

## HOW TO USE YOUR BASIC PARENTING PLAN GUIDE

**WHAT IS A PARENTING PLAN?** A parenting plan is a document that states when the children will be with each parent and how decisions will be made.

**WHY DO I NEED A PARENTING PLAN?** Oregon law requires parents (married or unmarried) to file a Parenting Plan with a request for a divorce or child custody order. The purpose of this guide is to help you make your parenting plan.

**WHAT SHOULD MY PARENTING PLAN LOOK LIKE?** Your parenting plan may be either general or detailed. In either case, the plan must at least state the time the children will be with each parent and can also state who will do what parenting tasks. The forms in this guide are examples of how parenting plans can look.

**WHO CAN HELP ME MAKE A PARENTING PLAN?** There are many places to find help.

- **ON-LINE:** The Oregon Judicial Department website, <http://courts.oregon.gov/familylaw>, has all sorts of help if you want to try on your own. In addition to this Guide, a [Safety Focused Parenting Plan Guide](#) can be found there or you can ask at the place where you got this information if copies of these guides are available. Both guides include a long list of books and other materials to help you with your parenting plan and with other questions you might have. Both guides have a list of “Words to Know” to help you understand the process better. This Guide also has information on children’s needs at different times and a list of questions to help you get started on your parenting plan.
- **LEGAL SERVICES:** You can locate a private attorney through the Oregon State Bar at (800) 452-8260 or [www.osbar.org](http://www.osbar.org). Free or low-cost legal advice may be available to you through non-profit agencies, volunteer programs, or the bar association of your county. Check [www.oregonlawhelp.org](http://www.oregonlawhelp.org) for a directory of legal aid programs.
- **PARENT EDUCATION:** Another source of information may be your county’s education program for parents going through a divorce or other child custody proceeding.
- **MEDIATION:** A mediator may be able to help you and the other parent through the process of creating a parenting plan. A mediator can help parents to find ways to talk to each other about their children. If you have safety concerns about the other parent (see checklist on the next page), mediation may not be appropriate. Family mediation services are available through your local court and through private providers.
- **THE COURT:** Your court may have a staff person who is called a Family Law Facilitator. The facilitator is not an attorney and cannot give legal advice, but may be able to help you in completing the forms and can provide other referrals. If you and the other parent cannot agree on a parenting plan, the court will order one.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You are not required to have a lawyer to create a parenting plan, but be aware that the provisions of your parenting plan may have important legal consequences. READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY and consult with an attorney BEFORE filing your parenting plan if you want to know about these legal consequences or if you have other questions.

**DO I NEED A SAFETY FOCUSED PARENTING PLAN?** The list below can help you decide.

Has the other parent:

- acted as though violent behavior toward you or your children is OK in some situations?
- damaged or destroyed property or pets during an argument?
- threatened to commit suicide?
- pushed, slapped, kicked, punched or physically hurt you or your children?
- had problems with alcohol or other drugs?
- needed medication to be safe around others?
- threatened not to return or not returned your children?
- used weapons to threaten or hurt people?
- threatened to kill you, your children or anyone else?
- sexually abused anyone?
- been served a protection or no contact order?
- been arrested for harming or threatening to harm you or anyone else?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please continue to take your safety, and your children’s safety, seriously. You may need to use a Safety Focused Parenting Plan. To get a copy of the Safety Focused Parenting Plan Guide, ask your court facilitator or go to the Oregon Judicial website at <http://courts.oregon.gov/familylaw>. Also, contact your local domestic violence center for additional help. Call 888-235-5333 for a referral in the State of Oregon and the Portland Metropolitan area.