

# Massachusetts Parenting Plans



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Putting together a Massachusetts parenting plan, formally called a child custody / visitation schedule, can be a very difficult process. There are only so many hours in the day and both parents generally want to spend as much of their free time with their child(ren) as possible. Additionally, both parents may have busy work schedules that complicate the matter. There are many factors that influence the parenting plan and two organizations have

developed “Model Parenting Plans” in order to facilitate the decision making process.

A Massachusetts Task Force comprised of judges, lawyers, probation officers and mental health professionals put together “Model Parenting Plans.” The plans list eleven factors that should be taken into consideration when developing a parenting plan. The Factors are:

1. Level of tension or conflict between parents
2. Parenting skills already in place
3. Child’s physical and emotional health
4. Child’s temperament and adaptability to change
5. Child’s developmental age and abilities
6. Child's daily schedule
7. Availability of each parent
8. Location of both parents
9. Parent's ability and willingness to learn basic care giving skills
10. Sibling groups
11. Close caretaking relationship

The Model Parenting Plans are grouped into categories by age. An infant parenting plan is different than a teenager parenting plan. [\[click here to view the Massachusetts parenting plan guide\]](#)

The Massachusetts Association of Family and Conciliation Courts has also developed a “Model Parenting Plan” information guide called, *Planning for Shared Parenting, A Guide For Parents Living Apart*. This guide is frequently used by Massachusetts

Probate and Family Court Judges and Lawyers as a starting point to develop a parenting plan. The Model Parenting Plans may be deviated from based on individual circumstances. The guide states that it is intended only as a guide from the time the parents separate until the initiation of court action. In reality, this guide is used during the divorce process and post divorce as well. [\[click here to view the AFCC parenting plan guide\]](#)

Regardless of the model that is used it is important to create a parenting plan that is in the best interests of the child(ren). Parents should not use the parenting plan as an opportunity to reduce or increase their child support payments.