

# Texas Family Law: Do's and Don'ts of Social Studies, 1st of 5 Installments

by David Wynne

## *Texas family law may require a social study*

Back in September 2013 we produced a 5-installment series describing the social study process. Now it's time to actually show the do's and don'ts for your role in the social study. How you conduct yourself can and will have an effect on the outcome. For 16 years the Wynne Law Firm has served the families of Fort Worth. Whether the issues of child custody require a social study of your parenting style or not, you will need the counsel of a qualified family law attorney. This is the first of five installments on the do's and don'ts of social studies.

## **The judge just wants all the facts**

No one is pointing the finger at you when the court orders a social study. Such investigations of parenting styles and living arrangements are common not only in divorce cases but in adoption and child custody disputes. Their purpose is to provide the judge with a clear, unbiased picture of the issues in the case as conducted by an independent professional.

## **What to do first**

Our first advice for any client suddenly involved in a social study is *don't behave like a jerk*. Welcome the study. Be cooperative. Demonstrate to everyone involved that you have nothing to hide and your primary concern is for the welfare of the children. Accordingly, do the following:

1. Pay the social study fees in person at the District Clerk's office. This is usually on the order of a few hundred dollars. Pay it promptly without having to be asked twice.
2. Completely fill out the personal data form. Do not delegate this to anyone. Do it yourself. Anything other than your personal involvement sends the wrong message.
3. Tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Make this your guiding light throughout the entire social study process. Lies and their lesser brethren—spinning the truth—are obvious to those conducting the study. They always raise more questions than anything else.