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Parenting Plans



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A **Parenting Plan** is a written document which sets forth the parenting schedule of each parent with the minor children. It also may include responsibilities and duties, as well as prohibitions during the time that the child is in each parent's care.

Some states have statutorily-created parenting plans that must be filed with the court as a part of any custody case and have pre-printed schedules for use by the parties. These may include certain requirements that become a part of everyone's parenting plan. Other states leave it to the parties or the individual judges to devise whatever visitation schedule they deem to be in best interests of the children in a particular case. The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) has created a Model Parenting Plan which can be used as a resource for specific provisions.

Anything that the parents want to include can be included. The plan can be as general or as specific as necessary. The more trouble the parents have communicating, the more detailed the plan needs to be in order to avoid future problems.

In general, the parenting plan will include:

- Times/days for parenting time (Including Summers, Holidays, Birthdays)
- Who will be doing the driving for pick up and drop off and where pick up and drop off will be
- Make up days/time for missed time due to illness
- Doctor/dentist appointments
- School decisions; school notifications
- Daycare, babysitting, right of first refusal
- Payment of expenses
- Prohibitions, such as no alcohol use
- Any special circumstances
- Remedy in the event of disagreement, such as mediation before filing in court

The goal with parenting plans is to fashion a plan that meets the child's developmental, emotional and social needs and facilitates the child's adjustment to the new living arrangement.

Mary G. Commander, Attorney & Mediator has been handling Family Law cases in Virginia since 1981.

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