

Why South Dakota Legislators Should Pass a Shared Parenting Bill

The Case for Shared Parenting

Shared parenting benefits children, reduces conflict, and ensures both parents remain involved in their child's life. Data-driven evidence supports a presumption of shared parenting. [Here's why lawmakers should act now.](#)



1 Myth: Shared Parenting is Dangerous



Reality: Studies show children in shared parenting arrangements experience better emotional, academic, and social outcomes than those in sole custody.



Fact: A 2018 study in the Journal of Divorce & Remarriage found that even in high-conflict cases, children fare better when both parents are actively involved.



Addressing Domestic Violence (DV): Shared parenting laws include safeguards to protect against proven cases of abuse. False or exaggerated claims should not be used to block fit parents from their children's lives.

2 Myth: South Dakota's System is Working

Reality: South Dakota primarily awards one parent primary custody, often leading to reduced parental involvement from the non-custodial parent.

South Dakota is One of the Least Father-Friendly States:

23.6%

On average, fathers in South Dakota receive only 23.6% of custody time, ranking the state 45th out of 50 in the nation.

F+

The National Parents Organization issues a Shared Parenting Report Card grading each state's laws on shared parenting. South Dakota received an F+, indicating significant deficiencies in its support for equal parenting rights.

Comparison: States with strong shared parenting laws (e.g., Kentucky, Arizona) show lower rates of custody litigation, improved child well-being, and better parental cooperation.

Best Interest Factors? South Dakota's "**best interest**" standard is subjective and inconsistently applied, often favoring one parent over the other rather than starting with a presumption of equal involvement.





3 Myth: This Will Overwhelm the Courts



Reality: States that have passed shared parenting laws have seen a decrease in court battles as parents no longer fight for sole custody.

20%
↓

Fact: A study by the National Parents Organization found that litigation decreased by over 20% in states that enacted shared parenting reforms.



Efficiency: When shared parenting is the default, courts spend less time deciding custody battles, reducing caseloads and taxpayer burden.

4 Myth: We Already Use Best Interest Factors



Reality: While courts claim to consider the best interest of the child, the lack of a shared parenting presumption often results in biased decisions favoring sole custody.



Data: In states without shared parenting laws, over 80% of custody cases result in one parent (usually the father) having minimal visitation.



Solution: A rebuttable presumption of shared parenting ensures both parents remain actively involved unless proven unfit.

The Importance of Father Involvement

1 Research consistently shows that children with active father involvement experience:



Better Academic Performance

Children with involved fathers are 70% less likely to drop out of school and are more likely to earn higher grades.



Improved Emotional Well-being

Children raised with both parents have lower rates of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues.



Lower Crime & Substance Abuse Rates

75% of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers come from fatherless homes.

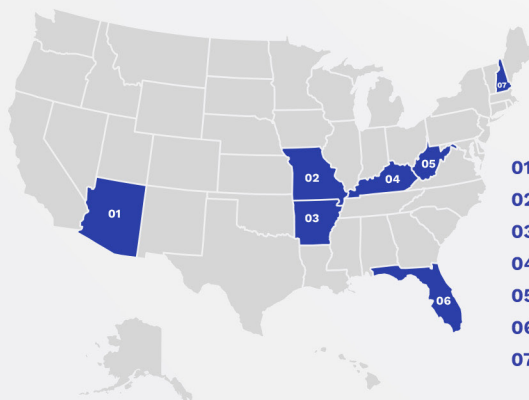


Better Economic Stability

Children raised without fathers are significantly more likely to experience poverty and financial hardship.

2 Legislative Success in Other States

Kentucky: Implemented a shared parenting presumption in 2018 – saw reduced custody disputes and higher child well-being ratings.



- 01 Arizona
- 02 Missouri
- 03 Arkansas
- 04 Kentucky
- 05 West Virginia
- 06 Florida
- 07 New Hampshire

Arizona: Reported less litigation and better parental cooperation after shared parenting became the norm.

Arkansas: Recently strengthened shared parenting laws, resulting in fewer contested custody cases.

By ensuring shared parenting, we can improve children's stability, emotional health, and long-term success.

Conclusion: Time for Change

Shared parenting is not only in the best interest of children but also reduces conflict, court battles, and parental alienation. Legislators must act now to modernize outdated laws and ensure children maintain meaningful relationships with both parents.