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PARENTING PLAN CHECKLIST

A Parenting Plan is a written document that is legally enforceable. It defines and clarifies expectations and responsibilities of co-parents and provides a foundation and roadmap for a strong co-parenting relationship. In addition, it helps parents avoid conflict and confusion and provides children with clarity.

The Parenting Plan includes:

Decision-making

- Major decisions (education, religion, health—physical and mental)
- Emergency medical decision-making
- Extracurricular activities
 - Who decides participation
 - Who pays, provides transportation, attends
- Child care (on-going regular and babysitting)
- Day to day decision-making

Children's time with each parent

- Daily, weekly, or long-distance time share
- Drop off/pick up: time and location and by whom
- Consideration of child's needs
- Rescheduling: canceled time rescheduled/make up time
- Will there be a different or the same schedule during the summer

Unplanned days off from school

- Children's sick days
- Snow days, late openings, early dismissals

Planned days off

- ½ days and professional days at school
- School days off that are not federal holidays

Trade off or last minute changes

- Does the other parent have first option (right of first refusal) for child-care over and above a sitter (No penalty is to be given for refusal.)
 - How much time before right of first refusal gets triggered
 - Does awake or asleep time matter
- Flexibility is a two-way process.

How will requests for changes to the schedule be made

- Verbal or in writing
- How much notice will be given
- How much response time is needed
- Confirm changes in writing

Phone calls

- Child can initiate phone call in private any time.
- Parent-initiated calls:
 - Do calls need to be scheduled? Do parents need to specify how long, how often, when or whether calls occur?

Toys and Belongings

- Do there need to be two complete sets
- Develop guidelines for things moving between two households
 - Specify what travels and what cannot
 - Specify condition clothes are to be in when returned to other house
 - e.g. clothes must be clean and in good repair

Holidays

- Supersede regularly scheduled time with parent with no makeup expected
- Consider when the holiday starts and ends

3-day weekends

- MLK Birthday
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day

One day holidays

- Mother's Day
- Father's Day
- July 4th
- Columbus Day
- Halloween

Thanksgiving

Winter break

- Christmas (Eve and Day)
- New Year's (Eve and Day)

Spring break

Any other religious holidays (e.g. Easter, Passover, Chanukah, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur)

Birthdays:

Parent's

- Will the birthday parent see the children on the parent's birthday

Children's

- Will the non-residential parent on that day see the child on the child's birthday
- How to manage peer/family celebrations
 - Who will plan the celebrations
 - Will both parents attend

Medical and Professional Appointments

Emergency: either parent can initiate

Regularly scheduled doctor's and dentist's appointments

- Who will schedule the appointment
- Who will transport
- Will both parents attend
- Notification given to other parent (if so, how far in advance)

Appointment because of illness

- Who decides if appointment is needed
- Informing other parent
- Providing information about diagnosis and treatment

An effort is made to keep other parent informed of prescriptions, illness, but ultimate responsibility rests with each parent to maintain communication with professionals working with the child.

Evaluation for special needs

Communication with professionals

Ability to obtain records

Communication plan

- Need a plan for communication between parents including what to communicate about

- Method of communication

- Turn around response time

- Time sensitive communication

- Written messages

 - How given to each parent

 - Do not use child as messenger.

Exchange of information

- Medical information

 - Appointments

 - Information from professionals

 - Any treatments recommended

- School information

 - Meetings scheduled

 - Event notices

 - Volunteer opportunities

 - Daily and weekly school information

 - Report cards

 - Attendance at meetings with teachers or other school personnel

- Travel information

 - Informing other parent of travel

 - Exchange of itinerary (domestic, international)

 - When travel with child

 - When travel without child

 - Ways in which to reach children

 - International travel and passport

Boundaries or rules at each household

- What rules/parenting practices will be consistent between houses

- How to explain differences to children

Alternative beliefs

- If one parent objects to the other's belief systems, then boundaries and ground rules need to be discussed and specified. .

Significant others and dating

- Factors to consider in introducing children

- Letting other parent know prior to introduction

- Overnight guests

- Bringing a significant other to a child's events

Special needs consideration

- Disability, physical or mental

- Chronic medical conditions

- Ethnic/cultural issues

Relocation

Impasse

Review of parenting plan