



PARENTAL RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES

What legal responsibilities do I have as a parent? A parent has two major responsibilities. They are:

1. to support your child by providing him or her with the necessities of life; and
2. to supervise and control your child.

What are the necessities of life? The necessities of life are **more than just food, shelter, and clothing**. They also include medical care, a safe and nurturing environment, an education, and legal help when required. **NOTE:** failure to provide the necessities of life for your child can be considered neglect.

How long does my duty to support my child last? The duty to support your child lasts until he or she reaches the age of majority, which is 18. There are some exceptions to this rule, they vary from state to state. They vary by such things as marriage of the child, and termination of parental rights.

I never married my child's other parent and my child does not live with me. Do I still have to support my child? Yes. The duty to provide support for your child is not affected by the marriage or absence of marriage between parents

What if I can afford to support my child, yet I don't? If the state is forced to support a child, the state is entitled to reimbursement from parents who are capable, but have refused, to provide for such support.

Does my duty to supervise and control my child mean that I, as a parent, will be held liable for any harm/damage caused by my child? Generally, parents are not held liable for the harm caused by their children. However, there are exceptions to this rule. For example, if you (a parent) knew or should have known of your child's propensities for engaging in improper behavior, or have aided or encouraged such behavior, you can be liable for harm/damage caused by your child. Additionally, there are specific statutes which make parents liable for the harm caused by their children under particular circumstances. Each state in the US has differing statutes. You can get information from your local library, or online at the state of Alaska website. **(This is not meant to constitute legal advice, but is a brief overview of parental rights and responsibilities.)**



Community Resource Kit

Alaska Children's Trust 1-800-643-KIDS

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network. akchildabuseprevention.org

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Do I have any rights as a parent? Yes, 4, listed below

1. The right to **custody and control** of your child. This means that as a parent you can make important decisions about your child's life. That a parent can decide where your child will live, with whom he or she will live, what he or she will do from day to day, what school he or she will attend, when he or she needs medical care, and what, if any, religion he or she will practice.

(NOTE: The court maintains the right to stop you making decisions that would adversely affect the rights or welfare of the child.)

2. The right to cooperation and obedience from your child entitles you to just that: cooperation and obedience. This right translates into the right to discipline your child in a **non-abusive and non-neglectful manner**. **NOTE:** Your child does not have to obey you if you have ordered him or her to do something that is dangerous or illegal. *In fact, if you have encouraged your child to commit dangerous or illegal acts you may be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, child abuse, or neglect.*

3. The right to your child's earnings means that you as a parent can legally collect and keep the money that your child earns. However, there are **limitations** on this right. Your child's earnings will not be entirely available if you have exploited, neglected, or abandoned your child; if your child's income is the result of his or her special talent or athletic ability; or if your child's income is the result of a gift or inheritance. Furthermore, most parents allow their children to keep the money that they have earned.

4. The right to sue if someone wrongfully injures or kills your child enables you to recover costs such as medical and funeral expenses, as well as lost earnings, lost companionship, and pain and suffering in the event of your child's death or injury.

Do my rights as a parent ever cease?

Yes. When your child reaches the age of majority they do. (that is, 18). In addition, your rights and authority as a parent can be suspended or terminated in any of the following situations: the court appoints a guardian of the person over your child; your child gets married; *the court suspends or terminates your parental rights due to abuse or abandonment; your child is made a ward of the juvenile court; has been emancipated by the court; or enlists in the military.*



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