

In Tennessee, a  
**Parenting Plan**  
is part of a divorce



JUSTICE FOR ALL

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Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie, Sevier,  
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## **What is a parenting plan?**

A parenting plan is part of your final divorce order. It says:

- how parenting time (visitation) will be divided between the parents;
- how you will make decisions about the children; and
- child support.

## **Do both parents have to go to parenting classes?**

**Yes.** Classes will be held in your area several times each month. Your lawyer or court clerk will help you find classes in your area. It is up to you to contact the class leader and sign up. You may have to pay for the class. If you can't afford to pay, tell the leader. You may get to go for free or you may have to pay only part of the cost.

## **How do you write a parenting plan?**

You will need a copy of the **parenting plan forms**. Your lawyer will prepare the forms. If you do not have a lawyer you will need a copy of the parenting plan form.

On the parenting plan forms, you state:

- when the children will stay with each parent, including holidays, vacations, and birthdays;
- how much child support will be paid (according to child support guidelines) and by whom, and
- how you will make decisions about the children's medical care, education and religion.

## **What if the parents cannot agree on the long-term parenting plan?**

One parent or both parents can give a short-term or **temporary parenting plan** to the Judge. The Judge can put this plan into effect **until the divorce is final**. The plan will state where the children will live until the divorce is final. If the parents cannot agree on a final plan, the Judge will make the final decision.

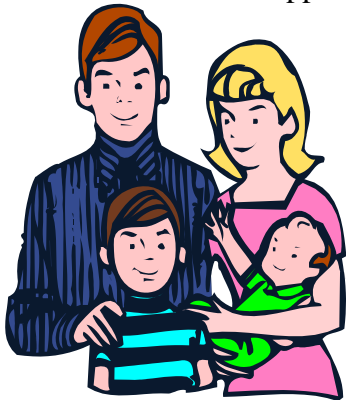
The law requires you to go to **mediation**. This may help you agree on a temporary plan and a long-term plan. In mediation, a trained person tries to help you and your spouse make a parenting plan you can agree on. The mediator is not a judge. The mediator does not give legal advice. The mediator can't make you agree to anything. Sometimes mediation in domestic violence cases is not required.

## What if you can't afford mediation?

You might be able to get free or low cost mediation. You need to fill out an Affidavit of Indigency. Write on the Affidavit you cannot afford mediation. Give the form to the Clerk and ask the Clerk to present to the Judge.

### WORDS TO KNOW:

- **Primary Residential Parent** means the parent with whom the child lives the majority of the time. This is what used to be known as “custody”. The other parent is known as the **Alternate Residential Parent**.
- **Residential parenting schedule** means when the child stays with each parent. This includes birthdays, holidays, vacations, and other special times.
- **Temporary parenting plan** means a plan for where the child will live until the divorce is final.
- **Permanent parenting plan** means a written plan that becomes an order of the court. It includes:
  - Where the children will live,
  - When they will spend time with the other parent,
  - What each parent has to do,
  - How much child support will be paid.



## OFFICE HOURS AND LOCATION

Legal Aid of East Tennessee offices are  
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This pamphlet is intended for general information only. The circumstances of every case are different and need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This is not a substitute for the advice of a lawyer. Also, the law may change and may be different from county to county.

