

# Let's Talk About...

It is stressful when your child is in the hospital or needs medical care. Sometimes complicated custody and guardianship issues come up. This can add to your stress. Your hospital Social Worker will work with you, your child and your doctors and nurses when this happens. They can help you follow hospital policy, laws, and what is best for your child. We believe “the child first and always.” We want to provide a safe and healing place for your child and your family.

## What can parents and guardians do?

- Give your care providers a copy of any legal papers about your child’s custody or guardianship right away. Otherwise, we think both biological parents have the right to visit their child and receive medical information.
- Develop a family visiting schedule. Try to meet your child’s needs first and your family’s needs, also. Try to make a flexible schedule. The most important thing is to reduce your child’s stress.
- When you think about family visitors, ask, “what is the best way to help my child get better”?
- Focus on common goals with your family members. This will help you achieve your child’s best interests.
- If there are safety concerns about custody or guardianship, please tell a hospital Social Worker right away.

## Custody and Guardianship

- Visitors should not be aggressive or violent. This is very important. If any visitor is aggressive or violent, the doctors and nurses will call hospital security. Disruptive behavior that disturbs your child, any other child, family, or staff member is not allowed. Disruptive visitors are taken out of the hospital and may not be allowed to visit in the hospital.

## How can a Hospital Social Worker help?

- They can help you with a hospital visit schedule. They will share your visiting arrangements and schedule with your doctors and nurses.
- They can listen to your concerns and provide support. They can help you figure out possible solutions to problems.
- They can help you understand the hospital’s custody and guardianship policy and how it relates to your child.

## What are things that a hospital Social Worker cannot do?

- They cannot perform custody or visitation evaluations.
- They cannot provide testimony in court about custody disputes.
- They cannot supervise visitors.
- They can’t ignore court orders. They have to follow court orders about custody and guardianship.
- They cannot give preferred treatment to any parent or guardian.



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