

Scenario 4: Jennifer & Blake

Jennifer, an office worker, and Blake, a beverage delivery man, met 10 years ago at a bar. She was 21 and he was 23. Seven months later, Jennifer got pregnant. They moved in together and married before the baby was born. Their son, Josh, was a healthy baby with an uncomplicated birth. When he was 3 months old, Josh went into full time child care and Jennifer returned to work.

After the baby's arrival, Blake's work and leisure time activities remained relatively unchanged. He was happy to play with the child on evenings and weekends. Jennifer's job was not demanding. She found her son easy to care for and looked forward to coming home after work. When Josh entered Kindergarten, Jennifer began to long for another child. Blake had a new job at UPS. His hours were longer and less predictable. He wasn't eager to add the responsibility of a new baby. Discussion on the subject dropped without agreement.

Shortly thereafter, Jennifer found out she was pregnant. She was thrilled. Blake became resigned to a second child. The pregnancy was problematic, and their daughter, Alisha, was born 3 1/2 weeks premature. She had poor lung function and required constant, vigilant care. Jennifer feared Alisha would become a victim of SIDS. She abandoned plans to return to her job. This baby needed her. Alisha struggled with breast and bottle feeding and gained weight slowly. She slept irregularly and was unable to settle into a routine. Frequent visits to the doctor took up Jennifer's time during the day. She was relieved to have Josh in school full time and after school care two to three days per week. Blake wasn't often involved in Alisha's daily care. When he attempted, his daughter cried for her mother.

Exhausted by multiple demands, over time the couple migrated to sleeping in different rooms and became emotionally distant. Blake's absence and Jennifer's suspicions of an affair ultimately led the couple to decide the marriage was over. He moved into an apartment nearby and spends as much time with Josh as possible given his work schedule. She returned to work two days a week, with Alisha, now 22 months old, in private child care. Alisha's health has improved, but there is concern about a delay in language development and her periodic, inconsolable tantrums. Blake finds spending time with Alisha and Josh together

very challenging. Jennifer knows she will need to return to a full time work schedule soon. The parents are at a loss as to how to arrange parenting time for both children.