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Dad, struggling in court *pro se*, wins with strong lawyer

CHICAGO – An unmarried father was raising his 9-year-old daughter by himself. Something else he was doing by himself was trying to navigate the courts to establish himself legally as the father, and to obtain a court order that keeps the child with him and which makes him the parent with sole decision-making authority.

According to court documents, this matter had been pending since 2014, with Dad filing numerous *pro se* motions for custody. *Pro se* is Latin meaning “for oneself;” it’s the term that applies when a litigant goes to court without a lawyer. This is something someone might do to appeal a parking ticket. For a matter as important as a court order that keeps a father and child together, a dad needs strong legal representation, says attorney Jeffery M. Leving, founder and president of the Law Offices of Jeffery M Leving Ltd. in Chicago. *Pro se* litigation, especially in family matters, is [on the rise](#) over the last 15 years. This can be a mistake, Leving says, and this dad’s story will illustrate that.

This is a loving, caring, involved and supportive father who has been raising his daughter in a warm, stable environment since she was born. The girl occasionally visited her mother, so the mother wasn’t completely out of the picture, but the girl lived with Dad and he was raising her.

He wanted a court order declaring him the father, he wanted sole custody, and he wanted a ruling ordering that the child would live exclusively with him, to keep her safely at home with him. He was unable to make any headway doing this without a lawyer. As the judge noted, there had been no resolution of the parental responsibilities and parenting time issues during the seven-year pendency of this litigation.

“It was this winter when Dad called me,” Leving says. “My legal team and I understood his troubles and we knew what to do. We gathered the facts, cited the applicable law, and prepared intensely for our day in court. Now it’s spring – and we won! The judge issued an order establishing my client as the father, giving him sole parental decision-making authority for his daughter’s educational, medical, religious and extracurricular activities, and granting him exclusive parenting time.”

Leving will talk about the case on his weekly radio program, the Dads Rights Legal Hour, 9-10 a.m. CDT Saturday, June 12, on Power 92.3 FM in Chicago.

“This is a tremendous, sweeping victory, modified for broadcast, which is great for Dad and his daughter, and which Dad probably never would have gained on his own,” Leving says. “I cannot stress enough the importance, No. 1, of getting a court order keeping you and your children together, and No. 2, having strong, knowledgeable, experienced, prepared attorneys at your side. Even cases where the father should win, based on the law and the facts, aren’t easy. You never know what the adverse party will say or do, and judges’ rulings can be unpredictable. When we take a case, we realize we have to fight for our client. We know the law, we uncover the facts, and we have a history of getting results, like the result we got for this dad.”

Also on the broadcast, Leving will talk about the annual fatherhood symposium that he coordinates as the governor-appointed chairman of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood. The symposium takes place 2-4 p.m. Saturday, June 12, via Zoom. It’s free and open to the public. Those who wish to listen should email Leving’s assistant, Jennifer Whiteside, at Jwhiteside@LevingLaw.com, for the Zoom link.

Jeffery M. Leving is founder and president of the Law Offices of Jeffery M. Leving Ltd., and is an advocate for the rights of fathers. He is the author of Fathers’ Rights, Divorce Wars and How to be a Good Divorced Dad, the latter of which was endorsed by President Obama and by Cardinal Francis E. George, then the archbishop of Chicago. To learn more about Leving and his latest court victories, follow him on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).