



ACCESS AND VISITATION ONLINE DIRECTORY CONNECTS PARENTS WITH NEEDED SERVICES

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

I AM COMMITTED to building strong Texas families. That is why my office developed a new tool to help parents without custody stay involved in their children's lives. The online [Access and Visitation Directory](#) is a compilation of programs across Texas designed to facilitate shared parenting after separation or divorce. Services include supervised visitation, mediation, co-parenting education, and visitation enforcement.

Parents can search the online directory by zip code, county or service provided. The site includes an [interactive map](#) that displays detailed information about the programs listed in the directory, and a link to each program's Web site. The directory is designed to give parents the information they need to select providers and services suitable to their situations. Providers may charge a fee for services.

The directory is located on the Child Support section of the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us. In addition to parents, the directory is available to counselors and other professionals who assist families who live apart. Local providers of access and visitation services are encouraged to register online to have their

programs added to the directory. To be included in the directory, providers must submit basic information about their programs, including professional affiliations. In addition, they must offer services that help mothers and fathers work together to parent their children.

The **Access and Visitation Directory** is maintained by the Attorney General's Office of Family Initiatives (OFI). OFI works to strengthen families and encourage healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood.

The directory is funded through a federal grant available to states for efforts that increase contact between noncustodial parents and their children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services distributes \$10 million each year based on the number of children in a state not living with both parents.

A statewide Access and Visitation Hotline is also available to help parents address custody concerns. The hotline is staffed by attorneys who provide legal information and assistance about child custody and visitation matters. The toll-free number, 1-866-292-4636, is answered in English and Spanish, Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. Attorneys provide basic

legal information and education about a parent's rights pertaining to child access; visitation and custody; establishing paternity; and the child support process. Parents can also visit www.txaccess.org to obtain downloadable legal forms and examples for completing them. Also available are samples of parent letters to request compliance with orders, visitation logs, and other tools for resolving custody and visitation concerns.

I encourage parents to use these resources to stay involved in their children's lives, because children thrive on the security that comes from knowing both parents want and care for them.

Studies have found that non-custodial parents who stay involved with their children are more likely to make regular child support payments. Studies also show that children of parents who pay their child support have fewer behavioral problems, make better grades, and stay in school longer than children who do not receive regular child support.

To find out more about the child support services the Attorney General provides, call (800) 252-8014 or visit the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



ACCESS
AND
VISITATION
DIRECTORY

The Access and Visitation Directory includes programs across Texas that offer:

- Supervised visitation
- Mediation
- Co-parenting education
- Visitation enforcement

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