
RESOURCE INFORMATION

Custody & Placement

Child or legal custody is a legal designation that is often confused with placement. The definition of custody is the right and responsibility to make major decisions about a child's life and placement refers to where the child lives. Most parents have joint custody of their children after divorce unless the court deems there to be a health or safety risk to the child. In those cases, one parent is awarded sole custody and the parental rights of the other parent is terminated with verifiable proof that such action is in the child's best interest.

Placement

There are many schedules parents can implement when deciding how they will co-parent. The term 'placement' designates where the child will live and parents have the option of primary placement where a child lives primarily with one parent and shared placement where the child lives with both parents on an agreed upon schedule. Determining a time sharing schedule that is the healthiest for children is important above all else.

Major decisions vs. day-to-day decisions

There is a difference between a child getting a car versus when they do homework. Divorcing parents must agree on what they consider to be major decisions and what they agree needs to be discussed before their child is allowed to do or have. Make a list of the decisions you feel should be made together and incorporated into your Parenting Plan. The following are examples of what could be considered major decisions by other parents, but are not limited. Every family is unique and what is important to you should be the basis for your decisions.

major appearance changes, unrelated child-care providers, elective medical procedures, spending money in savings or college fund accounts, therapy or counseling, traveling over night or out of state without either parent, curfews, discipline between homes, potentially dangerous sporting activities, birth control/abortions, study or travel abroad, use of electronics and social media, getting a job, dating, and getting a cell phone.

Dependent tax deductions

Determining which parent should take dependent deductions for their children is not always a simple decision. Many factors contribute to making a decision that maximizes the deduction and minimizes tax liabilities, as well as being fair. The income of each party, how much each contributes to support of the child, alimony, and whether both parents are supporting a home the child is residing in all factor into the equation. Once certain aspects of your Parenting Plan have been decided, it may be necessary to consult with a CPA before a final decision is made to avoid unnecessary tax implications or losses.

PARENTING STATEMENT

The following are samples of parenting statements created by other parents as part of their Parenting Plans. The purpose of a Parenting Statement is for you to define and unify your goals and commitments to your children, and each other, as co-parenting partners in the new family dynamic your divorce is going to create. You may utilize either of these statements if they align with your feelings and objectives or write your own. Your Parenting Statement should be a joint effort and written together.

EXAMPLES

As parents of Jordan, we agree that we would like her to develop the following qualities: Honesty, respect for others and for herself, a sense of belonging, love, and a sense of being her own person; Able to express herself, caring, compassionate and affectionate; to be healthy emotionally and physically and to be a spiritual individual. We understand that to help our daughter achieve these qualities, we in our relationship need communication, honesty and respect, we need to feel good about ourselves and each other, modeling the conduct we would like to see in our daughter.

As parents of Darien and Griffin, we agree that we want our children to be happy. We want them to develop into adults that exhibit love for themselves and others, honesty, respect, compassion, confidence, independence, curiosity and ingenuity. We are dedicated to protecting and nurturing their physical, mental and emotional health. We will encourage laughter, exercise, forgiveness and practice grace. In order to help our children achieve these qualities, we in our relationship need communication, honesty and respect, we need to feel good about ourselves and each other. As parents, we will always try our best to communicate with each other whenever it involves the children or some aspect of their lives. We will be patient with each other and work together to be the best parents we can be. We will model the conduct we would like to see in our children. We will treat each other with respect as co-parents. Although we will no longer be married, we want our children to know that they are cared for, loved, supported, and that we will always be a family.

As parents, our goal for Levi is to nurture his growth into a compassionate, resilient, and curious individual. We want to foster his natural creativity and encourage a love for learning, ensuring he approaches challenges with confidence and perseverance. We aim to cultivate his empathy and respect for others, teaching him the importance of kindness, integrity, and responsibility. By providing a supportive and stimulating environment, we hope to help Levi develop strong critical thinking skills and a sense of independence, preparing him to navigate the world with both wisdom and warmth. Despite the changes in our family structure, we remain committed to providing Levi with a stable and loving environment.

1. Parenting Statement

2. Parenting Schedule

When children will be with each parent during the week and weekends

- A. Transition days & times
- B. Provisions for work-related travel
- C. Provisions for parental vacations without children
- D. Sick day coverage (for children & parents)
- E. Transportation for children between homes
- F. Managing child-related social, sports & educational activities

3. Decision making as co-parents

Major decision making - see Resource Information page for detailed explanation

- A. Define what you consider to major decisions
- B. How major decisions will be discussed and handled
- C. Define what you consider day-to-day decisions

4. Time sharing

- A. Parenting schedule during school breaks
- B. Sharing holidays & special days
- C. Provisions for time with extended family in or out of state
- D. Travel during holidays

5. Time with children for vacations & summer months

- A. How much time each parent will have annually
- B. How much time each parent will have consecutively
- C. Traveling out of the country/passports
- D. Provisions for children traveling with either parent and their unrelated partner
- E. Advance notice for vacation time with children

6. Child expenses

- A. How support will be managed
- B. Providing for unexpected/extraordinary expenses
- C. When support begins

7. Guardianship

- A. Create guardianship for minor children
- B. When guardianship will be legally put in place

Mediation Parenting Plan Topics

8. Child health insurance

- A. Which parent provides benefits
- B. Will the same parent continue providing insurance after divorce
- C. Will insurance premiums be shared
- D. Provisions for loss of coverage, premium increases or changing which parent provides medical insurance

9. Child life insurance

- A. Obtaining/maintaining existing policy
- B. New policy - whole life or term
- C. Assigning or changing beneficiaries of existing policies
- D. Who pays premiums

10. Tax related dependent deductions

A consultation with a CPA or tax preparer is recommended prior to a final decision

- A. One parent takes the deduction
- B. Alternating years
- C. Dividing deductions for multiple children
- D. Sharing dependent deduction refund
- E. Head of household deduction considerations based on housing expenses

11. Bank accounts & college funds

- A. Account holders & beneficiaries (including guardian(s) if applicable)
- B. Accessibility of both parents to account information
- C. Decisions about account changes
- D. Decisions about use of funds, withdrawals and penalties if applicable

12. Resolution of future conflicts

- A. Return to mediation
- B. Work with family or co-parenting counselor
- C. How services will be paid

13. Co-habitation with either parent's future partners

- A. Agreed upon provisions