

IT'S TIME TO BUST THE MYTHS

Shared Parenting Myths



International Council
on Shared Parenting

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IT'S TIME TO BUST THE MYTHS

Shared Parenting Myths

MYTH

Shared parenting puts PARENTS' RIGHTS over the BEST INTEREST OF CHILDREN.

THE TRUTH

The primary consideration supporting a presumption of shared parenting is the benefits shared parenting provides to children.

More than 40 years of social science research establishes a growing consensus that in the vast majority of cases, children raised in shared parenting arrangements score significantly higher on almost every metric of child well-being than those raised in a sole custody arrangement.

NIELSEN (2014); BAUDE (2016); BAUSERMAN (2002 & 2012)



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MYTH

**Shared
parenting
doesn't
BENEFIT
children when
the parents
are in
CONFLICT**

THE TRUTH

The quality of the parent child relationship is a better predictor of children's long-term outcomes than coparenting conflict.

Even when there is conflict between parents, shared-custody arrangements are better for children than sole-custody arrangements on all measures of behavioral, emotional, physical, and academic well-being and are related to children having better relationships with their parents and grandparents.

FABRICIUS & LEUCKEN (2007); NIELSEN (2017 & 2018); HARMON, ET AL. (2022);
FABRICIUS & SUH (2017)



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MYTH

**Shared
parenting isn't
appropriate
for INFANTS
and
TODDLERS**

THE TRUTH

There is no scientific support for the claim that infants' and toddlers' overnighting with their fathers is harmful or interferes with their attachment to their mothers.

Strong, healthy parent child relationships need consistent and frequent contact including daytime and nighttime caregiving. Restricting infants and toddlers from overnights with loving parents is inconsistent with what we know about the development of meaningful parent-child relationships in the first years of life.

WARSHAK (2014 & 2018); NIELSEN (2014); FABRICIUS & SUH (2017);
FABRICIUS (2022)



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MYTH

**Shared
parenting
undermines
children's
SECURITY by
requiring them
to shuttle
between TWO
homes.**

THE TRUTH

While having two homes sometimes causes inconveniences, research has shown that this is not harmful to children, nor does it hinder their developing strong relationships with both parents.

Overnights "up to and including equal numbers of overnights at both parents' homes" benefitted "both the long-term mother-child and father-child relationships."

FABRICIUS & SUH (2017); FRANSSON ET AL. (2018); WARSHAK (2014)



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MYTH

Shared parenting isn't necessary because what benefits children is the **QUALITY not the **QUANTITY** of time with each parent.**

THE TRUTH

The quality of parenting time is vital, of course. But the quantity of parenting time is also vital to children's well-being.

Research shows that benefits to children arise because both parents are significantly involved in ordinary, day-to-day parenting responsibilities, not just weekend and holiday time. And the benefits of shared parenting for children increase as the time with each parent approaches equality.

FABRICIUS & SUH (2017); FABRICIUS (2020 & 2022)



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MYTH

**Shared
parenting
leaves
children
vulnerable to
ABUSE**

THE TRUTH

There is no scientific evidence to support this statement.

Shared parenting laws are rebuttable when this type of custody plan is not in the child's best interest and when there is a demonstrated history of family violence.

HHS reports show no increase in cases of child maltreatment in states after enactment of equal shared parenting presumptions.

"CHILD MALTREATMENT 2020" U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES; FABRICIUS, W. (2020). EQUAL PARENTING TIME: THE CASE FOR A LEGAL PRESUMPTION. THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF CHILDREN AND THE LAW (PP. 453-476). OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.



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MYTH

**Shared
parenting
doesn't CAUSE
better
outcomes for
children; it's
just a
CORRELATION**

THE TRUTH

While families that choose shared parenting may have other characteristics that help children succeed (higher income, higher levels of education, less conflict), there is now clear evidence that shared parenting itself, and not just these other characteristics, contributes to children's well-being.

Evidence for this comes from countries where shared parenting is common across socio-economic divisions and, also, from advanced statistical analyses that allow measurement of the effects of shared parenting.

[BRAVER & VOTRUBA, 2018]



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