

SECOND REGULAR SESSION
HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
HOUSE BILL NO. 1974
101ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4569H.03C

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 452.375, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to child custody arrangements.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 452.375, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 452.375, to read as follows:

452.375. 1. As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(1) "Custody" means joint legal custody, sole legal custody, joint physical custody or sole physical custody or any combination thereof;

(2) "Joint legal custody" means that the parents share the decision-making rights, responsibilities, and authority relating to the health, education and welfare of the child, and, unless allocated, apportioned, or decreed, the parents shall confer with one another in the exercise of decision-making rights, responsibilities, and authority;

(3) "Joint physical custody" means an order awarding each of the parents significant, but not necessarily equal, periods of time during which a child resides with or is under the care and supervision of each of the parents. Joint physical custody shall be shared by the parents in such a way as to assure the child of frequent, continuing and meaningful contact with both parents;

(4) "Third-party custody" means a third party designated as a legal and physical custodian pursuant to subdivision (5) of subsection 5 of this section.

2. The court shall determine custody in accordance with the best interests of the child. **There shall be a rebuttable presumption that an award of equal or approximately equal parenting time to each parent is in the best interests of the child. Such presumption is rebuttable only by a preponderance of the evidence in accordance with all relevant**

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

19 **factors including, but not limited to, the factors contained in subdivisions (1) to (8) of**
20 **this subsection. The presumption is also rebutted if the court finds that the parents have**
21 **reached an agreement on all issues related to custody, that a parent or any person living**
22 **with a parent has committed an offense as set forth under subsection 3 of this section, or**
23 **that a history of domestic violence or abuse, as defined under section 455.010, has**
24 **occurred.** When the parties have not reached an agreement on all issues related to custody,
25 the court shall consider all relevant factors and enter written findings of fact and conclusions
26 of law, including, but not limited to, the following:

27 (1) The wishes of the child's parents as to custody and the proposed parenting plan
28 submitted by both parties;

29 (2) The needs of the child for a frequent, continuing and meaningful relationship with
30 both parents and the ability and willingness of parents to actively perform their functions as
31 mother and father for the needs of the child;

32 (3) The interaction and interrelationship of the child with parents, siblings, and any
33 other person who may significantly affect the child's best interests;

34 (4) Which parent is more likely to allow the child frequent, continuing and
35 meaningful contact with the other parent;

36 (5) The child's adjustment to the child's home, school, and community; **the child's**
37 **physical, emotional, medical, educational, and other needs; and the effect of the**
38 **proposed custody plan on the child's health and welfare. The fact that a parent sends**
39 **his or her child or children to a home school, as defined under section 167.031, shall not**
40 **be the sole factor that a court considers in determining custody of such child or children;**

41 (6) The mental and physical health of all individuals involved, including any history
42 of abuse of any individuals involved. ~~[If the court finds that a pattern of domestic violence as~~
43 ~~defined in section 455.010 has occurred, and, if the court also finds that awarding custody to~~
44 ~~the abusive parent is in the best interest of the child, then the court shall enter written findings~~
45 ~~of fact and conclusions of law.]~~ Custody and visitation rights shall be ordered in a manner
46 that best protects the child and any other child or children for whom the parent has custodial
47 or visitation rights, and the parent or other family or household member who is the victim of
48 domestic violence from any further harm. **If the court finds that a pattern of domestic**
49 **violence, as defined under section 455.010, has occurred and that awarding custody to**
50 **the abusive parent is in the best interests of the child, the court shall enter written**
51 **findings of fact and conclusions of law, including those findings required under**
52 **subsection 15 of this section;**

53 (7) The intention of either parent to relocate the principal residence of the child; and

54 (8) The ~~wishes~~ **input** of a child as to the child's ~~eustodian~~ **custodial arrangement.**
55 ~~[The fact that a parent sends his or her child or children to a home school, as defined in~~

56 ~~section 167.031, shall not be the sole factor that a court considers in determining custody of~~
57 ~~such child or children.]~~

58 3. (1) In any court proceedings relating to custody of a child, the court shall not
59 award custody or unsupervised visitation of a child to a parent if such parent or any person
60 residing with such parent has been found guilty of, or pled guilty to, any of the following
61 offenses when a child was the victim:

62 (a) A felony violation of section 566.030, 566.031, 566.032, 566.060, 566.061,
63 566.062, 566.064, 566.067, 566.068, 566.083, 566.100, 566.101, 566.111, 566.151, 566.203,
64 566.206, 566.209, 566.211, or 566.215;

65 (b) A violation of section 568.020;

66 (c) A violation of subdivision (2) of subsection 1 of section 568.060;

67 (d) A violation of section 568.065;

68 (e) A violation of section 573.200;

69 (f) A violation of section 573.205; or

70 (g) A violation of section 568.175.

71 (2) For all other violations of offenses in chapters 566 and 568 not specifically listed
72 in subdivision (1) of this subsection or for a violation of an offense committed in another state
73 when a child is the victim that would be a violation of chapter 566 or 568 if committed in
74 Missouri, the court may exercise its discretion in awarding custody or visitation of a child to a
75 parent if such parent or any person residing with such parent has been found guilty of, or pled
76 guilty to, any such offense.

77 4. The general assembly finds and declares that it is the public policy of this state that
78 frequent, continuing and meaningful contact with both parents after the parents have
79 separated or dissolved their marriage is in the best interest of the child, except for cases where
80 the court specifically finds that such contact is not in the best interest of the child, and that it
81 is the public policy of this state to encourage parents to participate in decisions affecting the
82 health, education and welfare of their children, and to resolve disputes involving their
83 children amicably through alternative dispute resolution. In order to effectuate these policies,
84 **the general assembly encourages the court to enter a temporary parenting plan as early**
85 **as practicable in a proceeding under this chapter including, but not limited to, at an**
86 **initial case management conference, consistent with the provisions of subsection 2 of this**
87 **section, and, in so doing,** the court shall determine the custody arrangement which will best
88 assure both parents participate in such decisions and have frequent, continuing and
89 meaningful contact with their children so long as it is in the best interests of the child.

90 5. Prior to awarding the appropriate custody arrangement in the best interest of the
91 child, the court shall consider each of the following as follows:

92 (1) Joint physical and joint legal custody to both parents, which shall not be denied
93 solely for the reason that one parent opposes a joint physical and joint legal custody award.
94 The residence of one of the parents shall be designated as the address of the child for mailing
95 and educational purposes;

96 (2) Joint physical custody with one party granted sole legal custody. The residence of
97 one of the parents shall be designated as the address of the child for mailing and educational
98 purposes;

99 (3) Joint legal custody with one party granted sole physical custody;

100 (4) Sole custody to either parent; or

101 (5) Third-party custody or visitation:

102 (a) When the court finds that each parent is unfit, unsuitable, or unable to be a
103 custodian, or the welfare of the child requires, and it is in the best interests of the child, then
104 custody, temporary custody or visitation may be awarded **to** a person related by consanguinity
105 or affinity to the child. If no person related to the child by consanguinity or affinity is willing
106 to accept custody, then the court may award custody to any other person or persons deemed
107 by the court to be suitable and able to provide an adequate and stable environment for the
108 child. Before the court awards custody, temporary custody or visitation to a third person
109 under this subdivision, the court shall make that person a party to the action;

110 (b) Under the provisions of this subsection, any person may petition the court to
111 intervene as a party in interest at any time as provided by supreme court rule.

112 6. If the parties have not agreed to a custodial arrangement, or the court determines
113 such arrangement is not in the best interest of the child, the court shall include a written
114 finding in the judgment or order based on the public policy in subsection 4 of this section and
115 each of the factors listed in subdivisions (1) to (8) of subsection 2 of this section detailing the
116 specific relevant factors that made a particular arrangement in the best interest of the child. If
117 a proposed custodial arrangement is rejected by the court, the court shall include a written
118 finding in the judgment or order detailing the specific relevant factors resulting in the
119 rejection of such arrangement.

120 7. Upon a finding by the court that either parent has refused to exchange information
121 with the other parent, which shall include but not be limited to information concerning the
122 health, education and welfare of the child, the court shall order the parent to comply
123 immediately and to pay the prevailing party a sum equal to the prevailing party's cost
124 associated with obtaining the requested information, which shall include but not be limited to
125 reasonable attorney's fees and court costs.

126 8. As between the parents of a child, no preference may be given to either parent in
127 the awarding of custody because of that parent's age, sex, or financial status, nor because of
128 the age or sex of the child. The court shall not presume that a parent, solely because of his or

129 her sex, is more qualified than the other parent to act as a joint or sole legal or physical
130 custodian for the child.

131 9. Any judgment providing for custody shall include a specific written parenting plan
132 setting forth the terms of such parenting plan arrangements specified in subsection 8 of
133 section 452.310. Such plan may be a parenting plan submitted by the parties pursuant to
134 section 452.310 or, in the absence thereof, a plan determined by the court, but in all cases, the
135 custody plan approved and ordered by the court shall be in the court's discretion and shall be
136 in the best interest of the child.

137 10. After August 28, 2016, every court order establishing or modifying custody or
138 visitation shall include the following language: "In the event of noncompliance with this
139 order, the aggrieved party may file a verified motion for contempt. If custody, visitation, or
140 third-party custody is denied or interfered with by a parent or third party without good cause,
141 the aggrieved person may file a family access motion with the court stating the specific facts
142 that constitute a violation of the custody provisions of the judgment of dissolution, legal
143 separation, or judgment of paternity. The circuit clerk will provide the aggrieved party with
144 an explanation of the procedures for filing a family access motion and a simple form for use
145 in filing the family access motion. A family access motion does not require the assistance of
146 legal counsel to prepare and file."

147 11. No court shall adopt any local rule, form, or practice requiring a standardized or
148 default parenting plan for interim, temporary, or permanent orders or judgments.
149 Notwithstanding any other provision **of law** to the contrary, a court may enter an interim
150 order in a proceeding under this chapter, provided that the interim order shall not contain any
151 provisions about child custody or a parenting schedule or plan without first providing the
152 parties with notice and a hearing, unless the parties otherwise agree.

153 12. Unless a parent has been denied custody rights pursuant to this section or
154 visitation rights under section 452.400, both parents shall have access to records and
155 information pertaining to a minor child including, but not limited to, medical, dental, and
156 school records. If the parent without custody has been granted restricted or supervised
157 visitation because the court has found that the parent with custody or any child has been the
158 victim of domestic violence, as defined in section 455.010, by the parent without custody, the
159 court may order that the reports and records made available pursuant to this subsection not
160 include the address of the parent with custody or the child. A court shall order that the reports
161 and records made available under this subsection not include the address of the parent with
162 custody if the parent with custody is a participant in the address confidentiality program under
163 section 589.663. Unless a parent has been denied custody rights pursuant to this section or
164 visitation rights under section 452.400, any judgment of dissolution or other applicable court
165 order shall specifically allow both parents access to such records and reports.

166 13. Except as otherwise precluded by state or federal law, if any individual,
167 professional, public or private institution or organization denies access or fails to provide or
168 disclose any and all records and information, including, but not limited to, past and present
169 dental, medical and school records pertaining to a minor child, to either parent upon the
170 written request of such parent, the court shall, upon its finding that the individual,
171 professional, public or private institution or organization denied such request without good
172 cause, order that party to comply immediately with such request and to pay to the prevailing
173 party all costs incurred, including, but not limited to, attorney's fees and court costs associated
174 with obtaining the requested information.

175 14. An award of joint custody does not preclude an award of child support pursuant to
176 section 452.340 and applicable supreme court rules. The court shall consider the factors
177 contained in section 452.340 and applicable supreme court rules in determining an amount
178 reasonable or necessary for the support of the child.

179 15. If the court finds that domestic violence or abuse as defined in section 455.010
180 has occurred, the court shall make specific findings of fact to show that the custody or
181 visitation arrangement ordered by the court best protects the child and the parent or other
182 family or household member who is the victim of domestic violence, as defined in section
183 455.010, and any other children for whom such parent has custodial or visitation rights from
184 any further harm.

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