

Parenting Plan Guideline Overview

This Parenting Plan Guideline Overview is intended to provide general guidance on the issues that are typically addressed in a parenting plan involving minor children. **It is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.** Parenting plans must always be drafted with due regard to the best interests of the child and may require professional or legal assistance depending on the circumstances.

1. Purpose of a Parenting Plan

A parenting plan sets out the arrangements between parents or guardians regarding the care, contact, and responsibilities relating to a minor child. Its primary purpose is to ensure stability, predictability, and the promotion of the child's best interests following separation, divorce, or where parents do not reside together.

2. Parental Responsibilities and Rights

This section typically records how parental responsibilities and rights are exercised. It may address guardianship, care, and contact, as well as how major decisions concerning the child are to be made.

3. Primary Residence and Care Arrangements

The parenting plan should indicate where the child ordinarily resides and how day-to-day care is managed. This may include weekday arrangements, school term routines, and responsibilities for transport.

4. Contact Arrangements

Contact arrangements usually set out when and how the child will spend time with each parent. This may include weekends, midweek contact, public holidays, school holidays, special occasions, and telephonic or electronic communication.

5. Education

This section often addresses the child's schooling, including the choice of school, responsibility for school related costs, and participation in school activities and decisions.

6. Healthcare and Medical Decisions

Parenting plans commonly record how medical decisions are made, including consent for medical treatment, emergency care, and responsibility for medical expenses not covered by medical aid.

7. Religious, Cultural, and Extramural Activities

Where relevant, the plan may address the child's religious upbringing, cultural practices, and participation in extramural activities, including how such activities are agreed upon and funded.

8. Financial Contributions

Although maintenance is often dealt with separately, a parenting plan may record agreed contributions toward the child's daily needs, education, healthcare, and extramural activities.

9. Communication Between Parents

This section may regulate how parents communicate regarding the child, including methods of communication, information sharing, and expected standards of conduct.

10. Dispute Resolution

Parenting plans often include mechanisms for resolving disputes, such as consultation, mediation, or referral to a professional, before approaching a court.

11. Amendments and Review

The plan may provide for periodic review and amendment as the child's needs change over time, or where circumstances materially alter.

12. General Provisions

General provisions may include confirmation that the plan is entered into voluntarily, that it is intended to promote the child's best interests, and that it may be made an order of court where appropriate.