

I'm here to help you create a parenting plan. This series has all the information you need to navigate this court process smoothly.

Let's get started.

In this video, we'll cover parenting time, exchanges, major decisions, and communication.

Keep in mind, a parenting plan for a two-year-old might look different than one for a fourteen-year old. You may need separate plans for children who have different needs or interests.

CHAPTER HEADING: PARENTING TIME SCHEDULE

Your plan can include a parenting time schedule for when your child will spend time with each of you. Consider, for example, holidays. If you agree that your child will spend a holiday with one party, does that holiday begin the evening before or the morning of? What about three-day weekends? What will you do if your child is scheduled to be with you on a holiday that falls on a weekend they are supposed to be with the other party? If you expect parenting time to be a problem, try to work out these issues ahead of time.

Think about other events meaningful to your family. Let's say your family spends the Saturday after Thanksgiving at the home of a beloved aunt. She is important to your child, as are the cousins your child only sees at this event. Agreeing in the parenting plan that your child continue this tradition, regardless of the schedule, avoids conflicts later.

Think about other things. For example, if your child is involved in sports or extracurricular activities, who will take them to practices or events? How will you handle overnight or weekend travel?

CHAPTER HEADING: EXCHANGES

Another thing to think about is exchanges. Your parenting plan can spell out how to handle transitions from one party to the other. It can happen at home, work, or a neutral location like a library. Or it may be handled by a third party. Consider what is in your child's best interest.

CHAPTER HEADING: MAJOR DECISIONS

Your plan can also address how major decisions will be made such as those regarding your child's health and education. Will one party make all medical decisions and the other educational ones? Will you have a conversation before decisions are made, or will one of you be the "tiebreaker"? Maybe one party has tiebreaker authority on school and the other on sports and recreational activities. Your plan can also clarify who will attend doctor's

appointments and parent-teacher conferences, or be in charge of prescription medications. Think out as many issues as you can. Planning is key.

CHAPTER HEADING: COMMUNICATION

Good communication is important. Your plan can address issues like how your child communicates with you when he or she is with the other party. Think about how you want to exchange information with each other about changes in the child's health or social life. You can also specify the best means of contact. Is it by phone? text, Or email? Maybe it's better to communicate through a third party?

Think about your role in maintaining your child's relationships with friends, family, and other important adults. How will you introduce your child to people who may later become important, for example, a romantic partner?

Finally, how will you handle disputes? Will you go to mediation before asking the court to intervene or is there another creative solution?

Your parenting plan can be full of specific details. Or, it can be general. It's up to you.

CHAPTER HEADING: LET'S REVIEW

If you think it is in the best interest of your child, include details about parenting time, exchanges, major decisions, and communication. If you anticipate these issues being a problem, put them in your plan.

Remember, you are the experts.