

To Whom This May Concern:

I am a divorced father of 5 children, a 13 y/o son, 17 y/o daughter, 18 y/o daughter, 21 y/o son and 26 y/o son who has been divorced since November 24 2009 when 4 of my children were minors. I am unable to attend the proceedings on January 9 but wish to advise the following:

Due to my business travel, an agreement was made in the original divorce decree/shared custody agreement that I would advise my ex at the end of each month as to when I would be able to see the children including any weekdays and weekends. My ex was then supposed to work with this schedule to facilitate, encourage and support my visitation with the children. What a mistake! All this did was give her the authority to say "no" to my requests advising that either she had plans with the children or the children had their own plans, etc.

In early 2012 I had to return to court to try and change this visitation. I wanted at least one week a month having the children live with me as well as alternating weekends. My ex of course would not agree. Due to adjournments and games played by my ex who represented herself the matter was not resolved until 2013.

A GAL was appointed by the court who was a complete waste. She spent most of her time interviewing my then 17 y/o daughter who was about to turn 18 two days later. She failed to provide any comfort or confidence to the children so that they could open up and tell them how they really felt. Keep in mind that my ex had prepped them as to what to say or not say.

Anyway, all the GAL would recommend is alternating weekends and Wednesday night during the week when I wasn't traveling on business.

My attorney advised that we did not have to accept the GAL's recommendation and try the matter. However a judge would put great emphasis on the GAL's recommendations since she conducted the interviews of both parents and children.

I chose to accept the recommendations and agree to the alternating weekends and one night per week. This was more than I had previously and had already spent \$10,000 on my attorney and \$3,000 on the GAL. It also allowed me to rectify my mistake from the original divorce decree. More importantly, and this is critical, it allowed the children to know exactly when they would be with me. It allowed us to plan events such as when their birthdays would fall on my days, any proms, dances or other extended family social events. It gave my children stability and it has been a blessing as my relationships have improved dramatically in spite of the tremendous parental alienation measures used by my ex.

It isn't over of course. My ex now refers to me as "Tom" when texting or discussing me with my children not "your father" or "Dad".

Unfortunately, I have no relationship with my 26 y/o son who refuses to respond to my texts, e-mails or calls. He was the oldest and the most impressionable vis-a-vis his mother who has lied to him about certain events that transpired during the marriage and ultimate break up. A truly loving mother would sit down with him and tell him not to ignore his father, that he is the only father he will ever have.

On that note, I had asked the GAL if she could reach out to my 26 y/o son and she said she would call me to discuss. That never happened. I was also told that I was probably owed a refund from the retainer but once again no follow up from the GAL.

I would still like to have a week a month with my 13 y/o son and 17 y/o daughter who turns 18 in October. I actually only live 1.5 miles from the children in the same town. However I am ill prepared to deal with the costs, delays and ineptitude that I encountered in 2012 and 2013.

At some point all my children will be of majority and I won't have to deal with the courts, lawyers or GAL. The problem is that you can't get back the time lost with the children...when they are children and the most impressionable.

The system has to change to give Dads the opportunity to be Dads. It shouldn't automatically default to the mother.

In fact my ex once told me that I was the better parent. She would never admit that now of course. She has been too busy playing the system.

Thank you.

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