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PARENTING PLAN CHECKLIST

Children's time with each parent

Daily, weekly, or long-distance time share
Drop off/pick up: where, time, how, who
Consideration of child's needs
Transportation between households: delivery and pick up
Penalty for late drop off or pick up
Rescheduling: canceled visits rescheduled?

Trade off or last minute changes

Does the other parent have first option for child-care over and above a sitter?
(No penalty is to be given for refusal.)
Must ask in writing or verbally directly to other parent, not via a child.
The other parent responds yes or no with the understanding that no explanation is
expected or sought.
Flexibility is a two-way process.

Phone calls

In high conflict cases, specify times for each parent to call children.
Child can initiate phone call in private any time.
Parent-initiated calls:
In high conflict cases, schedule calls. Specify how long, how often, when or whether
allowed.

Toys and Belongings

Two complete sets are best.
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

Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Spring Break, Easter,
July 4th, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, President's Day, Passover,
Rosh Hashanah, other significant holidays &/or school days off

Specify whether or not a Monday holiday attaches to the preceding weekend or stands on its own

Birthdays: two celebrations

Father's Day and Mother's Day

Alternate arrangements:

1. Alternate odd/even years
2. Split holiday in mid-day

Extracurricular activities

Designate who has decision making authority for child's participation

If joint...specify process

Decide: who pays, provides transportation, attends

Expensive equipment needs to be covered in financial agreement for clarity

Religious planning

Religious training and/or education

Frequency of church or synagogue attendance

Who assumes responsibility for this

Observing religious holidays

Other religious issues

Medical and Professional Appointments

Emergency: either parent can initiate

Regularly scheduled doctor's and dentist's appointments

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 for moderate to severe conflict

Telephone permitted: Where? When? Who initiates the call?

Written messages

How given to each parent?

Do not use child as messenger.

Boundaries or rules at other household

Basically neither parent may dictate to the other parent

Serious concerns about parental judgment are to be addressed with third party.....mediator, therapist, parent coordinator, other professional

Is corporal punishment or other means of discipline an issue?

Including friends or pets on visits

Alternative beliefs

If one parent objects to the other's belief systems, then boundaries and ground rules need to be specified. Use mediator, therapist, parent coordinator, or other professional to help.

One parent cannot set rules for other's household

Significant others and dating

If relationship is truly seen as committed, then a gradual introduction of significant other is suggested. Both parents need to clarify their values with the children.

One parent cannot dictate to the other his or her lifestyle.

Better to limit the children's involvement in relationships with others until long-term commitments are made.

Special needs consideration

Disability, physical or mental

Chronic medication conditions

Ethnic/cultural issues

Define emergency procedures for unexpected flare-ups of conflict
Procedures for conflict resolution

Identify procedures for periodic reassessment of plan as developmental needs of children change

*Based on information from: Garrity, Carla B. and Baris, Mitchell A., Caught in the Middle, Protecting the children of High-Conflict Divorce, Lexington Books, New York, 1994.