

Making a parenting plan

Workbook to help you decide what's best for your children after separation



Parenting Through Separation
Programme Information

Sorting out your own parenting arrangements is usually better for you and your children. This is what most people do, and it can be quicker and less stressful for everyone than having to go to court.

If you are able to agree on care arrangements and you're both happy with what you have agreed, then you don't have to do anything else (unless you want the court to 'formalise' your agreement).

If you need help to reach agreement, new mediation services have been set up to help you.

The free Parenting Through Separation course may also be very useful in helping you think of, and manage your children's needs.

Parenting plans

A parenting plan helps you and your ex-partner (or wider family/whānau) to be clear about what you want the parenting arrangements for your child or children to be.

The plan will help you identify the things you need to decide and work out to care for your children and who will do what and when. It will also make it clear when the children spend time with each of their parents.

If you and your ex-partner cannot agree on how your children will be looked after, the plan may help you be clear about the things you are not agreeing on. You can use your completed plan to negotiate care and contact arrangements with your ex-partner.

What does the parenting plan cover?

As you work your way through the guide parenting plan, you'll see that it's set out in two parts.

The first part covers the main parenting arrangements, including:

- when and where the children spend time with each parent
- what schools they will go to
- what the holiday arrangements are
- rules about contact with the other parent and extended family when the children are with one parent
- how you'll handle changeovers between parents
- how you'll handle cultural and religious matters
- how you'll deal with any special health or medical needs your children have.

These types of things are called day-to-day care and contact arrangements. You will need to have decided what to do about these types of things if you ask a Family Court judge to turn your plan into a Parenting Order.

Part two of the parenting plan details agreements on things like pocket money for children or when they're allowed sweets. This part, while important to you and your children, cannot be turned into a Court Order.

Steps to filling in the plan

1. Go through the parenting plan and agree on what arrangements work best for your children.
2. Write them down.
3. Keep a copy for each of you.
4. If you can't agree, attend a Parenting Through Separation course and, if you need more help, go to Family Dispute Resolution.
5. Do your best to make the plan work for your children.

Can be made into a Court Order

Can be made into a Court Order

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2. Living arrangements – how will the children spend time with each of you?

Describe the arrangements. An easy way to get started is to make a weekly or monthly calendar showing how the arrangements all fit together. Blank weekly and monthly calendars are on the following pages for you to use.

EXAMPLE: Weekly plan (more appropriate for younger children)

A weekly plan for a pre-school child might look something like this:

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8.00							
9.00							
10.00							
11.00							
(noon)							
1.00pm							
2.00							
3.00							
4.00							
5.00							
6.00							
7.00							
8.00							
Overnight							

The shaded times are with Parent A – all day Monday and Monday night, 4 pm to 7 pm Wednesday, all day Friday and Friday night, Saturday morning.

The blank areas are the time the child spends with Parent B.

EXAMPLE: Monthly plan (more appropriate for older children)

A monthly plan for a school-aged child might look something like this:

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							

The shaded times are with Parent A – 9 am Sundays to 8 am Wednesdays (before school). The rest of the time (the unshaded areas) is with Parent B – Wednesdays after school to 9 am Sundays.

Weekly calendar

(More appropriate for younger children)

Shade the boxes to show when _____ (parent's name) will have the child/children.

_____ (the other parent or party) will have the child/children during the unshaded times.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8.00							
9.00							
10.00							
11.00							
(noon)							
1.00pm							
2.00							
3.00							
4.00							
5.00							
6.00							
7.00							
8.00							
Overnight							

Monthly calendar

(More appropriate for older children)

Shade the boxes to show when _____ (parent’s name) will have the child/children.

_____ (the other parent or party) will have the child/children during the unshaded times.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							

3. Contact arrangements

When the children are staying with one of you, what contact will they have with the other?

When will the children spend time with other important family/whānau and friends?

4. Changeovers

How will the children get from one household to the other?

Will changeovers sometimes take place at school (for example, one parent drops off the child at school in the morning, the other parent picks up the child from school in the afternoon) and on what days?

5. How will we deal with special occasions?

Birthdays (children's and parents')

Mother's Day

Father's Day

Long weekends/other public holidays

Christmas/other festivals

6. Holidays

Who will the children spend their holiday time with, and who will make any travel arrangements?

Is one parent able to take the children out of the country for a holiday? If so, who makes the travel arrangements, and how will the other parent be contacted?

7. School — which school children will go to

Will the children be able to stay at the same school?

Who will tell the school that the children's family circumstances have changed?

Who will go to parent/teacher interviews, parents' evenings and other school events?

When the children get older and the time comes for a change of school, how will this be agreed on?

Can the children receive religious instruction at school?

Can the children receive sex education at school?

How are decisions going to be made about choosing course subjects?

How will we know about progress at school, and who will tell the school that reports and notices need to be sent to both of us?

Who will look after the children during teacher-only days and other short school days?

8. Special cultural and religious matters — for example, are the children to go to church, and which one?

9. How will special medical or health matters be dealt with?

Part two

This part of the plan details other matters such as supervision, who takes the children to medical appointments, pocket money etc. You do not need to fill all of this out, only what is relevant to you and your children.

10. Safety rules

**Supervision at home – are the children ever allowed to be at home on their own?
Remember, children aged 14 and under require supervision by an adult.**

Supervision away from home – are the children ever allowed to walk/catch public transport on their own? In what circumstances?

Other concerns – for example, what are the arrangements for picking the children up after sports and music practise, or from friends' places?

11. Who else is allowed to look after the children?

(Other carers could include, babysitters, relatives, childcare centres, after-school care.)

What happens if one of us isn't available to look after the children during our scheduled time?

12. After-school activities

Who will take responsibility for getting the children to these?

Who will go to school camps?

13. Health

When and how will we communicate with each other, if the children are sick?

How will we share responsibility for looking after the children when they are sick or unable to go to school?

How will we share responsibility for taking the children to medical/dental appointments?

Do we agree that our children should be immunised?

14. When will we have regular discussions about the children?

15. Who will look after the children's important documents?

16. Money checklist

Are either of us making regular payments for the children to the other?

(These can include payments through Inland Revenue Child Support.)

How are we going to pay for everyday clothes and shoes?

How will we pay for the children's outside-school activities (for example, sport, church camps, music, dancing)?

How are we going to pay for other school expenses (like fees, donations, transport, trips, stationery)?

How are we going to pay for medical expenses (such as doctor's fees, dentist, optician)?

How are we going to pay for childcare?

How are we going to pay for school uniforms, clothes, shoes, sports and activities at school?

How are we going to pay for holidays and travel (like visits to grandparents, family/whānau and friends)?

How are we going to pay for large items (like a bicycle, mobile phone, computer)?

Are either of us going to give our children pocket money, and how much?

How will we make sure this plan is kept up to date for the children?

17. Is the agreed parenting plan different from the current arrangements?

Yes, explain what's changed and why it needs to change.

No, how long have the current arrangements been in place?

18. Review date

When will we review this plan?

Parents'/caregivers' commitment

We understand that we are still both joint guardians of our children, even though we've separated.

We accept that this means that we are both responsible for major decisions about their future, such as their education, religion, where they live, their name and overseas travel. We will work out decisions about these things together, as co-operatively as we can, until they are adults.

We accept that the responsibility to make the day-to-day decisions for our children will have to be taken by whoever they are staying with at the time.

We have both read and understood the arrangements for the children recorded in this parenting plan and will follow it as closely as we can until we make another agreement together.

Signed _____

Signed _____

Date _____



Notes and contact numbers



MINISTRY OF
JUSTICE
Tabu o te Ture

newzealand.govt.nz

2014 © Crown Copyright.

Models used for illustrative purposes.

MOJ0504/02/14

The information in this brochure is
a guide and is not legal advice.