



NEW BEGINNINGS

M E D I A

Parenting: Plans for Divorce

What is a "parenting plan" during a divorce?

A parenting plan contains the decisions about who is going to have the children on which dates and at what time. Children need to know when they will get to see their Mom and when they will get to spend time with Dad. In addition, parents will need to determine who will pay for which expenses as they pertain to the children. Parents need to put together a time share schedule and they need to figure out a parenting plan that can sustain the children going forward. This requires making some predictions about the future for the family which parents wouldn't normally undertake if they had stayed married. In essence, the parenting plan becomes a blueprint for the children, as it determines when they will see Mom and when they will see Dad.

When should I discuss a "parenting plan" during my divorce?

Start discussing the parenting plans as soon as the two of you decided to get a divorce. Discuss how the plan is going to work, how will parents stay in touch with the children when they are at the other parent's home? When is the best time to move out. What are the implications to the family. Parents need to let their children know what the future will look like going forward. This tends to decrease their children's fear as they can prepare for the future versus worry about the "what if's". If one parent wants to move across the country, or the children are going to be changing schools; the kids need to know. i.e. "We're moving in with grandma and grandpa."

What do I do if my partner and I don't agree on our parenting plan?

Quite often communication is the cornerstone problem in the marriage and in the divorce. Parents often don't communicate very well with each other, and they don't problem solve well together. If you can't resolve all of the issues together, there are options. Many parents hire a neutral third party mediator to help them with their parenting plan. This is typically a person who is trained in conflict resolution and is trained to help couples communicate with each other about the best interest of their children. A mediator can help facilitate a couple's ability to listen to one another resulting in a brainstorm of ideas for their parenting plan. In fact, most of our Courts now require that parents go to a mediator to help them agree upon a parenting plan before they go to Court. Although mediation may take a few sessions to accomplish your goals, the process tends to be much quicker and less costly than going to Court. The ultimate decision making authority stays in the control of the parents.

Some families prefer to hire a Child and Family Investigator (CFI). In this case, couples will seek the help of a professional to determine their parenting plan for them. The CFI typically does personality assessments of the couple and multiple interviews with the parents and children to determine the best parenting plan for the family. The decision making authority starts to move out of the parents control when a CFI is brought into the picture.

Where can I find sample parenting plans?

The best place to find a sample parenting plan is online. Many Courts use a standard form which can be downloaded and filled in as necessary. Parenting plans can be modified to fit your situation, as no two families are alike, thus no two parenting plans need be identical.

For more free information don't forget to tune into www.CastleRockRadio.com to hear Kristine Turner, the Divorce Doctor, live every Friday morning at 11:00am on New Beginnings, Life after Divorce.

Kristine Turner, Ph.D.

www.NewBeginningsCoParenting.com