

Scenario 3: Danae and Joel

Joel and Danae met in college and dated a year before moving in together. Joel started graduate school and Danae found work. Several months later they discovered they were expecting a child.

Celia was born six weeks premature and was in intensive care for four weeks. Danae took a three-month maternity leave. Both parents monitored and held Celia daily. Celia was released from the hospital with an apnea monitor, required until she was four months. Celia was hospitalized twice with pneumonia in her first year due to chronic asthma. This left her susceptible to lung infections.

Danae altered her return-to-work schedule to four, ten-hour days when Celia was two months old. Both parents agreed that Joel would leave graduate school temporarily, to provide daytime care for Celia. He cared for Celia most weekdays, up to 12 hours a day, for the next 18 months. During this time Danae was with Celia in the evenings/overnight. Both parents shared in their daughter's care on the weekends.

Conflicts over money and stress over Celia's special care needs resulted in these parents' separating when Celia was 20 months old. Danae remained in their apartment. Joel moved in with his brother and continued to care for Celia during the day and began working weeknights.

Joel seeks shared custody, and a shared parenting time plan with Celia, feeling that he and Danae shared equally in the baby's care. Danae worries about Joel's living situation (sleeping on a living room futon), and stresses that Celia has never spent a night away from her. Joel feels Celia is attached to him, and it won't matter where she sleeps as long as she's with him.