



MEDIA RELEASE

30 April 2009

Children Penalised in Parenting Orders

Fathers Missing Out

Family First NZ says that children are missing out on access to both their parents as a result of parenting orders being made in the Family Court, and that there appears to be a clear bias against fathers.

Figures obtained by Family First NZ under the *Official Information Act* show that only 13% of disputes results in a 50-50 parenting split.

"These figures are a tragic reminder that children are the ultimate losers when there is a breakdown in the parent relationship," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ. "The greatest injustice is that a parent can lose regular and sufficient access to their children when they may have done nothing wrong and never agreed to the separation in the first place."

The figures for the past three years since the passing of the *Care of Children Act* also show that mothers are more likely to be granted the most time, gaining sole custody in 2/3'rds of cases, but the father has only a 12% success rate.

"It is disturbing that judges do not consider that it is in the best interests of the children concerned to evenly divide their time between parents. For fathers who wish to take their parenting role seriously, there appears to be a significant 'perverse incentive'. Denied access simply feeds the anger and resentment that may exist between the parents."

"Principal Family Court Judge Peter Boshier has said that judges are influenced by research that shows kids with absentee fathers are most likely to have developmental problems and become childhood delinquents. Yet these figures suggest that this risk is not being taken seriously enough."

Family First is calling for shared parenting to be the default position for child custody arrangements in the family court.

"Children deserve access, support and love from both parents during the difficult period of breakdown and separation," says Mr McCoskrie. "This should be our starting point."

	Financial Year					
	2005/2006		2006/2007		2007/2008	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
DTD care arrangement						
Mother only	1515	63.6	2758	63.0	3095	62.0
Father only	276	11.6	523	11.9	605	12.1
Other party / parties only	272	11.4	491	11.2	586	11.7
Shared mother & father	296	12.4	562	12.8	662	13.3
Shared mother & other	12	0.5	32	0.7	19	0.4
Shared father & other	3	0.1	9	0.2	17	0.3
Shared mother & father & other	8	0.3	5	0.1	3	0.1
Not assigned					3	0.1
Total	2382	100	4380	100	4990	100

ENDS

For More Information and Media Interviews, contact Family First:

Bob McCoskrie - NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Mob. 027 55 555 42