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COPARENTING – CUSTODY – PARENTING RESOURCES



OCHR.ORG MISSION

Protect the rights of children to have access to parents by providing education, resources, and support services for successful coparenting strategies.

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REPRESENTING YOURSELF IN FAMILY COURT

By Jake Hornstein, Our Children Have Rights .Org



A commonly overlooked option while navigating the child custody process is Representing Yourself, or "Filing Pro Se". When parents split up, or are not together, and both parents want legal access to their child(ren), child custody arrangements must be determined.

Navigating this process through the court system can be emotional and complicated. Many parents choose to retain an attorney. Others decide to file Pro Se. Pro se is Latin for "on one's own behalf" or "for oneself". It effectively means self-representation.

Filing Pro Se is a MAJOR responsibility. Before you decide, do so with a complete understanding of what it entails. Ask yourself these questions:

Did The Other Parent Hire an Attorney? If yes, they could be in a more advantageous position.

Do I Understand How Court Procedures Work? Use your resources, such as online resources (OCHR.org), libraries, and your local court clerk. Seek out the court clerk, develop a friendly rapport and level of comfortability for asking questions.

Can I Afford to Hire an Attorney? Research the anticipated costs. Contact attorneys in the county of your court case to inquire about fees and estimated costs.

What Alternative Options Do I Have? Finances are the main driver behind choosing to file Pro Se. Explore options and resources for Pro Bono legal aid (we can help with this). You may qualify for legal assistance from various agencies depending on your circumstances.

Will My Ideal Custody Arrangements Be Too Difficult to Achieve? Consider the custody arrangement you desire and how that aligns with the best interests of your child. Have a clear understanding of the wishes of the co-parent as well.

Am I Familiar with the Required Court Documents? Review sample documents online or at the local courthouse. Determine your comfortability interpreting and completing the documents. Ask the court clerk for help identifying the correct forms, when they are due, and how they should be submitted.

When performed properly, filing Pro Se can be a powerful tool that could minimize or even eliminate the need for paid legal aid while achieving a successful custody and co-parenting outcome.

OCHR.Org is a Pinellas based nonprofit that serves children by helping their parents more seamlessly navigate their child custody and co-parenting journeys, at no cost to the family. We've built a no cost Virtual Educational Resource Center and offer no cost consultations on an on-going and as needed basis.

Support of our mission is vital, and we kindly ask our community to consider a small financial contribution to our mission.

Most importantly, if you, or someone you know, needs our assistance, we're here for you. We're on a mission... A mission to protect the rights of children to have access to both responsible parents by providing education, resources, and support services for successful co-parenting. Why? Because Our Children Have Rights.

Contact Jake, JakeHornstein@OurChildrenHaveRights.com or visit www.OCHR.org. To donate, visit www.ourchildrenhaverights.org/donate.



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