

Decision-Making (also called “Legal Custody”)

Day-to-day decisions are often made by the parent caring for the child in the moment. Parents must consider how other major decisions should be made, such as education, religion, and medical decisions. A few arrangements are most common:

- **Sole decision-making:** One parent has authority for making major decisions. They may consult the other parent for input.
- **Split decision-making:** Each parent has final authority in certain areas. They may consult the other parent for input in those areas.
- **Joint decision-making:** Parents have to reach an agreement about all major decisions.

Child’s Address (also called “Physical Custody”)

What is the legal address of record for our child? This is the address, for example, maintained by the school or doctor. It is usually the residence where the child spends most of their time; however, there are a few models you may consider:

- **Nesting:** The child lives in one home. The parents take turns staying with them.
- **Shared:** The child lives with each parent 50% of the time. Parents choose the address of record.

Parenting Time (also called “Visitation”)

“Visitation” refers to the time the child spends with the “non-custodial parent,” meaning the parent who spends less than 50% of the time with the child. Even parents who spend equal time with the child will need a schedule for parenting time.

- Where will our child regularly spend his/her time?
- How will we share special times, like school vacations, birthdays and holidays?
- How do we handle vacations?
- How do we handle pick-ups and drop-offs (also called “transfer”)?
- How will we handle it when someone is late?
- How will we handle it if someone cancels a visit?
- How will we handle conflicts with the parenting schedule?
- When a holiday falls on a scheduled visit, which takes priority?

Communication

- When and how will we communicate?
- How will we share school and medical information?
- What kind of notification do we need from the other parent?
- How do we handle disagreements so that our child is not caught in the middle?
- How, and how often, will our child be in contact with the parent who is not there?

Child’s Relationships with Other People

- Do we want to schedule separate visiting time with relatives? Or should this be included in the regular parenting schedule?
- How will we handle relationships with new partners?

Changes to the Parenting Plan

- How will we handle temporary changes?
- How will we handle long-term schedule changes?
- What if one of us wants to move in the future (also called “relocation”)?
- How will we handle future disagreements?

Child Support

- Mediators will review how the court would determine child support under the Child Support Standards Act and parents can then make informed decisions -- which can be the same or different from the law.
- How much can we each contribute to supporting our child(ren)?
- How much financial support do our child(ren) need?