

1. All steps in divorce cases will be organized around the four goals of (i) ensuring safety, (ii) reducing conflict, (iii) building cooperation, and (iv) protecting children and healthy family relationships.

We expect the cooperation of all persons—especially parents and attorneys—to serve these four goals. Family cases must be about meeting the needs of the people and relationships in the family, not a contest between family members. It's likely that a good result for you is possible only if you work for a good result for the entire family, including your children and their other parent.

Visit FamilyCourtWebsite.org for information on:

- Our expectations for safety and cooperation
- Your duty to immediately contact the Domestic Relations Counseling Bureau (DRCB, 574-xxx-xxxx) about your required co-parenting class
- The requirement to complete UpToParents.org and to take copies of your work to your class.

2. If there is a risk of violence in your family, immediately contact the DRCB about services available to you.

DRCB can provide important and confidential help in seeking protective orders and no-contact orders, counseling, and other important services. Please seek good counseling immediately if there has been violence against you or any child in your family.

Children have no defense against their parents' anger. —Dr. Ross Campbell

3. In addition to the required website work, we recommend that you fill out a Parenting Plan Worksheet (PPW) as soon as possible.

Children's needs increase dramatically when parents separate. We strongly suggest that you use the PPW form on FamilyCourtWebsite.org to build agreements that can protect your children. While we hope you will not need court hearings, note that parents taking any matter to court must bring their Agreed Commitments from their website work and a completed PPW.

4. Because of its emotional and financial costs, many parents are well-advised to consider if divorce is necessary for them.

In divorce, parents must divide assets and double many expenses. Added to this financial burden are the even greater emotional costs to members of the family. If there is no emergency, you may want to use counseling and other resources to see if your marriage can be saved and improved.

5. We expect all parents and attorneys to remember that parent conflict is dangerous to children and to conduct themselves in ways that reduce conflict.

Dozens of studies show that parent conflict seriously hurts children. We expect parents, whenever it is safe to do so, to relate courteously for the sake of all members of the family, especially the children.

Conflict between parents is the best predictor of a child's later maladjustment. —Dr. Anthony L. Berardi

6. We expect all parents and attorneys to remember that children need the best possible safe relationship with both parents.

We expect everyone to support whatever safe relationship the children can have with each parent. Be a friend to your children's relationship with their other parent.

7. The Courts are available in dangerous cases like domestic violence, but we also do not allow inappropriate use of court.

Court is not a place to take issues best worked out in discussion, counseling, mediation, or other cooperative processes. Parents should focus on their children even if they are not together. Visit FamilyCourtWebsite.org for information on the requirement of a problem-solving consultation before motions are filed in any family case.

8. ***Decide if you can and will use joint legal custody (JLC). Under JLC, unmarried parents cooperatively make the major decisions in their children's lives, just as they would do if they were happily married to each other.***

One of the first things you and your co-parent must decide is whether you are ready, willing, and able to use JLC. JLC offers advantages such as encouraging parents to work together to make the best cooperative decisions on major child issues like schooling, medical and counseling care, moral values and religious upbringing, and other things either parent sees as important. However, JLC is possible only if parents have a peaceful relationship and will share information openly and promptly, courteously come to joint decisions, and carry through together on those decisions. Counseling can help some parents succeed at JLC.

9. ***Carefully consider using any counseling or other help to move forward successfully.***

Separation and divorce are confusing and emotionally devastating experiences. Seek the help you need to create a better future.

10. ***Protecting your children is likely your light out of hurt and fear.***

There is a good guiding light almost all parents can use in divorce: ***parents who do what is best for their children almost always do best for themselves.*** Parents who build peace, courtesy, and cooperation for their children are the very ones who can use their money and emotional resources building a better future rather than arguing the past.

*If parents will agree on one thing, they'll agree on everything,
if that one thing is, "What do we want our children to look like at 25?"*
—Patrick Brown

For more information, see www.FamilyCourtWebsite.org or contact the Freedom 22 Foundation at 574-532-6655.

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Judges' Notice to Parents in Divorce Cases in Morguson County, Indiana



*Hon. Kenneth J. Jacobi, Morguson Circuit Court
Hon. Elizabeth Stephenson, Morguson Superior Court*

Divorce cases in Morguson County will be about:

1. Ensuring safety
2. Reducing conflict
3. Building cooperation
4. Protecting children and all healthy relationships.

Morguson County—Making family cases about families.