

- One mid-week overnight from after school until the next morning to school.

In the following examples, the child has significant periods with both parents.

Sample 1:

This option provides the child more time with the non-residential parent while ensuring that both parents have after-school time.

- One weekday for 3-4 hours.
- Alternate Thursday after school until Monday morning.
- Alternate Thursday after school to Friday morning.

Sample 2:

This option limits time away from either parent to five days and eliminates potential parental conflict by having all exchanges occur at school or daycare.

- Parent A has every Monday before school until Wednesday before school; Parent B has every Wednesday before school until Friday after school.
- Parents alternate weekends from Friday after school until Monday before school.

Sample 3:

This option maximizes the time each parent has with the child and minimizes contact between the parents. However, some children have difficulty adjusting to this plan.

- Alternate weeks (Friday after school until the following Friday after school).

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR PARENTING PLAN SUCCESSFUL:

- Honor your parenting plan. Each parent's time with the child is special and important.
- Avoid placing your child in the middle. Do not question your child about the other parent's personal life.
- Even though your parenting styles may be different, you each have strengths as parents. Honor them.
- Set your negative feelings about the other parent aside. Remember, you make sacrifices for your child all of the time.

For copies of this and other brochures in the "Creating a Parenting Plan" series, contact Family Court Services at (213) 830-0835.

To schedule a mediation appointment and for the online Our Children First Program go to: www.lacourt.org

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Creating A Parenting Plan

Children Six to Nine Years



FAMILY COURT SERVICES



HOW TO CREATE A PLAN FOR A CHILD FROM 6 TO 9 YEARS OLD

Issues of family and belonging are important for children in this age group. They are beginning to see how they are parts of different social groups like a classroom, a team or a club; however, the family remains the most important source for fostering a sense of security and belonging. During these years, children also need to begin to develop a sense of mastery as they learn new skills like reading or playing sports or an instrument.

When faced with their parents' separation or divorce, children in this age group may have difficulty understanding and accepting the change and fantasize about their parents reconciling. In an effort to find a reason for the change in their family, they may develop a feeling of personal responsibility for the separation or divorce or blame one parent for causing the separation. They may also experience feelings of intense longing for the parent they see less often. Difficulty concentrating at school and feelings of anger, guilt and sadness are common as are fears of losing one of their parents. They may also feel caught in the middle between their parents.

Parents can help their children by reassuring them that even though their parents are not in the same home, the children will continue to have both of

their parents. Maintaining continuity in school and other activities also helps children in this age group have the opportunities to grow with minimum disruption. While these children have a more developed sense of time than younger children and can tolerate longer absences from one or both parents, they benefit from a predictable schedule which fosters a sense of security.

Consider these factors when creating a parenting plan for children of this age:

- Develop a neutral child-focused and age-appropriate explanation for the separation or divorce.
- Set structure and routine by establishing a predictable time-sharing plan.
- Accept and encourage your child to express his or her feelings.
- Allow your child to express positive and loving feelings about the other parent.
- Support the other parent's relationship with your child.
- Provide a consistent schedule and stable environment so that your child can continue to build skills at school and in other activities and to grow socially.
- Consider your child's temperament when developing a parenting plan. For some children frequent transitions are stressful and such children may benefit from spending more time in one home.

- Consider your own work schedule and your child's school and activity schedule.
- Protect your child from parental conflict. If you and the other parent are unable to interact without conflict, plan the exchanges so that you have little contact with one another.

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

These examples serve as a reference and may not fit all families. Options for younger children may also be suitable for this age group.

In the following examples, the child resides in one home primarily but has predictable periods of time with the other parent.

Sample 1:

This option provides the non-residential parent mid-week contact with the child.

- Alternate weekends from Friday at 6 PM until Sunday at 6 PM.
- One or two weekdays for 3-4 hours.

Sample 2:

This option provides the child more time with the non-residential parent, fewer transitions and less potential for parental conflict with exchanges occurring at school.

- Alternate weekends from Friday after school until Monday's return to school.