**

BOOT CAMP FOR NEW DADS ONLINE / GREAT TOOL TO PREPARE FOR PROVIDING A SHARED PARENTING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR SHARED CHILD.

See and Hear, First-Hand, What It's *Really* Like to Be a New Dad

Boot Camp for New Dads is a **men-only workshop for guys expecting their first baby**. During the 3-hour workshop, "Rookie" dads-to-be talk to "Veteran" new dads (with their babies) about what the first months of fatherhood are really like. The Vets answer questions, address concerns, and share how they and their families are tackling common issues faced by new parents.

[Sign me up to be the best dad I can for my baby!](#)

GUYS LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO:

- Support new mom and understand what she's going through
- Form a parenting team with your partner
- Handle gatekeeping and make sure you're hands-on from day one
- Troubleshoot crying babies
- Become the dad you want to be and bond with baby
- Build your relationship before baby arrives

The live, online, interactive workshop is **\$40 for each dad-to-be**, which includes the book *Crash Course for Dads-To-Be*. **<https://www.bootcampfornewdads.org/online>**

WHAT TO EXPECT Register yourself for Boot Camp for New Dads. (Check the "Register Mom-To-Be for Boot Camp..." box to register mom-to-be at the same time for Boot Camp and/or the Return to Work online workshops and save \$5 on each additional registration! *Only applies if registrations are the same transaction.*) The Zoom link will be in your confirmation email. We will mail your *Crash Course for Dads-to-Be* book to you and a tracking email will be sent. The day of, click the Zoom link and join other dads-to-be, new dads with their babies, and our Coach.

2020/2021

WFCF ZOOM meetings: (5) each month!

Family Court help

Co parenting help

Select a meeting: 2nd Thur, 2nd Fri, 3rd Monday (2), 4th Wed

Send email to (wfcftreasurer@outlook.com) with zoom meeting preference and a link will be sent to you.

Join Today ~ \$30 Lifetime Membership

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	
Phone					
Personal E-Mail Address					
<input type="checkbox"/> Check Here to be Contacted about Volunteer Opportunities with WFCF					

Qty	Description	Unit Price	Extended Cost
1	WFCF Lifetime Membership ★ Includes E-Mail Subscription to "Todays 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 SEPARATED PARENT MEETINGS / TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

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):

Fourth 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