



Stuart Showalter is a child custody policy advisor to Indiana state policy makers as well as attorneys on child custody cases. For parents he offers child custody based life coaching to help them maintain control of their lives, increase their fitness as parents and manage their litigation so they can truly serve the best interest of their children. He provides this Law Blog as free opinion on various issues. Reader submissions of topics are welcomed. Send to Stuart@StuartShowalter.com

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2015 Indiana House Bill 1482 - The Office of Marriage Promotion

Indiana HB 1482 has been introduced by Representative Jeff Thompson. This bill would establish the Office of Marriage Promotion, IC 31-11-12, for the purpose of promoting marriage. The statutory goals of the office would be to increase the number of children born to married parents by promoting the following ideas:

Children born to married parents are more likely to better develop academically and socially;

Children born to married parents are more likely to be physically and emotionally healthier;

Children born into single parent households are more likely to live in poverty, commit crimes, commit suicide, use illegal drugs and tobacco, drop out of school, be an unemployed adult, and be incarcerated.

The other parts of the bill establish the director of the office who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor. It also establishes the funding process.

The three ideas, or rather correlations, expressed in this bill which relate to the more positive outcomes of children born to married parents or more negative attributes of children born into a single parent household are axiomatic. When I see correlations being used as an objective or in support of a relevant proposition I am always sceptical. To illustrate my concern I will rewrite the three correlations as these:

Parents who ensure that their children develop better academically and socially are more likely to be married;

Parents who ensure that their children are physically and emotionally healthier are more likely to be married;



About Me



[Stuart Showalter - Child Custody Advisor](#)

As a child custody policy advisor I have written and had child custody related legislation passed into law. My counseling of lawyers and appearances as an expert witness have helped them achieve more favorable results for their clients including winning appeals, gaining parenting time, reducing conflict, and mediating agreements. Additionally I made important contributions to the amended Indiana Parenting Time Guidelines that went into effect March 2013 and am currently formulating recommendations for the Indiana Child Support Guidelines which are to be amended this year. For parents I offer child custody based life coaching to help them maintain control of their lives and increase their fitness as parents so they can truly serve the best interest of their children.

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A mother who chooses not to ensure that she has an involved and committed father in the home is more likely to have children who live in poverty, commit crimes, commit suicide, use illegal drugs and tobacco, drop out of school, be unemployed as adults, and be incarcerated.

We now have two types of correlations. The first being the outcomes based upon marital status while the second is marital status based upon parental actions. When parents get married they are more likely to have particular outcomes for the children, and then there are parents who take certain actions to produce beneficial outcomes for their children who are more likely to marry.

From the ideas as written in the bill it should be easy to conclude that parents who marry are likely to have children who experience certain benefits as noted. If marriage countervails the adversities associated to single parenting then from the second set of ideas as I have rewritten them then the same conclusion should follow. Thus, *Parents who ensure that their children develop better academically and socially are more likely to be married* can be transposed to *getting married produces parents who ensure that their children develop better academically and socially*. Analogous to this would be *Children who perform well academically get told they are smart* being transposed to *Children who get told they are smart perform well academically*. The power of positive thought or positive affirmations is real. However, while performing well academically may be the cause of getting told one is smart, getting told one is smart is not enough to cause one to perform well academically. There are genetic components as well as training and studying habits that influence academic performance also.

While I understand Representative Thompson's rationale for proposing the Office of Marriage Promotion the ideas expressed in the bill do not establish a causal link between marriage and the outcomes of children. Rather than promoting a legal status as the bridge to better childhood experiences and well-being I would rather see an initiative that promotes responsible parenting regardless of the legal relationship of the parents. The [Responsible Parenting Campaign](#) of the Indiana Parenting Institute is a paradigm of what I think would better serve children than an effort to impose as legal status upon parents because of a positive correlation to those who have voluntarily embraced that status.

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Parents who would like to achieve the best outcome for their children in a

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