

MAINE BEST-INTEREST FACTORS

For Our Children and Families - practical public-use support for moments when families need calmer next steps. Not legal advice. Start with safety first.

HEARING QUICK REFERENCE

Use this as a plain-language sorting sheet before a meeting or call, meeting, clinic call, or legal-help conversation.

This is a public-use literacy tool, not legal advice.

CORE LENS

- The child's safety and well-being come first.
- Stability, routine, continuity, and real child impact matter.
- Sort facts under the factor they actually affect.
- Use dates, records, messages, calendars, school notes, provider notes, and concrete examples.

FAST QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What is the immediate child-safety issue, if any?
2. What daily routine is most at risk right now?
3. What school, medical, counseling, or developmental issue needs to stay visible?
4. What exchange, schedule, transportation, or communication problem is actually happening?
5. What facts are specific enough to show, not just say?

QUICK FACTOR MAP

- A. Age of the child
- B. Relationship of the child with parents and others who affect the child's welfare
- C. Parent ability to give love, affection, and guidance
- D. Child adjustment to home, school, and community
- E. Child preference, if old enough
- F. How long the child has lived in a stable, adequate environment and keeping continuity
- G. Stability of any proposed living arrangements
- H. Parent motivation and ability to give the child frequent and continuing contact with both parents

- I. Parent motivation and ability to cooperate or learn to cooperate in child-care decisions
- J. Methods for assisting parental cooperation and resolving disputes and willingness to use them
- K. Effect on the child if one parent has sole authority over upbringing
- L. Parent history of domestic abuse and its effect on the child's safety and well-being
- M. Parent history of child abuse or neglect and its effect on the child's safety and well-being
- N. Whether the child would be placed with a parent subject to abuse
- O. Existence of any past or current protection-from-abuse order
- P. Parent criminal history and its effect on the child's safety and well-being
- Q. Parent substance use and its effect on the child's safety and well-being
- R. Whether a parent's household includes a person with certain sexual-offense history
- S. Whether the allocation of rights and responsibilities best supports the child's safety and well-being

WHAT TO CARRY

- Proposed schedule or calendar
- School attendance or school communications
- Medical, counseling, or provider notes if relevant
- Messages showing communication problems or cooperation attempts
- Exchange logs, missed visits, or transportation issues
- Any safety records, police reports, PFAs, or hotline/agency contacts if relevant
- A short timeline with dates

DO NOT

- Dump one giant undifferentiated pile of papers
- Lead with labels instead of specific facts
- Hide the child-impact sentence
- Treat safety concerns like a side note

GOOD FACT FORMAT

- Date:
- What happened:
- Which factor(s) it affects:
- How it affects the child:
- What record supports it:

NEXT STEPS

- Full guide: </best-interest-factors.html>
- Organizer TXT: </downloads/best-interest-organizer-public.txt>
- Prepare + organize: </prepare-organize.html>
- Court week: </court-week.html>