

Is Your Parenting Plan Ready for Summer Break?

Article

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The end of the school year often reveals where a parenting plan falls short. Summer travel, schedules changes, and milestone events like graduations don't always fit neatly into standard time-sharing provisions. When these details aren't addressed upfront, even well-intentioned co-parents can find themselves dealing with conflict that could have been avoided at the drafting stage.

If you are putting a parenting plan in place—or revisiting an existing one—this is the time to address those details before summer arrives.

Define Summer Time-Sharing with Precision

Many parenting plans maintain a consistent year-round timesharing schedule, but summer is different. The break from school routines creates an opportunity to implement a modified arrangement that better reflects your family's needs outside the academic calendar. Some parenting plans address this through a separate, summer-specific schedule.

That schedule should account for summer camps, enrichment programs, and other activities that may affect each parent's time. Addressing how these commitments are coordinated in advance can help avoid overlap or uncertainty once the summer begins.

Parenting plans should also clearly address vacation time with each parent, including how travel periods are scheduled and how conflicts are resolved if both parents request the same time. Setting a defined framework for priority or rotation can help prevent disputes before they arise.

Address Travel in Advance

In high-conflict cases especially, travel provisions should go beyond general permission. Notice requirements, consent for out-of-state or international travel, and access to passports should all be explicitly addressed. The plan should also clearly define each parent's vacation entitlement, including how much time each parent is allocated and

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whether it can be taken in consecutive weeks. These are often the details where issues arise if expectations are not clearly defined, particularly during peak summer travel periods.

Clarify Decision-Making for Camps and Activities

Summer often involves advance planning for camps, travel programs, and other activities that can affect each parent's time-sharing schedule. Parenting plans should address how camps are selected and coordinated, whether the parent exercising time during a given week has decision-making authority for day camps or similar activities, and how costs are allocated.

Where a child attends overnight or out-of-state camp, the plan should also clarify how that time is treated within the schedule and whether any adjustment applies for missed timesharing. Where one parent is not working or has greater availability, the plan may also address whether a right of first refusal applies before third-party care or camps are utilized during the other parent's time.

Plan for Milestone Events

Graduations, ceremonies and end-of-the-year parties don't always align with a parenting schedule, but they are important to get right. Addressing in advance how these moments are shared avoids unnecessary tension around events that matter most to your child.

Build in Structured Flexibility

Flexibility is often necessary, but it works best when it's intentional. Clear parameters around schedule changes and communication allow for reasonable adjustments without creating confusion or unintentionally setting precedents.

What this Means for You

The most effective parenting plans are practical and workable. Addressing these issues during the drafting stage helps ensure that your agreement works smoothly when real-life situations arise, rather than requiring last-minute negotiation.

If you are creating or updating a parenting plan, a conversation can help ensure these considerations are thoughtfully addressed from the outset.

We're here to help. If you have questions or would like to discuss your specific situation, contact **Crystal Buit** at crystal.buit@lowndes-law.com.