

**LYCOMING COUNTY
CUSTODY STIPULATION
SELF-HELP KIT
INSTRUCTIONS**

REMEMBER

The law often changes. Each case is different. This self-help kit is meant to give you general information and not give you specific legal advice.

INTRODUCTION

A stipulation is another word for “agreement.” This kit gives you the forms you need to make a custody agreement into a Custody Order without a court proceeding. It can ONLY be used when you and the other party are in agreement as to custody. If there is anyone else who has custody rights to the child(ren), that party must also be in agreement and sign the Stipulation.

This kit can be used when you do not yet have a Custody Order, and it can also be used to modify a Custody Order you already have.

Here are some definitions that may help you write up your custody agreement.

- LEGAL CUSTODY** - Means the right to make major decisions affecting the best interest of a minor child, including, but not limited to, medical, religious, and educational decisions.
- SHARED LEGAL CUSTODY** - Means the right of more than one individual to legal custody of the child.
- SOLE LEGAL CUSTODY** - Means the right of one individual to exclusive legal custody of the child.
- PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means the actual physical possession and control of a child.
- PRIMARY PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means the right to assume physical custody of the child for a majority of the time.
- PARTIAL PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means the right to take possession of a child away from the custodial parent for a certain period of time.
- SHARED PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means the right of more than one individual to assume physical custody of the child, each having significant periods of physical custodial time with the child.
- SOLE PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means the right of one individual to exclusive physical custody of the child.
- SUPERVISED PHYSICAL CUSTODY** - Means custodial time during which an agency or an adult designated by the Court, or agreed upon by the parties, monitors the interaction between the child and the individual with those rights.
- PERSON ACTING AS A PARENT** - A person other than a parent, including an institution, who has physical custody of a child and who has either been awarded custody by a court or claims a right to custody.
- RELOCATION** - Means a change in residence of the child which significantly impairs the ability of a non-relocating party to exercise custodial rights.

CUSTODY STIPULATION

PART ONE: INSTRUCTIONS

*****Please note, you must print the forms and hand-sign all signatures.*****

These are the instructions for filling out the forms. The forms are found in Part Two of this packet. You may want to separate the forms from the instructions now, so you can read the instructions for each form as you fill out that form.

1. FIRST FORM – MOTION COVER SHEET

Caption:

- If you DO NOT have a Custody Order, complete the caption (heading) by printing your name as the Plaintiff and the other party's name as the Defendant. Use middle initials and print neatly. Note: If grandparents or other third parties have physical custody, there will be more than one Defendant, because both parents must always be parties.

- If you ALREADY HAVE a custody order and want to change that order, USE THE SAME CAPTION AS IN THE PREVIOUS ORDER. Your caption will never change. The same person who is listed as the Plaintiff in your Custody Order must be the Plaintiff in this action. The same person listed as Defendant in your Custody Order must be the Defendant in this action. You should also use the same case number that appears on your Custody Order

On line 1, print your name.

On line 3, print "Custody Stipulation."

In box 4, check "Entry of Uncontested Order."

In box 6, print your name and address

Leave the rest of the form blank

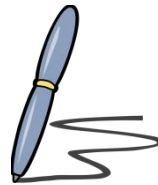
2. SECOND FORM –STIPULATED CUSTODY ORDER

Complete the caption as on the other forms. The numbers below match the numbers on the Stipulation form.

1. Print the Plaintiff's name, address, phone number, and relationship to the child(ren).
2. Print the Defendant's name, address, phone number, and relationship to the child(ren). Add another paragraph for additional parties, with their name, relationship and address.
3. Write the names and addresses of the parents *if* the Plaintiff and Defendant are not the two parents of the child(ren).
4. Write the names and birth dates of the child(ren) the Order will apply to.
5. If both parents are signing the Stipulation, check the letter A. If both parents are not signing the Stipulation, check the letter B and then explain why the parent is not signing. (For example: deceased or whereabouts unknown). If you can't find the other parent, write what you have done to try to find that parent. The Court needs to know why the other parent isn't signing. If you don't fill this out, the Court may refuse to approve the Stipulation.

6. This part states who will have legal custody (decision-making authority) for the child(ren). Check (A) if this authority will be shared by the parties. If not, Check (B) and write the name(s) of the person or people who will have this authority.
7. This part states what the physical custody schedule will be. Write when the Plaintiff will have the children, and when the Defendant will have the children. Be as specific as you can, because this will protect both you and the other party if you are in disagreement over where the child(ren) should be on any day.
8. Check the first line if this is a new custody case.
Check the second line if you already have a Custody Order. Write the date of that order.
9. This section must be in every custody order, by law. Be aware that neither you nor the other party may move the child a distance that significantly impairs the other party's right to exercise custody. If you want to move such a distance, you must have the agreement of the other party or permission of a judge. To do this, you can get a Relocation Kit from the same place you got this Stipulation Kit.
10. All individuals with custody rights must sign and date the form here.
11. **Leave this part BLANK. This is where the judge signs to make the Stipulation a Court Order.**

Last and very important: EACH PARTY MUST INITIAL THE FIRST THREE PAGES OF THE STIPULATION AT THE BOTTOM!



3. **THIRD DOCUMENT – A COPY OF YOUR CURRENT CUSTODY ORDER (IF THERE IS ONE)**

If you already have a Custody Order, you **MUST** attach a copy of that order. You can get a copy of the Custody Order at the Prothonotary's Office.

4. **FOURTH FORM – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FORM**

According to a new state rule, all filings must include this form. Sign the form, date it, and write your name and phone number. This means you promise you have not violated the Public Access Policy. The policy does not cover court orders, like the one you will be filing, so you do not have to worry about this policy.

5. AND 6. FIFTH AND SIXTH FORMS – FORMS TO WAIVE THE FILING FEE

In order to file the stipulation, there is a fee that must be paid to the Prothonotary. This fee changes from time to time. As of January 1, 2018, it is \$155.00 if you do not already have a custody order. If you already have a custody order and are modifying it with the stipulation, the cost is \$25.75.

If you don't think you can pay the filing fee, you may ask the Court to waive the cost. You will need to fill out and file two forms, in addition to the documents above. If you can afford to pay the filing fee, you will have to do so. The Court waives this cost only in cases where income is extremely low.

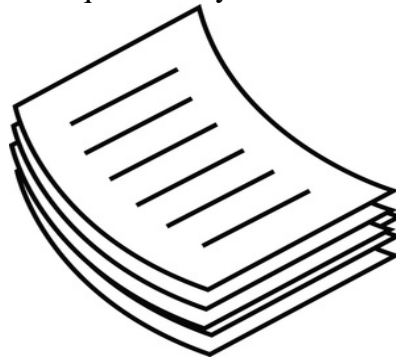
FIFTH FORM – ORDER TO PROCEED WITHOUT PAYMENT OF FEES AND COSTS

Fill in the caption as on the other documents. There is nothing more for you to fill out on this document. If the Court grants the Petition, your custody action can proceed. If not, you will be notified and you will have to pay the costs in order to continue.

SIXTH FORM – PETITION TO PROCEED WITHOUT PAYMENT OF FEES AND COSTS

Fill out the caption as on the other documents. The rest of the form is quite clear. You are asked to fill in facts about your personal finances. Be sure to include income from all sources, including government benefits like Public Assistance, unemployment compensation, and food stamps. Don't forget money your spouse receives, if you are married; from your parents if they help you; from friends or other family members; or from a child support. Finally, identify all persons who depend on your income for support, including children who live with you. Do not list the children's names—only their initials and age.

Sections 4 and 5 of this Petition are important. Be sure that you read these paragraphs. They require you to inform the Court of any improvement in your financial situation which might permit you to pay some or all of the costs at a later date. When you date and sign the Petition after paragraph 5, you are promising that the information you have filled in is true. There will be consequences if you make false statements.



COPIES

After you have completed forms one through four, clip them together in order, with the Motion Cover Sheet on the front. You will then need to get copies made. You need a copy for yourself, one for the Defendant, and one for each additional Defendant, if there are any. The original will stay at court, in the Prothonotary's office.

If you are filing a request to proceed without paying costs, you will need to make one copy of those documents, too (forms five and six).

You are now ready to file all of the papers with the Prothonotary.

HOW TO FILE THE STIPULATION

Take all of your completed forms (including the copies) to the Prothonotary's Office on the first floor of the Lycoming County Courthouse at 48 West Third Street, Williamsport, on any weekday (Monday through Friday) between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Separate the papers into the two groups shown below, and put them in the order shown below. You MUST have the groups of documents listed under First Group. If you are asking the Court to waive the filing fee, you should also have the documents listed under Second Group.

1. FIRST GROUP: (1) Motion Cover Sheet, (2) Stipulated Custody Order, (3) a Copy of Your Current Custody Order, and (4) the Confidential Information Form

You will need an original and at least two copies of all these forms.

2. SECOND GROUP: If you are asking to have the filing fee waived, you will need: (1) Order to Proceed Without Payment of Fees and Costs, and (2) Petition to Proceed without Payment of Fees and Costs.

You will need an original and one copy of each of these documents.



The Prothonotary will give the case a number and will file stamp all of the documents. The Prothonotary will keep all the forms. The case will be sent to a Judge for signature. Once the Judge signs the Order, the documents will be sent back to you. You will then have an actual Custody Order.

It is YOUR responsibility to send a copy of the Custody Order to the other party.

