

- One midweek overnight from Wednesday after school until Thursday to school.

Sample 2:

This option may work well for families where parents live far apart or where a parent's work schedule or other factors make midweek contact between the child and the non-residential parent impractical.

- Alternate Friday evening until Sunday evening or Monday before school.

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

Sample 1:

This option provides the child with equal time with each parent.

- 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 2:

This option minimizes transitions so that the parent assuming care and the child can settle into a routine before the week begins.

- Alternate weeks from Friday after school until the following Friday after school.

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR PARENTING PLAN SUCCESSFUL:

- Provide consistent rules and expectations. Although they may not show it, teenagers continue to need nurturing and oversight from their parents.
- Exercise flexibility. Your teen will be more likely to look forward to spending time with the non-residential parent if that parent is willing to accommodate the teen's needs. At this stage, the quality of time spent with your child is more important than the quantity.
- Do not use your child as a messenger.
- Never speak negatively about the other parent to your child. You only drive your child away by doing so.
- Participate in your child's athletic, performance, academic or other activities regardless of the parenting plan. Children need to know you support them.

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

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Creating A Parenting Plan

Children 14 to 18 Years



FAMILY COURT SERVICES



HOW TO CREATE A PLAN FOR A CHILD FROM 14 TO 18 YEARS OLD

As they move toward adulthood, children in this age group strive to develop a separate identity from their parents. They assert their views and opinions readily and believe that they are capable of making their own decisions. Increasingly they focus on their friends, extracurricular activities, school and work more than family. Resistance to participating in family activities is common. As they prefer to spend more time with their friends, they may become resentful or angry when their wishes are not respected. The challenge for parents is to support the teen's growing independence while maintaining appropriate structure, supervision and guidance.

When faced with their parents' separation, children in this age group may resist having a well-defined parenting schedule, especially if it interferes with their activities. Parents need to be flexible and able to negotiate changes to the parenting plan based on the child's activities and preferences. Direct communication between the parents about changes is especially important to ensure that the teen is accountable and that everyone understands the changes. While being sensitive to their teenager's feelings and preferences, parents should also make it

clear to the child that contact with both parents is not negotiable.

Children in this age group who have had a set parenting plan for several years may express the desire for change in the schedule. Some teens prefer to have a home base during the week to eliminate the need for taking possessions back and forth as their social and school schedules have become busier. Others who have lived primarily with one parent may wish to experience living in the other parent's home. Some may wish the opportunity to live with the parent of the same gender. When considering a child's voiced preference, parents can provide guidance and assistance by helping the child understand how the change would affect all areas of the child's life.

To help your child through this transition, consider these factors when creating a parenting plan:

- Develop a neutral, child-focused and age-appropriate explanation for the separation or divorce.
- Encourage teenagers to express their feelings about the separation or divorce.
- Reassure your child that the problems between you and the other parent are not his or her fault.
- Provide opportunities to discuss schedule changes in advance.
- Support your child's need to spend time with the other parent and allow

your child to express positive feelings about the other parent.

- Allow your child to express his or her thoughts or concerns about the schedule, but be clear that you and the other parent together will make the final decision.
- Support your child's growing independence while maintaining basic structure and expectations.
- Strive to ensure consistency of rules, expectations and consequences in both homes.
- Seek the assistance of a counselor if your child refuses to see the other parent.

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 keeps the non-residential parent involved with school and extra-curricular activities and limits contact between parents with all transitions occurring at school.

- Alternate Friday evening until Sunday evening or Monday before school.