



THE CUSTODY DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

What to save, what to log, what to bring to your first hearing

An action-checklist companion to the main guide. Read it, mark it, share it.

YO PELEO® POR TI

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ACTION WORKSHEET · PRINT IT · FILL IT IN · CARRY IT

THE CUSTODY DOCUMENTATION LOG

Start logging today. Every text, every call, every visit. Bring this to your first attorney meeting.

COMMUNICATION LOG TEMPLATE — START NOW

01 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

02 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

03 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

04 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

05 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

06 Date: _____ Time: _____ Channel: _____ Screenshot? Y / N

What was said: _____

FINANCIAL RECORDS — PULL THESE THIS WEEK

- 1.** Tax returns — last 3 years (federal + state, all schedules)
- 2.** Paystubs — last 12 months (both parents if possible)
- 3.** Bank statements — last 6 months (every account)
- 4.** Credit card statements — last 6 months
- 5.** Mortgage / rent records + utility bills (proof of household)
- 6.** Receipts for kids' expenses (school, medical, sports, daycare)

DON'T: text in anger · post on social media · badmouth the other parent to your kids · delete anything

USE TODAY · NO ATTORNEY REQUIRED

Use This Today

A neutral co-parenting communication template — court-friendly tone, every time.

Every text, every email between you and the other parent is potential evidence. The BIFF method — Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm — is what judges and family-court mediators want to see. This template gives you a starter for the four most common touchy conversations. Use it. Save the originals. Bring screenshots to your first hearing.

Co-Parenting Communication Template (BIFF Method)

TEMPLATE 1 — Schedule Change Request

"Hi [Name], requesting to switch our pickup from [DATE] to [DATE] because of [reason]. Happy to switch back another weekend that works for you. Please let me know by [DATE] so I can plan accordingly. — [Your Name]"

TEMPLATE 2 — Asking for Medical or School Info

"Hi [Name], [child's name] has a [appointment / event] on [date]. Can you share the [doctor's notes / school report / IEP update] when you have a moment? I want to stay informed and aligned with you on next steps. Thanks — [Your Name]"

TEMPLATE 3 — Responding to Anger (de-escalation)

"Hi [Name], I hear that you are upset. Let's table this and revisit it in writing tomorrow when we both have time to think clearly. [Child's name] is the priority. — [Your Name]"

TEMPLATE 4 — Documenting a Concern (in writing)

"Hi [Name], on [date] at [time], [child's name] told me [concern, factual, no interpretation]. I want to share this so we are both informed. Can we discuss how to best support [him / her / them]? — [Your Name]"

Notes:

- Never include accusations, insults, sarcasm, or emotional language.
- Reply within 24-48 hours. Silence reads as indifference in court.
- Use a parenting app like OurFamilyWizard or TalkingParents if a judge has recommended one.
- Every message you send is potentially read by your judge. Write accordingly.



FROM THE FOUNDING PARTNER

This is the action checklist. Use it like one.

I'm William Vásquez. I served as a soldier in the United States Air Force before law school, and today I lead Vasquez Law Firm — bilingual, working-family-focused, answering the phone 24/7. We've handled over 30,000 cases in 15 years.

This companion is shorter than the main guide on purpose. It's the part you actually do this week — folders to build, words to memorize, mistakes to avoid. Print it. Mark it up. Share it with anyone you love who's in the same fight.

If something in here gives you pause, that's the call to make. We answer in English and Spanish, day or night, no fee unless we win.

YO PELEO® POR TI — I fight for you.

— William J. Vásquez

Founding Attorney · NC + FL Bar · USAF Veteran

KEY TAKEAWAYS

What to remember from this checklist — the 5 things that change cases.

- 01** The judge does not decide custody based on who is right. They decide based on who documented better.
- 02** Every family judge sees 30 cases a day. Yours has to stand out with evidence on the desk, not emotion in the air.
- 03** In NC and FL, the legal standard is the best interest of the child. Gender is not a factor. Daily work is.
- 04** Recording rules matter. NC is one-party consent. FL is two-party consent. Get this wrong and your evidence is gone.
- 05** Assume the other side's lawyer is screenshotting your texts, your Instagram, and your TikTok right now. Behave accordingly.



01 SECTION

The Best Interest Standard — What Judges Actually Weigh

Under NC G.S. Section 50-13.2 and Fla. Stat. Section 61.13, the judge applies one standard: the best interest of the child. In North Carolina, that means stability of each parent's home, physical and mental health, primary caretaker history, the child's preference (especially at 12+), each parent's ability to foster a relationship with the other, history of domestic violence or substance abuse, and continuity in school, community, and religion. Florida runs roughly 20 statutory factors under 61.13(3) — moral fitness, mental and physical health, the child's home/school/community record, capacity for a stable routine, demonstrated involvement in school and extracurriculars, and willingness to honor a time-sharing schedule. After Florida HB 1301 (July 2023), there is a rebuttable presumption of 50/50 time-sharing — you overcome it only with specific, documented reasons. Gender is not a factor in either state. Daily work is. Whoever proves the daily work wins that factor.



02 SECTION

Your Communication Log — Save Every Text, Email, and Voicemail

Save everything. Every text between you and the other parent — screenshot with the date visible. Every email — never delete, archive into a folder labeled by month (2026-05-communications). Every voicemail — record it on a second device or transcribe it the same day. Every important phone call — write a one-line summary with date and time before you go to bed. Every missed exchange or no-show — log it. I recommend OurFamilyWizard or TalkingParents. Some NC and FL judges order them by name because the timestamps are court-admissible and tone gets recorded. Here is the rule that wins cases: write every message as if the judge will read it tomorrow morning. Calm. Brief. About the kids. Never insult, never accuse, never yell. A text from the other parent calling your child an idiot is gold in court. A reasonable email from you they ignored for three days is gold. A screaming voicemail at 11pm is gold. Build the gold pile.



03 SECTION

Financial Records To Pull NOW

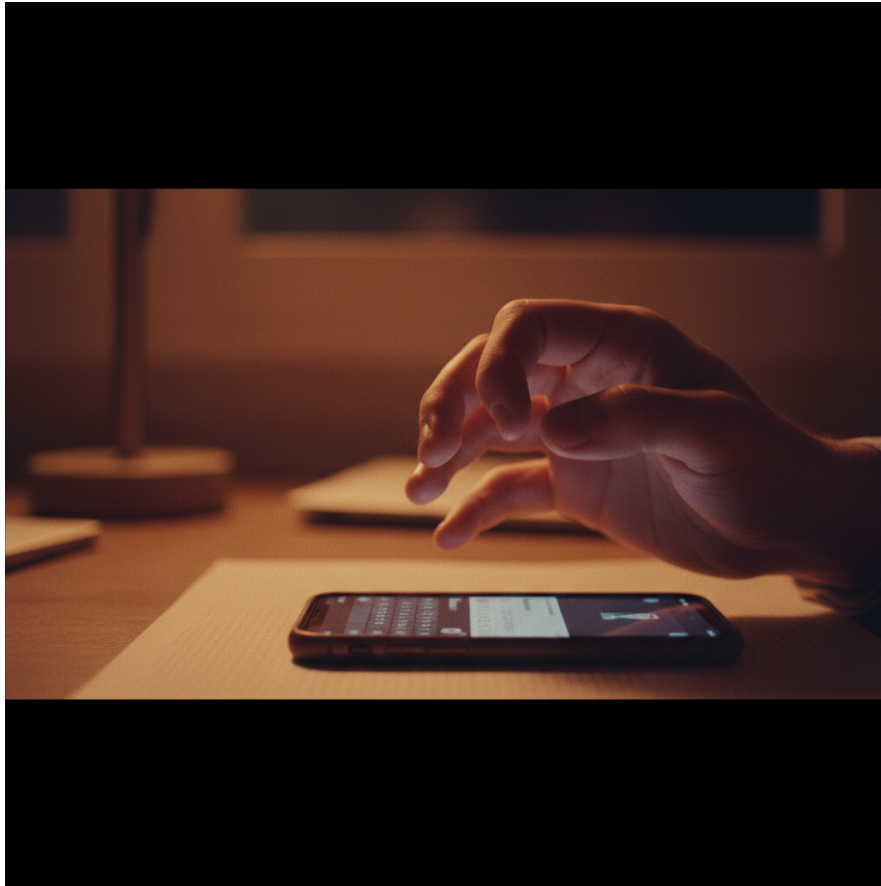
Pull these before your first attorney meeting. Twelve months of paystubs — yours and, if you have access, the other parent's. Three years of tax returns (W-2s, 1099s, Schedule C if self-employed). Six months of bank and credit card statements. Every receipt for the kids — school registration, uniforms, sports, music lessons, therapy, daycare, doctor copays, prescriptions, birthday parties. Drop them in a folder labeled by category. Build one Excel sheet with date, category, who paid, and amount. Why this matters: if you have been paying 70 percent of the kids' expenses but you cannot prove it, the judge assumes 50/50 and rules accordingly. Child support is calculated under the Income Shares Model in both states (NC G.S. Section 50-13.4; Fla. Stat. Section 61.30) — combined gross income plus overnights determines the number. If you tell the judge the other parent earns \$5,000 a month but you cannot prove it, it does not count. Documentation is the case.



04 SECTION

Witnesses — Who Speaks For You (And Who Hurts You)

Strong witnesses are people who see your kids regularly and have no axe to grind. Teachers and school principals are the most powerful witnesses you can put on the stand — they spend more waking hours with your child than any adult outside the parents, and judges weigh their observations heavily. Pediatricians, dentists, children's therapists, coaches, instructors, religious leaders, neighbors who see the day-to-day, babysitters, after-school staff — all strong. Family is weaker; judges expect your mother to defend you. Witnesses who hurt you: your new partner (instant bias), close friends with no direct kid contact, anyone with a criminal record or pending conflict, and family who badmouth the other parent. What to ask each witness for: a signed letter describing what they have personally seen (not what they think or feel), willingness to testify in person if needed, and current contact information.



05 SECTION

What NOT To Do This Week

Do not text the other parent emotionally — every word is discoverable. Do not post on social media about the case, the other parent, your dating life, or your weekend. Assume opposing counsel is screenshotting your Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Snapchat right now. Posts are admissible under NC and FL rules of discovery, and deleting after a case is filed is destruction of evidence. Do not badmouth the other parent to or near the kids — Guardians ad Litem interview children, and parental alienation flips a judge against you fast. Do not block visitation without a court order, even if you are right; you can be held in contempt. Do not record conversations in Florida without the other person's consent (Fla. Stat. Section 934 — two-party consent). In NC you can record a call you are on (NC G.S. Section 15A-287 — one-party consent), but never record the kids saying bad things about the other parent. Do not move the kids out of county or state without a court order. Do not start a public new relationship during the case. Do not use the child as a messenger. Do not lie under oath. Do not wait to call an attorney.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Real questions from our intake line — answered in plain English.

Q. Can I record conversations with my ex in NC or FL?

North Carolina is a one-party consent state (NC G.S. Section 15A-287) — if you are on the call, you can record it without telling the other person. Florida is a two-party (all-party) consent state (Fla. Stat. Section 934) — every participant must consent or the recording is illegal and inadmissible. Never record the kids saying negative things about the other parent. Judges call that alienation.

Q. Will a Florida judge automatically order 50/50 time-sharing?

After HB 1301 (July 2023), Fla. Stat. Section 61.13 carries a rebuttable presumption of equal time-sharing. It can be overcome with specific evidence — domestic violence, substance abuse, instability, inability to co-parent, or a long-distance move that makes 50/50 impractical. You need documentation, not allegations.

Q. Does NC have a 50/50 presumption?

No. Under NC G.S. Section 50-13.2, custody is decided by best interest with no automatic split. Joint legal custody is generally preferred when parents can cooperate, but physical custody is decided factor-by-factor. The primary caretaker has a real edge, regardless of gender.

Q. My ex is posting lies about me on Facebook. What do I do?

Screenshot everything with the date and URL visible. Save to a folder. Do not respond publicly, do not subtweet, do not vent on your own page. Bring the screenshots to your attorney. Social media posts are admissible, and a parent who broadcasts the dispute online almost always looks worse to a judge than the one who stays silent.

Q. How fast can I get a protective order if there is domestic violence?

Same day. In NC (Chapter 50B), an ex parte DVPO can be issued the day you file, with a full hearing within 10 days. In FL (Fla. Stat. Section 741.30), a temporary injunction is also same-day, with a full hearing within 15 days. Both are free, available in any county, and do not require a police report or legal immigration status. If you are in danger right now, call 911.

FREE HELP IN NC + FL · PUBLIC, VETTED, ANSWERS 24/7

Free Help You Can Trust

Mediators, domestic violence services, child support help — free or sliding-scale.

Family court is brutal. These resources soften the cost — and save the children.

01 NC Legal Aid (Family Law)

Free civil legal help for low-income NC residents — custody, support, DV.

(866) 219-5262 · <https://www.legalaidnc.org>

02 Florida Statewide Legal Aid Hotline

Connects you to your local FL Legal Aid office for family law assistance.

(888) 257-9577 · <https://www.floridalawhelp.org>

03 NC Dispute Resolution Commission

Court-certified mediators for custody, support, and equitable distribution.

(919) 890-1415 · <https://www.nccourts.gov/courts/dispute-resolution-commission>

04 Florida ADR / Mediator Directory

Locate certified family mediators by county — court-friendly, sliding-scale.

(850) 921-2910 · <https://www.flcourts.gov/Resources-Services/Alternative-Dispute-Resolution>

05 NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Statewide DV resources, shelters, safety planning, court advocates.

(888) 232-9124 · <https://nccadv.org>

06 FL Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Statewide DV hotline, certified shelters, injunction help in every county.

(800) 500-1119 · <https://www.fcadv.org>

07 National Domestic Violence Hotline

24/7 confidential support, safety planning, local referrals nationwide.

(800) 799-7233 · <https://www.thehotline.org>

08 NC Child Support Enforcement

File for support, enforce orders, locate non-custodial parent.

(800) 992-9457 · <https://www.ncchildsupport.com>

09 FL Department of Revenue — Child Support

Open a case, modify orders, enforce arrears across state lines.

(850) 488-5437 · <https://floridarevenue.com/childsupport>

10 Our Family Wizard

Court-friendly co-parenting app — judges in NC and FL recommend it by name.

(866) 755-9991 · <https://www.ourfamilywizard.com>

11 NC Courts — Self-Help Forms

Official custody, support, and DVPO forms with filing instructions.

N/A · <https://www.nccourts.gov/forms>

12 FL Courts — Family Court Self-Help

Official FL family law forms, time-sharing guidelines, filing fee waivers.

N/A · <https://www.flcourts.gov/Resources-Services/Family-Courts>

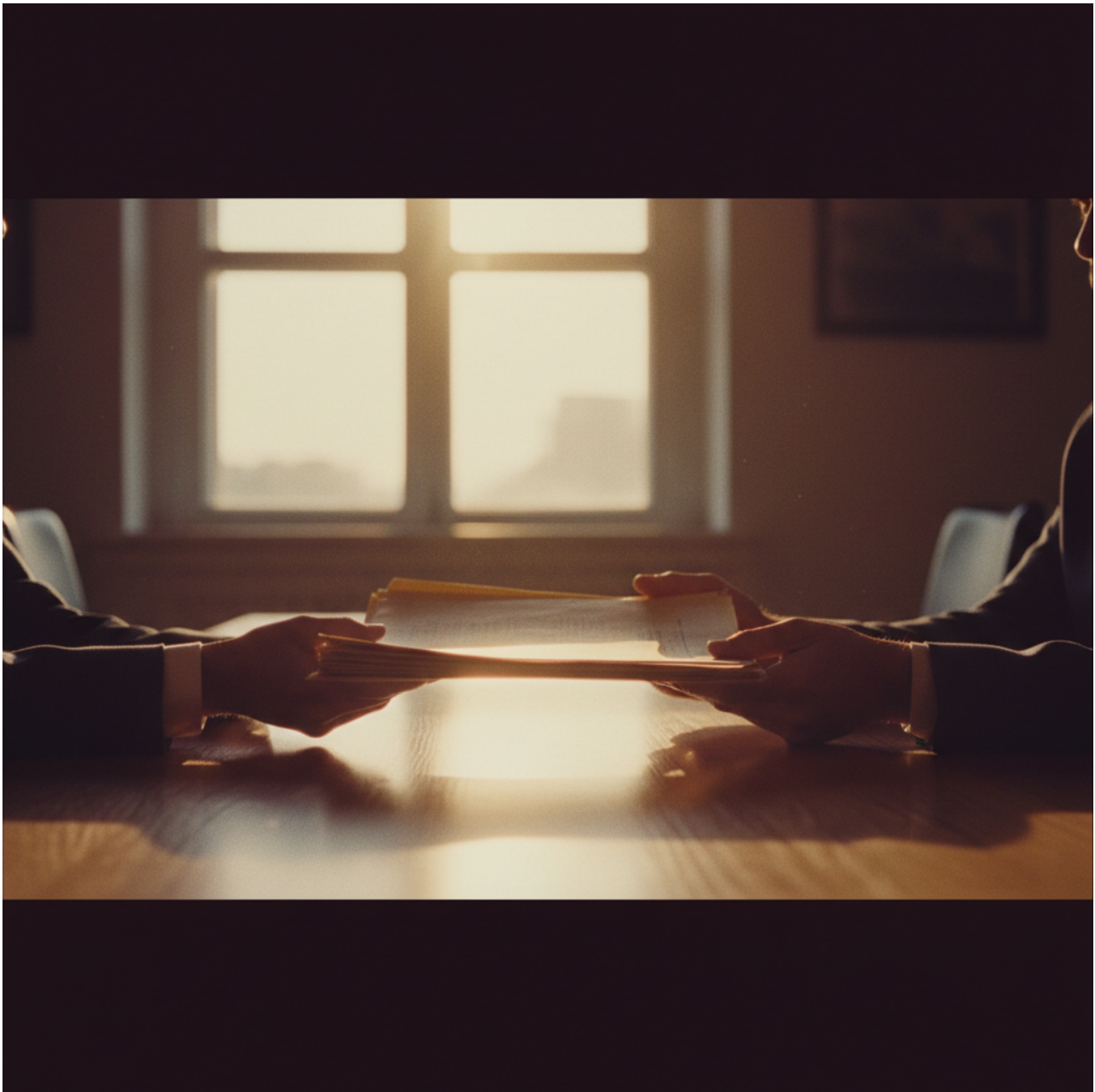
BEFORE YOU CALL US · PREP IN 30 MIN · ANSWERS IN 15

Before You Call Us (or Anyone Else)

15 minutes of prep = a real custody strategy in the first meeting.

Bring this list. We can give you a strategy on day one instead of a homework list.

- 1.** Date of marriage and date of separation (if applicable). Exact dates — not 'last spring.'
- 2.** Full legal names and dates of birth of every child involved.
- 3.** Current parenting arrangement — formal court order or informal week-to-week breakdown.
- 4.** Last 3 years of tax returns for both parents if you have access (W-2, 1099, Schedule C).
- 5.** Last 12 months of paystubs — yours, and the other parent's if obtainable.
- 6.** Last 6 months of bank and credit card statements for every account in your name.
- 7.** Communication log from the last 30 days — texts, emails, voicemails, with screenshots.
- 8.** School records — report cards, attendance, IEPs, disciplinary notes, teacher emails.
- 9.** Medical records for the child and for each parent if mental health or substance use is relevant.
- 10.** Any domestic violence, police, or 911 reports — even if charges were never filed.
- 11.** Witness list — teachers, coaches, pediatricians, therapists, neighbors, babysitters who see the parenting up close.
- 12.** Any prior court orders — custody, child support, restraining orders, criminal, even from other states.



The judge sees 30 cases a day. Yours has to stand out.

Free 15-min evaluation. Get a custody strategy before your first hearing.

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GO DEEPER — THE FULL GUIDE

This is the action checklist. For the full strategy — every form, every deadline, every rule — read the comprehensive guide:

Family Law Guide

<https://www.vasquezlawnc.com/guides/family-law>

CITE THIS GUIDE

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This guide is educational only and is not legal advice. Every case is different. Reading it does not create an attorney-client relationship. For advice on your specific situation, call us for a free 15-minute evaluation.