



THE FIRST 72 HOURS

A Crisis Guide for Fathers Entering Family Court

When everything feels urgent, make the next decision smaller.

YOUR FATHERHOOD IS LARGER THAN YOUR LITIGATION.

THE ENDURING FATHER

CHARACTER · ENDURANCE · REDEMPTION

Before you begin

This guide is an organization tool, not legal advice, a psychological diagnosis, or a substitute for individualized professional help. Family law, deadlines, evidence rules, safety procedures, and professional roles vary by jurisdiction.

If you received a court paper, locate the actual document and verify any deadline through qualified counsel, the court, or an appropriate official self-help resource. Do not rely on memory, a social-media post, or an AI-generated deadline calculation.

YOUR JOB FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS

Not to master family law. Not to prove your entire history. Not to make everyone understand you. Identify what is actually required next and preserve enough capacity to do it responsibly.

Five rules for a bad day

1. Read the actual order or paper. Do not build your next move around what somebody says the document means.
2. Describe the act, not the personality. "I did not receive the schedule before the event" is usable. "She is a narcissist" does not solve the schedule problem.
3. Answer the request, not the insult. A hostile message may still contain one logistical question. Separate the two.
4. Do not use your child as staff, messenger, witness, or audience. Adult administration belongs with adults.
5. Take one responsible next step. You do not have to settle the entire past tonight.

Hours 0–6: Establish what is real

- Locate the current order, notice, filing, email, or request that created the immediate problem.
- Record when you received it.
- Identify any hearing date, response date, exchange time, appointment, or other stated requirement.
- Save the original file and attachments. Do not edit or crop away context.
- Write one sentence describing the immediate issue without diagnosing motive.

WRITE THIS SENTENCE

The immediate issue I need to solve is

_____.

Do not do this yet

- Post the dispute publicly.
- Send a long character defense to everyone involved.
- Delete embarrassing messages.
- Pressure a child or witness to “clear things up.”
- Contact someone through a prohibited channel.

Hours 6–24: Reduce the problem

Choose the one issue that needs a decision next. Gather only the few records directly relevant to that issue. Preserve the rest without trying to present your entire case tonight.

Use four columns

OBSERVATION	What you directly saw, heard, received, or saved.
STATEMENT	What another person actually said or wrote.
INFERENCE	What you think the event may mean.
VERIFICATION	What could confirm, weaken, or change the inference.

THE DISCIPLINE

A concern becomes more trustworthy when you are willing to record what would weaken it, not only what supports it.

Hours 24–48: Send the right question to the right person

To counsel

“The attached document creates this question and this stated deadline. What action is required, what information do you need from me, and when do you need it?”

To an authorized provider

“Please explain the process for obtaining the information I am permitted to receive. I can provide the relevant order and identification.”

To a support person

“I need help completing one practical task. Can you sit with me while I sort these documents?”

IMPORTANT

These are examples, not instructions to contact someone when contact is restricted. Use only permitted channels and adapt the wording to the actual facts.

One question at a time

The goal is not to tell the entire story in every message. Put the question first. Attach only what is needed to answer it. Save the rest.

Hours 48–72: Protect tomorrow’s capacity

- Write down the next three tasks. Stop adding to the list until those are handled or reprioritized.
- Eat something reasonable.
- Protect a realistic sleep opportunity.
- Take prescribed medication as directed.
- Keep essential work and child-care commitments visible.
- Tell one grounded adult what practical help you need.
- Set a time to review new messages rather than refreshing constantly, unless an emergency or order requires otherwise.

YOUR NEXT THREE TASKS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

A life under pressure still needs food, sleep, work, medication, transportation, and ordinary care. Protecting those basics is not surrender. It is part of staying capable of making the next responsible decision.

The Message Check

Before sending a difficult message, read it five times for five different jobs.

FACTS

Are dates and quotations accurate? Have you separated what you know from what you infer?

PURPOSE

What should happen after the recipient reads this? Is the request identifiable?

TONE

Remove insults, diagnoses, spiritual threats, predictions about motive, and irrelevant history.

TIMING

Is a response required now, by an actual deadline, or within a reasonable routine window?

PERMISSION

Is this contact and channel actually allowed?

ONE LINE TO REMEMBER

Answer the request. Not the insult.

One-event incident record

Use one event at a time. This is an organizational aid, not a guarantee that a record will be admissible in court.

Date and time of event:

Date this note was written:

People directly involved:

Relevant order provision, if verified:

What I directly observed:

Exact words, if accurately preserved; otherwise identify paraphrase:

What happened next, including my own response:

Source files / firsthand witnesses:

What remains uncertain:

Practical effect on the child or arrangement:

Question for counsel or another appropriate professional:

What not to do in the first 72 hours

- Do not diagnose your former spouse to make the facts sound more serious.
- Do not turn your child into a source of reassurance, information, or evidence.
- Do not retaliate by withholding support, information, or parenting time.
- Do not improvise around no-contact or other restrictions.
- Do not delete records or “clean up” a message thread.
- Do not make a public campaign out of a private family crisis.
- Do not spend three days proving a theory that would not change the next decision.

IF SAFETY IS AT RISK

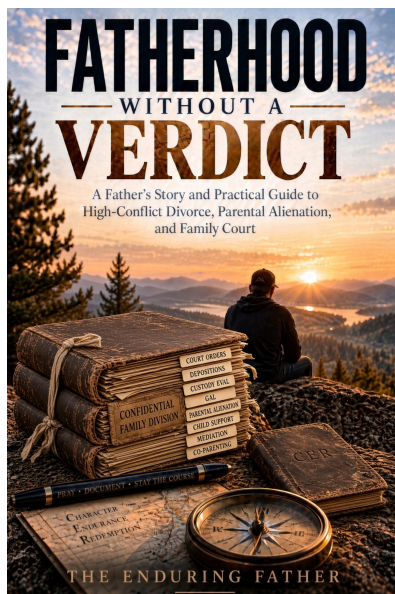
This guide is not a substitute for an emergency response. If you or a child may be in immediate danger, prioritize appropriate emergency, legal, and professional help.

ONE NEXT STEP. THEN STOP.

The goal of the first 72 hours is not certainty. It is enough clarity to make the next responsible decision.

After the first 72 hours

If this guide helped you make one clearer decision, *Fatherhood Without a Verdict* expands the same method into 22 focused Guide chapters covering documentation, false allegations, guardians ad litem, custody evaluations, counseling, depositions, orders, co-parenting communication, financial survival, faith, reconnection, and legacy.



FATHERHOOD WITHOUT A VERDICT

A Father's Story and Practical Guide to High-Conflict Divorce,
Parental Alienation, and Family Court

THE ENDURING FATHER

You're already on the list. I'll let you know when Fatherhood Without a Verdict is available.