



*Sabrina Winters*  
Attorney at Law, PLLC

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## **SHOULD THE GODPARENTS ALWAYS BE THE GUARDIAN?**

By: Sabrina Winters, Attorney at Law

I received an excellent question recently, and I must say that it may be the first time I was asked this question.

### ***Do you feel that the Godparents should always be the Guardians?***

I had to step back and think a minute. The tradition is (at least in my religion) that the godparents were chosen with the expectation that if something happened to the child's parents that they would raise that child. Being from an Italian family, I am very traditional and believe that traditions build a stronger closer family. But when I really thought about the question from the legal perspective, I have to be honest in saying that my answer is not as based on tradition as you would think.

There are certain things that parents look for in godparents as well as guardians, although some of the criteria may overlap, and that is ok. Perhaps it is more of a religious/spiritual based choice in choosing a godparent and more of a "reality" based decision when choosing a guardian. Or maybe our choice of godparents is merely based on having to pick your brother because he would have felt badly if he wasn't chosen or your mother put pressure on you! The godparents are also chosen so early in your child's life, even before you as the parent really know your child...his or her likes, dislikes, disposition, etc. Perhaps the godparents were chosen as the best spiritual guides and perhaps not chosen based on his or her child rearing qualities.

15720 John J. Delaney Drive, Suite 300  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28277  
(704) 843-1446  
[www.ncstateplanninginfo.com](http://www.ncstateplanninginfo.com)  
swinters@sabrinawinterslaw.com

People change, beliefs change, family dynamics change...that is a matter of how life affects each and everyone of us every day.

My answer was simply: don't depend on tradition, or expectations of what "should" be. Base one of the most important life changing decisions on who your child is today. Base it on your parental instincts. Base it on the qualities that you find important that the guardian have. You may find that your choice may be one and the same person, but more importantly, you may find that the person you thought years ago would be the parental figure in your child's life is far from that today. And isn't it better to have gone down that road today so that you could make the better choice for tomorrow?

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Charlotte, North Carolina 28277  
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[www.ncestateplanninginfo.com](http://www.ncestateplanninginfo.com)  
swinters@sabrinawinterslaw.com