



# CENTRAL VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY

[www.cvlas.org](http://www.cvlas.org)

101 W. Broad St., Suite #101  
Richmond, Virginia 23220  
804-648-1012 or 800-868-1012  
Fax: 804-649-8794

229 North Sycamore Street  
Petersburg, Virginia 23803  
804-862-1100 or 800-868-1012  
Fax: 804-861-4311

103 E Water St, Suite 201/202  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902  
434-296-8851 or 800-390-9983  
Fax: 434-296-5731

## Rules for People in Child Custody and Child Visitation Disputes

Rule #1 - Obey the Court Order.

Rule #2 - In case of doubt, see Rule #1.

Rule #3 - The court cannot solve all your problems. Communicate and cooperate with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights. You will be doing this until your youngest child turns 18. You will not be involving lawyers and judges each time a problem comes up.

Rule #4 - Always do what is best for your child, not what is best for you. Any argument with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights hurts your child, even if you are in the right. Do not sweat the small stuff.

Rule #5 - Remember it is natural for a child to want to stay where the child is now. A child often will hesitate to leave you. A child often will hesitate to return to you. Talk with your child about this. Prepare your child for this.

Rule #6 - Keep exchanges of the child brief. At these times, say as little as possible. At these times, say only what is needed.

Rule #7 - **Do's:**

- Tell your children you love them.
- Make sure your children know it's OK to love the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights.
- Be willing to talk about your children's feelings, and encourage them to talk with a teacher, babysitter, or family friend.
- Answer your children's questions honestly, while avoiding unnecessary details about your relationship with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights
- When you make a mistake or lose your temper, admit it. Tell your children that you can and will do better.
- Reassure your children they are not to blame for the parents' problems.
- Include the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights in your children's school activities and special events.
- Be consistent and on time when picking up and dropping off your children.
- Be responsible and prompt with child support payments, and don't discuss child support issues with your children.
- Establish a home in which your children feel comfortable and secure.

- Develop a workable and cooperative parenting plan that gives your children access to both of you.
- Make every effort to agree with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights about discipline.

**Rule #8 - Don'ts:**

- Don't use your child to carry messages to the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights.
- Don't argue in front of your children.
- Don't pump your children for information about the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights.
- Don't speak negatively about the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights in front of your children.
- Don't discourage their communication with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights.
- Don't put your children in the middle of your problems or ask them to take sides.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't use your children as confidants. Let them be children.
- Don't ask your children with whom they want to live. That issue is for you, the other parent or custodian, and the courts to resolve.
- Don't compare your child to the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights.
- Don't involve the children in money conflicts.

Rule #9 - Get agreements with the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights in writing. If this cannot be done, write a letter to the other parent or custodian or person having visitation rights. In the letter, explain what you believe is the agreement. Sign and date the letter. Save a copy.

Rule #10 - Keep written records of concerns or problems. Include names, date, times, and places.

Rule #11 - Do not have any overnight guests of the opposite sex to whom you are not related by blood or marriage.

Rule #12 - Do not abuse alcohol or prescription drugs. Do not be around people who do these things.

Rule #13 - Do not use illegal drugs or commit other crimes. Do not be around people who do these things.

Rule #14 - Do not use the telephone to annoy or bother anyone. If this happens to you, always hang up right away.

Rule #15 - It is impossible to list all rules. Use common sense.