

## **More Dads getting Guardianship Rights**

By Geraldine Gittens  
Monday November 17 2008  
The Evening Herald

**THE overwhelming majority of Irish fathers in split families are now being granted guardianship rights, it has been revealed.**

**Brenda Forde, a spokesperson for Treoir, an agency which works with unmarried parents, said couples who are splitting up are now negotiating guardianship rights for the father.**

**"The positive thing is that so many fathers are getting their rights. Ninety per cent of fathers are getting their guardianship rights.**

**"Even in the worst case scenario where the father has been in trouble with the law, or is involved in substance abuse, access might not be given, but at least they might get supervised access rather than no access at all.**

**"The important thing is keeping these cases out of court to begin with," she stressed.**

**"We always feel that going to court is the last option, and we say to parents to try and negotiate themselves.**

### **Mediation**

**"A mother might take a father to court for maintenance, but then they make an agreement and decide they don't need to go to court."**

**Ms Forde said that the focus now is on mediation outside of the courts, instead of courtroom battles.**

**"Once in court, the case is heavily contested at that stage and we always feel that it doesn't bode well for the future.**

**"If people are using solicitors to argue their case, as part of their brief, solicitors have to try and recommend negotiation. If that's not a runner, they go to court.**

**"The court is needed in some cases, but it means that a judge who knows nothing about the personal case will make a ruling."**

**Meanwhile, Ms Forde said that the number of mothers being granted maintenance has remained stable in the past few years. Last year, out of a total of 2,831 applicants for maintenance through the courts, 1,981 were granted maintenance. In 2006, some 1,860 mothers were granted maintenance by the courts, out of 2,652 applications.**

**"Legally the father has an obligation to pay support until the child is 18, and 23 if the child continues on with education, and for life if the child has special needs," said Ms Forde.**

**In certain cases, maintenance is refused by the courts where it is deemed that the father is not able to pay, she added.**

*- Geraldine Gittens*