

# Parenting Plans

A Parenting Plan is a document that you must submit to the court before any orders are made regarding the care and control of your child. A Parenting Plan will eventually become a part of the court's order in the divorce or parental rights and responsibilities case. Ideally, the two parents work together to create a plan that they agree upon. If the two parents cannot agree, then each drafts their own proposed plan, and the court either approves one, or crafts its own. If there is a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in your case, then s/he will also make a proposal.

The New Hampshire Court has adopted a rule that requires all plans include 9 sections (lettered A through I). All of the issues pertaining to the children should be included on one of these 9. The sample is set up to comply with the court rule. It includes sections A through I.

The parenting plan is intended to further the State of New Hampshire's intention to foster positive family relationships; to encourage parents to work cooperatively for the benefit of their children; and to keep both parents actively involved in their child's life - recognizing that a positive relationship between children and both parents is best for children. It is also the expectation of the State and the courts, that parents will always make decisions that are in the best interests of the child, even when the parent's interests conflict with those of the child.

These instructions are designed to lead you through the process of completing the form as found on the [Court's website](#), [PDF of Parenting Plan form](#).

## Completing the Form:

1. Select the box that accurately explains how this plan was created. It was either created by the parents together and you both agree on its terms; or you completed it alone because you and the other parent could not reach an agreement. Put your name on the line that says "name of the parent or party making proposal".
2. If you have a very young child, you might want to draft an addendum to address the special circumstances in cases involving preschool aged children. Such an addendum would allow you to specify conditions that would be in place until your child is older.

It is not required, but might be useful. See more about this idea in the appendix.

3. Select the box that explains the plan. Is it to be:
  - part of a Temporary Order,
  - a Final or Permanent Order,
  - intended to replace an existing order.
4. List the name(s), date(s) of birth, and sex of the child to whom this plan applies.
5. Decision-making Responsibility. Decision-making responsibility refers to your obligation to make decisions about your child's education, religion, medical care, activities, etc. You will need to decide whether you and the other parent can work together on these issues. If you believe that you and the other parent cannot work together, or that the other parent cannot make decisions that are best for the child for some specific reason, then you will need to ask the court to give you these responsibilities.
6. Residential Responsibilities. This section covers what used to be called physical custody. Here you will agree, or propose, a schedule of where the child will live, and when. You should consider in this section holidays, school vacations, and so forth. This is also where you would request supervised contact between the child and the other parent if you believe it is necessary. As a rule, courts will only order one parent's contact to be supervised if there are clear, specific reasons to believe that the child would not be safe with that parent unsupervised. Also, in most cases supervised contact is expected to be temporary, with some schedule of visits which includes increasing time, and ultimately eliminated supervision. Some reasons that the court might consider requiring supervision:
  - a history of domestic violence,
  - a history of abuse, neglect, or other inappropriate parenting,
  - a risk of the child being removed from the State.
7. Legal Residence of the Child for School Attendance. If the child spends roughly equal time with both parents, it is important to specify the child's legal residence for school purposes. In the event either parent moves this would be very important to resolve disputes about what should happen to the child's home after the move.
8. Transportation and exchange of the Child(ren). Here you will specify the allocation of responsibility for transporting the children for the time they spend with each parent, as well as the costs (if

there are any). This is also a good place to specify a neutral exchange location if necessary.

9. Information Sharing and Access, Including Telephone and Electronic Access. These provisions can be very important, particularly in cases where there is a high level of animosity or hostility between the parents. The issues covered in this section can often be the root of a lot of conflict between parents.
10. Relocation of a Residence of a Child. Here you have the opportunity to think about the process that will be used if either you or the other parent decides to move a significant distance.
11. Procedure for Review and Adjustment of Parenting Plan. Everyone's life changes over time- and this includes children. Between the time of the court order and your child reaching adulthood, you and/or your child may need to change some aspect of the plan. This section gives you the chance to think about and plan how those changes should happen.
12. Methods for Resolving Disputes. As with changes, disputes are an unpleasant reality for many families. This section provides you the opportunity to think through how those disputes should be resolved before you are in the middle of the dispute.
13. Other. Every family has unique issues that are important to them. The final section provides a place for you to address those specific issues that are not included elsewhere in the plan, but that are important to you, the other parent, or the child.

Before submitting the plan to the court, sign it and have your signature witnessed. If you and the other parent are submitting an agreed upon plan, then you both need to sign it.

If there is a Guardian ad Litem working on your case you should make sure that the GAL gets a copy, and if you have reached an agreement you should request the GAL's signature. If you and the other parent agree, and the GAL does not, you should submit the plan to the court and let the judge decide whether or not to approve your plan.

## **Try Also Reading...**

- [Parents' Rights - A Place to Start](#)
- [Parental Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Whether to File a Petition for Parental Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Child Support](#)

- [Medical Support](#)
- [Paternity and Child Support](#)
- [Enforcing an Order](#)
- [Residential Responsibility](#)
- [Modification of Parental Rights & Responsibilities](#)

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