

## Family Court in Freehold

When I began law school in 1980, I used to walk from my apartment to the law school daily. The walk took me in front of a building called the "New York City Family Court".

Coming from an intact family in suburban New Jersey, I used to think that the word "Family" didn't seem to belong on a building next to the word "Court". Indeed my naiveté prevented me from understanding much of the business that might be conducted in a building called the "Family Court".

After law school, by chance I obtained a clerkship with a wonderful New Jersey Family Court judge who showed me how a good, smart, compassionate judge can make a difference in the lives of families in crisis. This experience then led to a career of practicing law in the Family Court. Over the past 19 years I have been involved with thousands of cases involving families in crisis in one form or another.

New clients often expect that I "have seen it all". Sometimes I myself am smug enough to think that I have, in fact, "seen it all". Of course, every time I think that I have "seen it all" another new case comes into my office with another new twist.

For example, earlier today I appeared in court representing grandparents in a custody battle against their daughter and her husband. The habitual heroin-using daughter and son-in-law had both been in jail for two months, having been apprehended in a western state after kidnapping their two-year old child from the grandparents in New Jersey, who had a valid temporary custody order.

Last week I represented a mother seeking to restrict the father's visitation with their three young girls based upon some rather bizarre sexual conduct that the mother learned the father was engaging in with strange men he had met on the Internet.

I have learned over the years that the Family Court is a place where competent caring professionals can help families in crisis try to turn things around for the better. Some parents cannot put their children's needs above their own. Child custody and visitation- related issues are often complicated. Restraining orders are sometimes necessary to protect one family member from another. After a marital separation, there often isn't enough money to support two households on a budget that was stretched to support the one former household.

There needs to be a place to address these very real family problems. The Family Court is that place.

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