



## Planning a Family Law Clinic in Your Community

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# InfoSheet 7: Family Law Clinics

Family Law Clinics are a valuable source of information for parents, especially non-custodial fathers, to learn about legal rights and options regarding child support, custody, parenting time, arrearages, and other areas of family law.

For fathers, mothers, and other family members who are interested in learning about the rights and responsibilities of unmarried or divorced non-custodial parents, Family Law Clinics can be a good source of basic and intermediate-level information. Typically, law clinics are 2-hour sessions that dedicate a large amount of time to answering attendees' questions about family law. The following checklist offers tips for hosting a successful clinic in your community.

### 6-8 Weeks Before Event

- Plan the time and date of the clinic. Many clinics are scheduled for 2 hours in the early evening or on weekends, when most parents are not working. However, if you are offering more than one clinic, it may be good to try different times and days of the week, to accommodate many schedules.
- Invite panelists such as:
  - Child support magistrate / family court judge
  - Attorney who works with non-custodial parents (2 or more, if possible)
  - Child support workers from each county where event will be publicized
  - Guardian ad litem
  - Advocate from a local nonprofit or community organization that serves fathers
- Reserve a room in a neutral location such as a school, college, library, park building, or YMCA (some parents respond better if the clinic is not hosted in a county courthouse or child support office).

*When both boys and girls are reared with engaged fathers they demonstrate a greater ability to take initiative and evidence self-control.*

Kyle Pruett

### 4-6 Weeks Before Event

- Complete rough draft of promotional flyer. Get creative ideas from others to make the flyer stand out.
- Review completed rough draft with others for appearance, spelling, etc. before distributing.

### 3-4 Weeks Before Event

- Re-confirm date and time with facility and panelists. Send letter to panelists confirming their participation. Ask all panelists and fatherhood programs to bring sufficient business cards or brochures.
- Recruit volunteers to help at the event, including a photographer. Ensure that volunteers know their responsibilities (then, trust them).
- Forward flyer to newspaper, television stations, radio, etc. Encourage newspapers to write about the event and include it in their calendar.
- Mail flyers broadly to other fatherhood agencies, child support agencies, and attendees from past law clinics. Post extra flyers at local businesses.

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**1-2 Weeks Before Event**

- Create handouts including an agenda and evaluation. Make nametags for presenters and volunteers.
- Determine how to mitigate legal liabilities, if any. Consider need for insurance, disclaimers, or legal review.
- Ensure that volunteers understand what their duties will be, including the time they need to be at the event (Volunteers may help with check-in, distribution of materials, setting-up food, managing panelists, etc.).
- Pick up beverages, snacks, etc. that will be provided at the event.

**Day of Event**

- Bring agendas, evaluations, index cards, handouts, etc. Also, bring beverages, snacks, and necessary supplies (serving trays, napkins, cups, plastic utensils, coffee pot, etc.).
- Arrive at the event early enough to ensure that everything is set up accordingly.
- As attendees arrive, ask them to sign-in. Each attendee will receive an agenda, an index card (for questions), an evaluation, any informational handouts. Be sure to welcome attendees and help them feel comfortable.

**Schedule of Event – 2 hours total**

- 5 minutes: Thank attendees; give overview of session; focus on the issue of “positive parent involvement”.
- 10 minutes: Panelists will introduce themselves, including their background working with non-custodial parents.
- 30-45 minutes: Each panelist will speak for 5-7 minutes about their area of family law. Focus on providing specific information that answers some of the following questions:
- What is your role in helping non-custodial parents stay/get connected with their children?
  - What tips can you offer to non-custodial parents who are struggling to “work within the system”?
  - What resources are there for non-custodial parents in the community?
  - What words of hope / encouragement can you offer?
- 45-50 minutes: Ask attendees to write questions on index cards. Pass the questions to the front for the panelists to respond. Or, ask attendees to stand and ask questions directly to the panelists.
- 5 minutes: Thank everyone for attending. Remind them to complete the evaluation.

Visit MFFN online at  
[www.mnfathers.org/resources.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/resources.html)  
for additional InfoSheets about how to  
engage fathers in family service programs.

**After the Event**

- Clean up after the event.
- Send thank you letters to panelists and volunteers.

**Variations**

- Offer 15-minute one-on-one consultations where parents can ask specific questions with panelists.
- Plan 2 or more consecutive clinics so parents can return and/or recruit more attendees for the later clinics.
- Offer free pizza or snack trays, if the clinic is scheduled during dinner-hour.
- Raffle off door prizes as an incentive for attending. Good door prizes include passes for family activities, restaurant gift cards, books about positive/healthy parenting, etc. Contact local businesses to seek donations.
- If you offer other services/programs for fathers, conduct a survey to find out their interests/needs.

For further details about how to host a Family Law Clinic, contact the Fatherhood Program of Carlton County at (218) 384-9568.

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