

Things to Consider when Developing a Parenting Plan

When to develop a parenting plan?

Creating a parenting plan is a helpful way for parents to set out how they will carry on with their parenting responsibilities following a separation. The sooner a parenting plan can be put into place, the better, even if it is a temporary one. This way everyone knows what is supposed to happen and when. Documenting a parenting plan is a good way to avoid misunderstandings.

What does a good parenting plan usually include?

- How children will spend time with each parent and extended families
- How major decisions about children's health, education, religion and activities will be decided
- How parents will communicate with each other about the needs of children
- How parents will negotiate future changes based on their children's developmental needs
- How parents will work out differences that might arise in the future

What if there is parental conflict?

Parenting plans help families most when there is a lot of detail. A detailed parenting plan is especially necessary for families who experience higher levels of conflict. Even for families who experience lower conflict, a detailed plan is something parents can fall back on during times of higher stress.

What other things should be considered when developing a parenting plan?

- Children's ages
- Developmental stages
- Temperament and personality
- How they adapt and cope with change
- Special needs
- Gender
- Relationships with the extended families
- Friendships
- Sense of belonging and comfort with respect to their home, school, neighborhood, community and culture
- Activities
- Parents' schedules (work, study)
- Distance between both homes
- Access to transportation

