



International Conference on **SHARED PARENTING 2023**

May 5,6 and 7 2023

Athens, Greece
live and Online

New Paradigms: Advances in Research and Practice on Shared Parenting



Press Release and Conference Conclusions May 12, 2023

As the world's leading organization devoted to the study of shared parenting and the best interests of children after parental separation, the International Council on Shared Parenting has concluded its Sixth International Conference on Shared Parenting, held in Athens Greece, on May 5-7, 2023.

The Council's goals are, first, the advancement of scientific knowledge on the needs and best interests of children whose parents are living apart, and second, to formulate evidence-based recommendations about the legal, judicial and practical implementation of shared parenting. The Council has compiled a large database of new research on child and family outcomes in shared parenting families, and seeks to integrate this scientific knowledge into family law and professional practice. Our main accomplishment has been the publication of a series of consensus statements about shared parenting and the best interests of children, at the conclusion of each of our six international conferences to date.

What is unique about the Council is that it brings together three distinct groups in dialogue: leading scientists in the field of shared parenting who are able to share their current research; leading child and family legal and mental health practitioners who specialize in the area of parental separation and are able to share information on best practices with children and families; and members of civil society who are actively involved in the politics of law reform to establish shared parenting as the foundation of family law. We are also unique in regard to the international scope of our organization; this year we attracted 200 online and in-person delegates from 34 countries to our international conference.

Our sixth international conference was our most ambitious to date in regard to the number and wide scope breadth of the presentations on offer. In total, we offered a total of 74 plenary, workshop, panel and round table presentations, with over 100 speakers. Our conference theme was, *New Paradigms: Advances in Research and Practice on Shared Parenting*. Our subthemes included: International Comparisons in Shared Parenting Law, Best Practices in Child- and Family-Friendly Justice, Best Practices in Child- and Family-Friendly Mental Health Intervention, Experiences of Children and Families Affected by Domestic Violence and Parental Alienation, and Overcoming Barriers to the Establishment

of Shared Parenting in Law. In developing conclusions with respect to each of these sub-themes, we sought the assistance of the chairs and moderators of the workshop sessions at the conference, as well as all of the plenary presenters.

The Conclusions of the Sixth International Conference on Shared Parenting are as follows:

1. We reaffirmed the main conclusion from our first international conference: There is a consensus that neither the discretionary best interests of the child standard nor sole custody or primary residence orders are serving the needs of children and families of divorce. There is a consensus that shared parenting is a viable post-divorce parenting arrangement that is optimal to child development and well-being, including for children of high conflict parents. The amount of shared parenting time necessary to achieve child well being and positive outcomes is a minimum of one-third time with each parent, with additional benefits accruing up to and including equal (50-50) parenting time, including both weekday (routine) and weekend (leisure) time.
2. We reaffirmed the main conclusion from our second international conference: “As shared parenting encompasses both shared parental authority (decision-making) and shared parental responsibility for the day-to-day upbringing and welfare of children, between fathers and mothers, in keeping with children's age and stage of development, there is consensus that the legal implementation of shared parenting, including both the assumption of shared responsibilities and presumption of shared rights in regard to the parenting of children by fathers and mothers who are living together or apart, be enshrined in law.”
3. We strengthened the main conclusion from our third international conference: On the basis of current research evidence, social scientists can now confidently recommend presumptive shared parenting to policy makers. Shared parenting now has enough evidence that the burden of proof should fall to those who oppose it rather than those who promote it.
4. We reaffirmed the main recommendation from our fourth international conference, calling upon the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, governments and professional associations to identify shared parenting as a fundamental right of the child. We went further to state that a corresponding Charter of Responsibilities to Children's Needs in the Separation and Divorce Transition is needed, and that shared parenting responsibility is most in keeping with a responsibility-to-needs approach to the best interests of the child. There is a consensus that it is the responsibility of social institutions, including public and private social

- welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies, to support parents in their shared responsibility to address their children's needs in the separation and divorce transition.
5. There is consensus that the lack of responsibility and the lack of accountability of social institutions, including public and private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies, is a significant factor compromising the well-being of children of separation and divorce and their families, and strong accountability structures are urgently needed and should be established forthwith.
 6. At the same time, there is consensus that parents bear responsibility for inducing problems such as parental alienation and psychological disorders in children. Parents and professionals should be conscious about parents' attachment styles and motivational beliefs, and professional support to break the intergenerational cycle of such harmful family patterns and dynamics is vital.
 7. We reaffirmed the main conclusions from our fifth international conference: Shared parenting is a viable post-divorce parenting arrangement that is optimal to child development and well-being, including for children of high conflict parents. Shared parenting serves as a bulwark against first-time family violence, and we thus support a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting in contested cases of child custody, and advocate for shared parenting as the foundation of family law reform. At the same time, there is a consensus that shared parenting is an optimal arrangement for the majority of children and families, including high conflict families, but not for situations of substantiated family violence and child abuse. We thus support a rebuttable legal presumption against shared parenting in family violence cases.
 8. There is consensus that addressing the issue of family violence in separation and divorce cases, and addressing parental alienation subsequent to separation and divorce, are not mutually exclusive endeavors. Recognition of parental alienation as a form of family violence is part of our collective responsibility to address family violence in all its forms. All attempts to polarize the need to address parental alienation on the one hand, and other forms of family violence on the other, place children and family members at risk.
 9. Formal and informal social support is vital not only to the well-being of children, parents and extended families undergoing separation and divorce, but also to the success of shared parenting arrangements. The role of social capital in assisting children and families in their transition to shared parenting arrangements cannot be underestimated.