

Supporting Materials

For Our Children and Families

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

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Transparency, Not Punishment

This initiative does not weaken protections for victims, silence reporting, or punish good-faith advocacy. It reorders the process so that neutral fact-finding and child protection occur before adversarial incentives escalate conflict.

Transparency, sequencing, and early resolution reduce harm without criminalizing families or professionals acting in good faith.

Implementation Readiness

- Phased implementation for DHHS screening and Guardian ad Litem expansion
- Use of existing court and administrative systems
- Emphasis on training and sequencing, not punishment
- Advisory oversight without enforcement authority

UPDATED VOTER SUMMARY (rev07E)

What this proposal does

"For Our Children and Families" reforms Maine's family law process to protect children before conflict escalates, reduce unnecessary court delays and costs, and ensure parents are treated fairly - whether or not they can afford a lawyer.

The proposal does not eliminate courts or lawyers. It reorders the process so neutral fact-finding and child safety come first, before adversarial tactics take hold.

Key changes voters should know about

1. Children come first - before litigation.

Independent fact-finding happens early through Guardians ad Litem and safety screening. Allegations are assessed before lawyers can escalate disputes through motions and hearings.

2. Fewer hearings, faster resolution.

Limits serial interim hearings that prolong cases. Requires courts to move family cases toward final resolution on a defined timeline. Reduces repeated court appearances that exhaust families and harm children.

3. Neutral mediation before escalation.

Creates an Office of Family Mediation and Parental Protection. Encourages early, voluntary mediation before adversarial litigation intensifies.

4. Protection against abuse of the system.

Penalizes knowingly false or manipulative abuse claims used to gain leverage over children. Distinguishes clearly between good-faith safety concerns and bad-faith weaponization.

5. Transparency instead of secrecy.

Requires anonymized public reporting on case length, hearing frequency, attorney fee approvals, use of Guardians ad Litem, and patterns of procedural abuse. Focuses on systemic accountability, not targeting individual victims.

6. Accountability where harm is proven.

Criminalizes intentional parental alienation. Allows children, once adults, to seek civil accountability if lawyers knowingly helped destroy a parent-child relationship.

7. Judicial independence preserved.

Courts retain authority to implement rules. No change limits emergency protection for genuine abuse victims.

What this proposal is not

- It does not silence abuse victims.
- It does not eliminate lawyers or courts.
- It does not force mediation in dangerous situations.

UPDATED FAQ (rev07E)

Does this proposal make it harder for abuse victims to get help?

No. Emergency protection remains fully available. Courts may issue immediate orders whenever a child or parent faces real danger. What changes is that false or repeated bad-faith claims used to control custody or alienate children are addressed after neutral review.

Is this anti-lawyer?

No. Lawyers remain essential. This proposal regulates process and incentives, not advocacy. It prevents fee-driven escalation and ensures lawyers do not gain procedural advantages over self-represented parents.

Why regulate attorney fees at all?

Because unchecked litigation drains money meant for children. The proposal sets a presumptive fee threshold, allows courts to approve higher fees when justified, and prevents fees from becoming leverage against families.

What is intentional parental alienation?

It is a pattern of conduct that knowingly and unjustifiably destroys a child's relationship with a parent. It does not include good-faith safety actions, disagreements, one-time conflicts, or professional guidance based on real evaluation.

Will children have to testify?

No. The proposal explicitly avoids requiring children to testify and relies on neutral professionals instead.

Does this slow down family court?

No - it speeds it up by reducing repeated hearings, preventing premature litigation, and resolving disputes earlier.

How is privacy protected?

All public reporting is anonymized, aggregated, and barred from use as evidence in individual cases. Transparency focuses on patterns, not people.

DRAFT CHANGELOG

rev07E - Publication-Grade Draft (Current)

Status: Public Review - Version Freeze Recommended

- Fully integrated, uncondensed statutory text suitable for publication, litigation review, and ballot preparation
- Finalized "sunlight, not punishment" transparency framework
- Automatic metric-based review triggers tied to anonymized reporting

- Strengthened protections against repeated false abuse allegations used to alienate children
- Expanded accountability for attorneys who knowingly facilitate parental alienation
- Hardened separation-of-powers safeguards and rulemaking deference
- Preserved emergency protections for genuine victims
- Added phased implementation ramp for DHHS screening and Guardian ad Litem capacity
- Declared version stable pending court-required changes only

rev07D

- Added sanctions framework for repeated, knowingly false abuse or domestic violence claims
- Integrated accountability for attorneys who assist or perpetuate alienation strategies
- Introduced automatic review triggers linked to transparency dashboard metrics
- Strengthened procedural safeguards while maintaining due process protections

rev07C

- Surgical constitutional hardening across vulnerable sections
- Added cure periods and safe harbors to prevent unintended denial of access to justice
- Clarified criminal thresholds and mens rea requirements
- Refined filing controls to reduce clerk-level overreach risk

rev07A - rev07B

- Narrowed and clarified definitions to prevent weaponization of new provisions
- Added time-based implementation ramp for DHHS intake and Guardian ad Litem expansion
- Maintained assertive child-protection posture while reducing litigation risk
- Stress-tested attorney fee oversight and hearing limits

rev06

- Expanded legislative findings to address incentives, adversarial framing, and self-regulation limits
- Clarified attorney fee oversight while preserving Supreme Judicial Court authority
- Strengthened Guardian ad Litem sequencing and investigation requirements
- Added protections against misuse of Protection from Abuse orders

rev05

- Initial full public draft released
- Established mediation-first architecture
- Introduced interim hearing limits and fee oversight concepts
- Laid foundation for child-centered procedural sequencing

Version Status

rev07E is the current stable draft. Further revisions are not anticipated unless required by constitutional review, court rule conflicts, or ballot-processing requirements.