

The evolution of child custody arrangements

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The Evolution of Child Custody Arrangements Heather Gibson Southern New Hampshire University When a family splits, separates, divorces or a child is born out of wedlock for whatever reason one of the most difficult decisions to make are custody arrangements. Over the years the government has shifted its views from the child's mother being the best fit for primary custody to "the best interest" of the child. What's in the best interest of the child consists of both tangible and non-tangible things.

The necessities include the ability to provide food, shelter and a safe environment are important but also the stability of the parent psychologically and their mental health also begins to become part of the importance to the child. The person who has legal custody over a child is the person who makes important decisions in the child's life. The determination of who should have custody in a child custody battle has become highly problematic over the years. Maternal preference was given as the best fit for the child. The mother was deemed more nurturing and caring as a parent.

The United States held this idea for many years. In the world around them women were fighting for equal rights and in turn making men equal in the work force as well as a parent. The increase of divorces in the mid 1900's and women going in the workforce led to the courts deciding what was in the best interest of the child rather than who was more motherly and nurturing. Another change that came about was the idea of joint custody, rather than sole custody. Today child custody can be as simple as two parents making the decision to share custody or on the opposite end the legal battle of who's the better parent.

Forensic psychologists help in informing the judge of who (unbiased) is the better parent or if joint custody would work out for the best interest of the child. They go through different competency evaluations, may visit the home or investigate further to determine custody. Although it seems women are still chosen as the better parent trend have shifted and men have a better chance at sole custody. Another evolution that has evolved is the familiarization of gay rights as parents. It is still unclear as it is emerging but it is food for thought.