

Parenting Plan Help

What is a parenting plan?

A parenting plan is a written agreement between parents. It says when a child will be with each parent (parenting time) and how decisions about the child will be made. It is used when parents are not living together. Sometimes parents agree about these subjects and write their own plan. Sometimes parents use the help of a mediator or a lawyer to work out a plan. A parenting plan may also be ordered by a judge after a trial or hearing.

What are the benefits of a parenting plan?

- Children can spend time with both parents on a regular schedule.
- Parents and children will know what to expect and planning is easier.
- Parents may have fewer disagreements about contact with the children and major decisions and may get along better.
- The parent without custody may feel more involved with and committed to the children.

How do I get a parenting plan?

If you need a written parenting plan in Oregon, you can use the Interactive Parenting Plan (IPP) option found on the Oregon Judicial Department website here: <https://oregon.tylerhost.net/SRL/SRL>. (You'll need to select the filing option "Parenting Plan"). The IPP includes information about plans for different age groups, sample plans, and provides multiple links to legal and other resources.

If we create a plan, what's next?

Here are some options:

1. Keep your parenting plan just between you and the other parent as a way to show your commitment to your children;
2. Give a copy of your parenting plan that is signed by both parents to your child support worker to use for calculating your child support order. The Child Support Program can use it to figure out parenting time credit for establishing or modifying child support; or
3. Make your plan enforceable by filing a legal action to include the plan in a court judgment.

How do I get something filed in court?

The Oregon Judicial Department has resources for you to figure out how to get your parenting plan filed. You can find information about filing on their website here:

<https://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Pages/default.aspx>

What if I don't have (or can't afford) an attorney?

The Oregon Judicial Department has resources to help you. You can find self-help information here:

<https://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Pages/default.aspx>. Additionally, the Oregon State Bar may be able to help you find low cost legal help. You can find information on their website here: <http://www.oregonstatebar.org/public/ris/>.

What if I don't know exactly what to put in my parenting plan?

The IPP will walk you through several questions to help you get through your plan. Also, there are several resource links throughout the IPP that might help you. You may want to start with the Basic Parenting Plan Guide here: <http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Pages/parenting-plan-guide.aspx>. That page will give you several links to information about different plans, age groups, and schedules.

Note: there is a lot of information in the link for the parenting plan guide, and the amount might be a bit overwhelming. You do not have to read through it all at once. You can go through it a little at a time and at more than one sitting. Also, the guide has PDF forms you can download, but these are not the interactive parenting plan (IPP). The IPP is here: <https://oregon.tylerhost.net/SRL/SRL>.

A good starting tool is the "how do I get started" document here:

<http://www.courts.oregon.gov/forms/Documents/HowDoIGetStarted.pdf>

What if I'm worried about my (or my children's) safety around the other parent?

There are options in the IPP for making a safety-based parenting plan, with different options for overnight visits, no overnights, or supervised visits. These plans also include options for exchanging children and how the other parent can communicate with you. You may wish to review safety resources at <http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/domestic-violence/Pages/default.aspx>

What about school breaks, holidays or vacations? Are those in the plan?

Yes, the IPP allows you to choose how to sort out school breaks, holidays, and vacations.

What if I already have a plan but want to change it?

If you already have a plan that was only used for parenting time for a child support calculation, that plan will be used by the Oregon Child Support Program until you have a new plan signed by both parties or a parenting plan that is filed with the court. If you have a new parenting plan, provide a copy to the Child Support Program if you are seeking a modification of your child support.

If you already have a plan filed in court, that plan is the one that is in effect until you take steps to change it. Changes to the parenting plan or schedule are allowed whenever both parents agree to a change. You can go back to the court and ask the court to order changes. This request is called a "Motion Requesting Modification." The court will decide based on what is best for the children. The form for that request is located in the Family Law Forms. The form can be found here:

<http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/forms/Pages/modifications.aspx>

What if the other parent doesn't agree with the changes I want?

If you don't both agree to the changes, you can work with a mediator. To find out if mediation services are available in your county, go to this site: <http://www.courts.oregon.gov>, and search for the county name and mediation (ex: Polk county mediation).

I don't understand some of the legal words and phrases in the IPP and its resources. Can someone tell me what the legal words mean?

You can find some legal terms and what they mean here:

<http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/terms/Pages/default.aspx>.