

Co-Parenting: Rules of the Road



WHAT IS CO-PARENTING AND IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

Co-parenting occurs whenever a child's parents, following divorce or separation, each maintain **shared responsibilities** for the child's upbringing. Clinical studies show that ongoing conflict between parents causes children emotional turmoil, while **less conflict and strong relationships** with both parents results in developmental benefits for the child. At **Chicago Advocate Legal, NFP**, we encourage co-parenting practices for all divorced or separated couples, unless there is domestic violence or other circumstances that create health and safety risks to you or your children.

Before You Begin, Know The Basics...

RULES FOR NEGOTIATING A PARENTING PLAN



- Children are better off when **both of their parents are actively involved** in their lives.
- Make room for **flexibility**. Going to be late? Missed a parenting time call? Allow for wiggle room in your agreement including back up plans.
- Inquire into the other parent's decision-making process before deciding it's good or bad. **Give the benefit of the doubt**.
- If you don't get along well with the other parent, **communication should be about your child only**.



- Don't use your **child as a messenger** in the negotiation.
- Don't hold the other parent exactly to your standards if your child is healthy and happy.
- **Don't accuse the other parent of wrongdoing**. Rather, discuss with the other parent issues that are bothering you and how to address them.
- Don't say or do things you know will **aggravate or annoy** the other parent if those things aren't necessary for your negotiation.
- Don't be petty and fight over small issues. There's 365 days in a year, **don't fight over hours or minutes** unless necessary.



- Be practical and **know your own limitations**. Chart out your own schedule and don't bite off more than you can chew.
- Take it one issue at a time and **save the money for last**.

Co-Parenting Roadmap



Parenting Time

WHAT TO DISCUSS

- Regular Parenting Time
 - Monday-Friday schedule
 - Weekend schedule
 - Pick-up/drop-off location(s)
- Summer/Vacation Parenting Time
 - Travel restrictions (i.e., out-of-state/international travel, passport)
 - Notice to the other parent
- Holiday Parenting Time

HOW TO APPROACH IT

- **Start with the Status Quo.** What are you doing now that's working well?
- **Remember, Don't be Petty.** If you don't get time here, ask for time there.
- **And Be Practical.** Don't ask for time that you can't use.



Decision-making

WHAT TO DISCUSS

- Education
 - School district
 - Private vs. public
 - Tutors, IEPs, etc.
- Medical
 - Selection of provider(s)
 - Routine health care and medications
 - Elective procedures/ surgery
- Extracurricular
 - Before/after school activities
 - Summer activities
- Religion

HOW TO APPROACH IT

- **“Co-Parenting” typically calls for joint decision-making, at least on most topics.**
- **Communication!** Keep each other notified of new child-related updates.
- **Transparency is key.** Provide easy access to child activities and records to both parents.



Financial Matters

WHAT TO DISCUSS

- Child Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Health Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Child Expenses
 - Out-of-pocket medical expenses
 - Extracurricular activity costs
 - Daycare, babysitters, etc.
 - School fees, tutors, etc.

HOW TO APPROACH IT

- Start with the Illinois child support calculator. Deviate if necessary.
- Where possible, **save money together.**
- When in doubt, **alternate years or split it 50/50.**