

Florida Chapter of AFCC PARENTING PLANS PROJECT

The Florida Chapter of AFCC Parenting Plans Project was formulated in order to assist parents, professionals, and judiciary develop and/or modify parenting plans in the best interests of children. This list details areas that could be considered as parents work on issues relating specifically to schedules, and while circuits utilize various techniques to assist them in this process. In general, a more specific the parenting plan will reduce the potential for conflict in the future.

Communication

Methods: Phone conferences, Email, fax, mail, in person, Family Wizard/service, liaison

Oral communication – when (scheduled, flexible, who initiates), written communication (who writes, who signs, fax, email)

Neutral 3rd party for communication between parties

Assistance: therapy, parenting coordination, mediation, parent education, books, coach

Teach communication skills

Information sharing/Specific Issues:

Contact/schedule - Celebration of holidays/three day weekends/teacher workdays/extended school recess (breaks, summer), birthdays, rescheduling (at mutual agreement/written or verbal?), first option/right of first refusal, vacations/uninterrupted time, transfer location/contact with extended family/significant others, during illness, notice of changes, make-up time, planning individual time with each child, planning for reassessments according to child's developmental needs

Educational issues – Change in school, magnet school, private school, school teacher (identify, meetings, ways of communicating), school forms (registration, emergency/emergency contact alternatives), progress (interim and quarterly reports), school attendance/tardies, school pick up list, school functions/activities (open house, fairs, special programs), school photos, field trips

Medical – doctor/dental/therapy selection and contact info, insurance info, scheduling well check ups/sick appointments, releases of information, 2nd opinions, elective procedure, orthodontic, transportation, appointment scheduling, emergency contacts, if child sick/staying home from school, emergency protocols (which hospital, surgery)

Caretaking/supervision – who (list of acceptable babysitters, relative/non-relative, how old/experience), who can transport, emergency situations, at what age and when child can care for self, sibling sitting

Enrichment Activities – whose choice, contact information, after school/camp/team, tutoring, parameters (academic related come first, team sport cooperation, coaching)

Social – activities, friends, friend's parents, chaperones, curfews, gift giving (to child, to child's friend/birthday party, who provides present)

Special events – who attends, who is responsible for obtaining/transmitting information)

Age related – allowed alone at movies, driving age

Physical – hair cuts, tattoos, body piercings

Possessions – clothing

Discipline – parameters (type/time outs/physical, restrictions/who is allowed to provide and at what time, continuing reinforcement in other home, no undermining of)

Religion – general observance, affiliated activities, classes, religious life cycle events (i.e. baptism, confirmation, bar/bat mitzvah), who participates/is invited
General life cycle events – of parents (remarriage, new sibling, moving), of child (birthday, who plans party, who is invited, present buying)

Safety – parent (seat belts, car seats, alcohol/drug, smoking), child (smoking, alcohol, drug, sex)

Procedures

No disparaging remarks regarding other parent/parent's family

General encouragement of relationship with both parents

Do not pass messages between children

Do not plan activities during other parent's time with child

No undermining of other parent's relationship with child

Children not to keep secrets from the other parent

Consider non-verbal communication: body language, facial expression

Do not interrogate children about the other parent's private life/home

Do not discuss adult issues/information with children

Do not discourage children from having relationship with other parent's relatives

Do use children as detectives or spies regarding other parent's personal life

Strategies to maintain positive communication

Communicate as business partners

Time out using cued word

Communication with child – initiator of calls, when (how many times/at what time per day), with whom (extended families/parent's significant others, siblings), during vacations, long distance

Overnights for Infants

Parent's ability to nurture and care for infant/toddler

Safety (child proof) car seat, crib, baby equipment in each home

Financially, emotionally capable

Previous experience and interest in child-care

Knowledge of child's doctors and child care takers

Parental work scheduled (coordinate/day vs. night switch offs)

Breast feeding? Pump? Educations re: impact of breast feeding and importance

Consider age of child and child's relationship with each parent

Developmental level and temperamental differences create different needs

0-5 months/more capable to handle transitions and nurturing home

6-12 months/need to consider transitioning and easing into schedule

Overnights for Very Young Children

What about infants with older siblings?/differing needs and different schedules

Parent's ability to maintain similar schedules/routine/parenting techniques

Child care and right of first refusal

Motivations of each parent to truly parent and nurture child during that developmental level

Consider child remaining in their home and parents come to child instead of transferring child out of most familiar environment

Provide education/support systems to both parents to make sure they are equipped to appropriately parent an infant

No assumptions against overnights/must consider each child/parent in context of developmental needs of child/previous ideas are suggestions for best case, not requirements for contact/overnights

Remove assumptions re; gender bias and ability to parent overnight

Young children need more frequent and regular contact with both parents – including overnights to make sure that there is adequate bonding/the meaning of this can vary depending on the individual case

Rotating Time-sharing

Geographical accessibility

Work schedules

Ability to cooperate and make transitions seamless

Consistency of routine for children

Rule out parents who undermine each other

Consider bringing in third party neutral (PC, mediator)

Counseling for children if needed

Options for intervals to rotate

Schooling

Child development considerations

Children's activities

Community resources to help families with this plan

Family economics

Children's pets

Children's belongings (clothes, toys, computer, etc.)

Sibling Splitting

Evaluation

Identify age, gender and special needs (physical, emotional, spiritual)

Identify special parental capabilities

Primary caretaker

Financial

Medical training

Sibling relationships

Psychological

Lifestyle

Preference

Alienation

Geography

Alternatives – Three households (don't split children, parent's share same residence)

II. Plan

Education

Timesharing

Rotating siblings with each other/with each parent

Family events

Psychological counseling

Siblings/parents

Caregivers

Family units

Fostering sibling relationships

Communication between siblings (audio/video)

Age-based changes

School breaks/summer

Planned re-evaluation periods as ages and circumstances change

Dispute resolution plan

Mediation

Therapist

Facilitator

PC

Co-scheduling with siblings aware of each other's activities

Extended Family/Grandparent Access

Best interests of the children

Prior relationships/access

Prior support to the family and/or children

No legal standing (currently)

Emergency coverage

Guardianship issues

Access to step-children/grandchildren

Non-traditional Families

Identify who the major players are (non-parties) and what roles they play in the child's life

Consider the children's (special) needs arising from the non-traditional family unit

What are the competing (available) plans/who is offering what

What legal obstacles are there?

Children's resiliency

Competing cultural and developmental stages/needs

Community resources/composition (what arrangement will be most conducive to the child "fitting in")

Acceptance level of the proposed community and each side of the family and the impact on the child

Most important goal is to maximize the child's potential to develop healthy self-esteem

Domestic Violence

By definition: restrictive time for perpetrator

- Restraining order/injunction

- Potential for DV

- Criminal conviction

Limited parenting plan

- Depending on age/teen's wishes

Batterer's intervention

Probation compliance, if applicable

Communication - written only/no contact order

Include options for family members/step-parents

Reservation of jurisdiction that can be re-visited

Supervised access or monitored exchange

- 3rd party assistance

Restraining order – address impact of order

- Terminate order

- Protections to comply with order

Consequences of recurrence of DV

- Court can sanction either party if reoccurrence

- Prevailing party fee shifting

- Limitation of contact to protect children

Support counseling – both parents and children

If children exposed to DV in future, serious sanctions

Drug/alcohol counseling, if appropriate

Legal Considerations

Parenting plan development and implementation

- Best interest of the child

- Cases by case basis

- Non-adversarial resolution, whenever reasonably possible

- Encourage settlement

Decreased child support if greater parenting time

No presumptions

Concerns regarding the development of child's relationship with both parents, routine, stability, school work, moving

Special Needs

Dependent upon diagnosis

Treatment plan – therapy, medication, alternative treatments, professionals and third parties
Routine and structure for time sharing
Education
Expenses/insurance
Equipment
Long term care/independent living
Participation/involvement (joint participation in treatment plan)
Ongoing communication
Built in periodic assessment and re-assessment of child's needs
Travel responsibilities and coordination
ID – support systems/respice/relatives, 3rd parties
Allocation for responsibility how to share responsibility in each area
Access to information
Advanced directives
Other siblings
Family counseling/comprehensive

Relocation and Long Distance

Reason for relocation/substantial change
Distance
Cost – who pays for transportation of child? Who travels?
Will child support change?
Benefit or detriment to child/developmental needs and age of child/burden of travel
Involvement of parent
Educational impact/school system
Maintain DV protection
Special needs – medical, educational
Communication – video, telephone, email
Preparation for travel
Encouragement of parents regarding child's relationship with each of them
Parent's ability to maintain relationship with child
Child's support system/extended family relationships in each area
Maintaining child's relationship with extended family members

Reunification

What are ages of children and length of separation
What caused separation
What are current risks
 Domestic Violence or abuse
 Substance abuse
 Child abuse
 Criminal activity
 Mental health issues
 Poor parenting

- Special needs children/parent
- Beliefs/wishes/psychological states of child
- Agencies available to facilitate the process
 - Supervised contact
 - Monitored exchanges
 - Therapeutic contact
- What is impact of other family members
- What attachments exist for child/how does reunification plan impact these attachments
- Alienation
 - Determine if alienation has occurred and what the alienation/estrangement processes are
- Outside resources/education
 - Refer child to therapist, counseling for parents, family counseling
- Involve court
 - Legal sanctions
 - Mittor case
- Use of alternative dispute resolution
- Parenting coordination
 - Choose professional trained in high conflict/alienation issues
- Determine a strategy to deal with an uncooperative parent