

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING YOUR PARENTING PLAN

- The more conflict there is between parents, the harder it is for children to adjust to a new situation.
- Think of your children's needs first.
- You and your children have a right to be safe.
- A simple schedule is easier for children to adjust to.
- Your children may need to have a "home base" with one parent, and frequent contact with the other parent, although some children are comfortable with two full-time homes.
- As children get older, it gets easier for them to handle longer periods away from a parent.
- Each child is unique. Consider temperament, personality, and needs when creating your parenting plan.
- All children have a right to love, care, and commitment from their parents.
- Your parenting plan can be as detailed as you need it to be.
- Consistency and predictability are important for children.

TIPS

- Figure out what is working now and continue it in your plan.
- Figure out what isn't working now and do something else in your plan.
- Try to plan a schedule that allows each parent to be at his or her best when the children are with that parent.
- Try to find a way of communicating that allows each parent to be at his or her best with each other.

QUESTIONS

- **These questions are written to help you make choices in your parenting plan that fit the unique needs of your child, yourself, and the other parent.**
- **After asking yourself a question, write down your thoughts in the space provided or a separate sheet of paper before filling out your Parenting Plan Form.**
- **Begin with the first few questions in each section. If you find them helpful and want to explore more, go to the "More Questions" sections.**
- **Some of the questions may apply to your situation, others may not.**

SECTION 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN

1) What are our children's individual qualities and what do our children need from each parent?

2) In what ways do each of us provide important things to our children?

3) How are our children doing right now?

4) Do I have concerns about how our children are treated? Are dangers present in the other parent's home, like violent acts or anger, too much drinking or the use of drugs?

5) Has anyone else raised a concern about my well being or our children's? Am I afraid for my safety or our children's safety?

If you have any of the concerns listed in #4 or #5 or other serious safety concerns, seek help from others before writing your plan. The [Safety Focused Parenting Plan Guide](#) can help you decide if you need to develop a different kind of parenting plan. A useful web site for locating people to help you with these issues in your area is [Oregon Health Authority Community Resources](#).

MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN

6) What kind of person is each child? What makes each child special?

7) When do our children seek out one parent? When do our children seek out the other parent?

8) During the first year of each child's life (the "bonding period"), was one of us around the child more? Did one of us do more caretaking for the child?

9) When our children are in a difficult situation, for example during separation and reunion, when feeling overtired, or in an unfamiliar situation, how do they reach out to us? How do they let us know that something is wrong?

10) How do our children like the current parenting arrangements? Have the children talked about their feelings, reactions, concerns, or what they want in the future?

11) How do our children react to change? What makes it easier for our children to accept change?

12) How are each of our children's needs different based on their ages, personalities, and likes and dislikes?

13) Who else (family members, other caring people) is important in our children's life?

SECTION 2: QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU RELATE TO YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S OTHER PARENT

14) When am I at my best with our children? What helps me and my children to get along well?

15) When am I at best with the other parent? What helps me and the other parent get along well (if at all)?

16) What am I trying to do better? What do I want the other parent to do better?

17) How can other people help our family?

MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU RELATE TO YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S OTHER PARENT

18) What are my plans and wishes for our children's future?

19) How do my children and I handle and resolve conflict with each other?

20) How do the other parent and I handle conflict with each other?

21) Realistically, knowing myself and the other parent, what kind of future parenting relationship is possible between us? How often do I want to be in contact with the other parent about the day-to-day details of our child's life?

22) Can I comfortably meet the other parent at parties, school, conferences and other functions important to our child? What would it take to become more comfortable?

23) How did the other parent and I share parenting responsibilities and time in the past? How do the other parent and I share parenting responsibilities and time with our children now?

24) Am I happy with the current arrangements: Why or why not? Are our children happy with the current arrangements? Why or why not? What changes can I suggest to make things work better?
