

Issues in Relocation
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Principles

- There is no one solution that fits all family situations or all children.
- Relocation, like divorce, can represent a crisis in the lives of children.
- The parents' attitudes toward the relocation plan affect children as much or more than the children's attitudes.
- Children's distress is most significantly exacerbated by ongoing conflict and resentment between their parents.
- Children need a close, safe, and sensitive relationship with a psychologically sound, mature, and conscientious custodial parent.
- Children's access to both parents does not, by itself, prevent the stress related to relocation.
- Children's adjustment is positively related to the frequency of visits with the healthy noncustodial parent and to the custodial parent's support for these visits.
- When the noncustodial parent is not available, both the constructive and destructive behavior of the custodial parent are funneled more directly to the children.
- Noncustodial parents can be very influential in the development of the children.
- Children show the best adjustment to divorce when they have quality access to both parents in an atmosphere of low conflict.
- Boys seem to have more adjustment problems than girls.
- Children 10 or older should be carefully listened to with regard to their feelings, thoughts, needs, and preferences, though these factors should not dictate the relocation arrangement.
- For adolescents of average maturity, their stability may not lie with either parent, but may have its major source in their circle of friends or their activities and connections in their school, church, or community organizations.

Factors to Consider

- The impact of each following option needs to be considered:
 - A. The relocating parent moves with the children
 - B. The relocating parent moves without the children
 - C. The relocating parent moves with some of the children
 - D. The relocating parent decides not to move
 - E. Both parents move

- The age, developmental stage, personality, and needs of each child
- The feelings and wishes of the children
- The children's abilities to cope successfully with such a change
- The children's history of other significant changes experienced
- How well the children were adjusting pre-divorce
- The nature of the relationship of each child with each parent
- The connections and supports for each child currently and following relocation
- The impact on the relocating parent if the children stay
- The impact on the staying parent if the children leave
- How well the current custodial arrangement has been working for the children
- Does the relocating parent have primary custody? Why?
- The potential meaning of this change to the children—what they will actually experience if the relocation does or does not take place
- The mental health and flexibility of the moving parent
- The attitude of the moving parent toward the importance of the noncustodial parent in the children's lives
- The history of the moving parent's facilitation of the noncustodial parent's access
- The moving parent's motives for moving; whether the move is representative of stability or a pattern of instability on the part of the moving parent
- The moving parent's history of (situational/occupational) stability and likelihood for stability once relocated
- The distance of the move
- The nature and impact of the losses for the children, either staying or leaving
- The current level of parental conflict and the likely level of conflict post-relocation
- Economic, scheduling, and travel considerations bearing on the children's access to the noncustodial parent after the relocation
- The proper timing of the relocation, considering the children's attitudes and activities
- How the effects of the relocation on the children might be monitored and the arrangement changed if necessary
- What alternative parenting plans might be considered