

CREATING A CO-PARENTING PLAN THAT WORKS

Co-parenting is not a new concept - it's just a new word. **Co-parenting** simply means that the parents are both involved in the day-to-day decision-making that is part of being a good parent. Effective co-parents communicate well with each other and they willingly share parenting time with their children.

A **co-parenting plan** is a formal statement of how the needs of the children will be met. A co-parenting plan asks: **Does this (and every decision) reflect and support the best interests of the children?** Items that should be considered in every co-parenting plan include:

Visitation/Shared Parenting Schedules

- Remember to plan for days like Mother's Day or Father's Day, or any other special occasions such as grandparents' birthdays.
- Remember to include drop off and pick-up times and locations.
- Use a regular calendar and a school calendar to plan for school breaks and holidays, summer vacations, and weekend starts and finishes.
- Define when holidays start and end. Be specific with time (e.g. after school, 6:00 P.M.).

Equal Access to Health and School Records

- Both parents have equal access to medical records.
- Both parents have equal access to school records.
- Inform the school or teacher of your separation and any special arrangements you would like to make.
- Take responsibility to stay informed about your children's health and school information. For some this may mean being more involved than in the past.
- Make efforts to include and involve the other co-parent in school-based events.

Financial Support for Children

- Establish the amount of child support payment and who will pay.
- Designate whether the payment will be made directly by check, by direct deposit to an account or by some other method.
- Consider the importance of adequate life insurance for both parents to provide for the children in case of sudden death.
- Discuss the need for disability insurance for both parents.
- Medical and dental coverage is a priority. Decide how to provide this coverage. Items not included in basic coverage must be discussed (e.g. physiotherapy, glasses, orthotics etc.).