

October 05, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- When parents in Bristol County, Massachusetts, go through a divorce, finding appropriate child support and custody arrangements is crucial to the well-being of the children. Many parents, however, don't realize that

[child custody plans](#)

for babies may need to be tailored differently than plans for older children. A recent study suggests that too many overnight stays away from the primary custodial parent may have a negative impact on infants.

Overnight arrangements affect infant attachment

As described on Science Daily, the University of Virginia study followed approximately 5,000 infants or toddlers to investigate how joint custody arrangements changed a child's parental attachments. The study found that infants who spent at least one night away from the primary custodial parent had a less secure attachment with that parent.

Researchers in the study pointed out that a strong bond with both parents is always ideal, but in joint custody arrangements, creating a strong bond with one parent -- rather than a weak bond with both -- should be a priority. A smaller University of Iowa study, which included 102 infants, suggests a similar conclusion.

The University of Iowa study found that whether a baby develops a strong bond with a parent before the age of two impacts the child's emotional health in later years. According to the study, school age children with weak parental attachments are more likely to experience or display:- Fear- Aggression- Disobedience- Worry- Sadness

Furthermore, a strong bond with one parent -- regardless of whether it was the mother or [father](#) -- lowered the likelihood of a child having these problems. The study found that children who had a strong attachment to both parents did not enjoy significant benefits over children who had a secure bond with just one parent.

Both studies show that it's important for infants to be given the opportunity to form a strong bond with at least one parent. This doesn't mean, however, that the other parent has to be deprived of his or her rights.

Working around the attachment issue

There are a few ways that joint custody parents can fairly divide time spent with their child and still ensure that the child can develop a strong bond with one parent. One co-author of the University of Virginia study suggests that daytime visitation hours be increased for the non-primary custodial parent, so that the infant can consistently spend nights at one household without the other parent losing out on custody time.

The same study did not find a statistically reliable relationship between overnight arrangements and parental attachments for toddlers. Spending nights away from home could still affect the ability of toddlers to make a secure attachment, but this study indicates that the effect is much more prominent in infants. Knowing this, parents could commit to their child spending nights at one household during infancy and reevaluate the arrangement when the child is a few years older.

Any parent who is going through a divorce or believes that the post-divorce parenting plan requires modifications should talk to a lawyer about his or her options.

Article provided by Percy Tedeschi & Associates, P.C. Visit us at www.ptklaw.com