

What is a Parenting Plan?

It is the public policy of this state to assure that each minor child has frequent and continuing contact with both parents after the parents separate or the marriage of the parties is dissolved and to encourage parents to share the rights and responsibilities, and joys, of childrearing. Florida Statutes, section 61.13(2)(c).

A **parenting plan** is a document developed and agreed to by the parents of a minor child, and approved by the court, or if the parents cannot agree, established by the court, which governs the relationship between the parents regarding the child (encompassing “custody”, “parental responsibility”, and “visitation”). A parenting plan may address issues such as the child’s education, health care, and physical, social, and emotional well-being, and must include a **time-sharing schedule**. The parenting plan must take into account the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act, the International Child Abduction Remedies Act, the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act, and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction when addressing jurisdictional issues.

For purposes of establishing or modifying parental responsibility and creating, developing, approving, or modifying a parenting plan, including a time-sharing schedule, which governs each parent's relationship with his or her minor child and the relationship between each parent with regard to his or her minor child, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration.

Any parenting plan approved by a court must address the following issues:

- Details about how parents will share daily tasks associated with the upbringing of the child;
- Time-sharing schedule that will specify the time the child will spend with each parent;
- Designation of who will be responsible for health care, school-related matters, and other activities; and
- Methods and technologies parents will use to communicate with each other and with the child.
- File a Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA) form

Time-sharing schedule means a timetable that must be included in the parenting plan that specifies the time, including overnights and holidays that a minor child will spend with each parent. If developed and agreed to by the parents of a minor child, it must be approved by the court. If the parents cannot agree, the schedule shall be established by the court. See *Florida Statutes, Section 61.046(22)*.

Shared parental responsibility means a court-ordered relationship in which both parents retain full parental rights and responsibilities with respect to their child and in which both parents confer with each other so that major decisions affecting the welfare of the child will be determined jointly. See *Florida Statutes, section 61.046(16)*.

Sole parental responsibility means a court-ordered relationship in which one parent makes decisions regarding the minor child. See *Florida Statutes, section 61.046(17)*.

The parties to litigation involving children are strongly encouraged to resolve parenting issues through agreement, mediation, or parent facilitation. Litigants are generally happier with and more likely to comply with Court Orders reached by amicable agreement than when the Court is required to dictate responsibility for parenting decisions. Information on Family Law Mediation and the Parent Facilitation Program may be obtained by calling the mediation office in St Petersburg at (727) 582-7206 and Clearwater at (727) 464-4947.