



GO DIVORCE CLINIC[®]
THE END OF THE UGLY DIVORCE

Physical Custody & Parenting Plan

Turning two households into a workable plan for your children

When parents begin discussing custody, the conversation can quickly become focused on percentages, family planning schedules, or the idea of who "gets" the children. Children do not experience percentages or calendars. They experience school mornings, backpacks, birthdays, holidays, practices, transportation, bedtime, vacations, and transitions between homes.

A parenting plan has to work in real life, with your children and your shared circumstances. Sometimes, that's not always an absolutely equal division of time with the kids. And sometimes, what custody is possible, is not the custody desired.

Logistics: Start With the Actual Week

Before focusing on percentages, look at the ordinary rhythm of your children's lives. School schedules, work schedules, distance between homes, transportation, childcare, activities, and the children's routines can all affect whether a proposed schedule is workable.

Some of the practical questions parents commonly work through include:

- Where will the children be on school nights?
- How will weekends be arranged?
- How will pickups, drop-offs, and transportation work?
- How will holidays, birthdays, school breaks, and vacations be handled? Mother's Day? Father's Day?
- How will extracurricular activities and school events fit into the schedule?
- How will the parents exchange information concerning the children?
- What happens when a schedule needs to change?
- How will the parents handle alternate child care for the children?

These questions are not a formula for creating the right parenting plan. They are practical details that need enough clarity for both parents to understand the arrangement they have made.



Two Homes, Two Parenting Styles

Parents sometimes enter divorce concerned that different parenting styles will make a shared parenting arrangement difficult to reconcile. Different households will naturally develop different routines, expectations, and ways of doing things. Different does not necessarily mean unworkable.

The existence of those differences does not, by itself, tell the parents what their parenting arrangement should be. For couples using the GDC Portal, the practical task is to reach an agreement they both understand and can carry out.

Watch the Transitions & The Kids

A schedule is more than a division of days. Every move between homes creates a transition for the children and will require coordination between the parents. Beyond those logistics, pay attention to the children. How are they handling the transitions? How are they when they are being transported to and from the drop offs?

Think through where exchanges will happen. Small logistical details can become recurring sources of friction when they are left unresolved. Children are often remarkably sensitive to tension between their parents. The easier and more predictable you can make exchanges, the less parental friction the children have to move through along with the transition itself.

Know What You Have Actually Agreed To

A parenting plan should be clear enough that both parents can describe the same arrangement. Online custody calendars are useful tools. Many of our clients use them now to great effect.

Along with your daily school year schedule, be clear about summer vacations, holidays, vacations, transportation, and other recurring parts of the schedule. Identify what remains unclear and work through it before entering the agreement into the Portal.

When You Cannot Reach Agreement

The GDC Portal does not decide custody issues, recommend a parenting schedule, determine what arrangement is best for your children, or advise either parent about individual legal rights.

If you and the other parent cannot reach an agreement about a parenting issue, you may take additional time to work through it together, use a separate neutral mediation process to help facilitate agreement, or seek independent legal advice.

The decisions remain yours. GDC provides the structure for recording them.

GDC is not a law firm and does not provide legal advice. This resource is general educational information for GDC Portal users and is not a recommendation concerning custody, parenting time, or any particular parenting arrangement.