

Parallel Parenting Plans:

Parallel parenting plans are appropriate for parents who

- *do not get along,*
- *are highly reactive to each other,*
- *feel extremely uncomfortable in each other's presence,*
- *have an order of protection, OR*
- *cannot cooperate in one or more major areas of parenting*

Rationale for a parallel parenting arrangement:

- EVERY child has a right to a meaningful relationship with each parent
- EVERY child has a right not to be caught in the middle of parental conflict
- EVERY parent has a right to have a meaningful relationship with his or her child without the interference of the other parent.
- When parents separate, the greatest predictor of a child's well being is the level of conflict between the parents. ***Children exposed to high conflict have a poorer prognosis.***
- If the parents do not get along, feel uncomfortable in each other's presence, prefer not to deal with each other or, more seriously, have an order of protection in place, then it appears to be in the child's best interest for the parents to develop a parenting plan that eliminates the opportunities to interact and have conflict with each other.

Conduct of Parents In A Parallel Parenting:

- Nothing is assumed, everything is spelled out in the parenting plan
Your parenting plan MUST be extremely specific about who will do what and by when for each exchange of the children.
- Polite, businesslike, but not personal - There is a wall between your parenting relationship and the rest of your personal life; nothing personal is shared with the other parent
- Meetings are public and formal, not private, and scheduled by appointment at a mutually convenient time.

- Meetings and calls should take place during regular working hours and last no more than thirty minutes.
- Following meetings or communications, the parent initiating should send the a parent a written summary of understanding reached and the other parent should send back a confirming understanding, that includes any different understandings, if any. Keep these communications free of commentary! Just the facts.
- Meetings may require the presence of a third party. Ideally you should have a Parenting Coordinator to be present for all meetings; however, if you do not have one, you could use a therapist or someone from your church staff to be present.

How Parallel Parenting Works:

- Parents disengage and have little or no interactions with each other.
- The schedule is written down in detail and placed on a calendar. ***Nothing is left open to interpretation, because loopholes breed conflict.***
- In order to minimize conflict, there is no assumption of flexibility in scheduling.
- Parents work independently for the best interests of their child.
- Each parent's household functions independently; each parent is responsible for making decisions about the child during the time that the child is in that parent's household. ***Don't tell the other parent how to parent!***
- Major decisions are communicated rather than discussed by the parent who has the authority to make the decision. *For example, health education and welfare issues about your child.*
- In the event of emergencies, parents will communicate.
- When parents do need to share information with each other, parents will use e-mail, fax(if there is privacy where the fax is received), a parenting notebook or a pre-appointed third party (**never** the child). ***Parents will avoid face-to-face communication wherever possible.***
- Transition times take place at school, day care or activities to minimize parental conflict and parental face-to face contact with each other.
- As much as possible, each parent bears the responsibility for getting information about the child for themselves. i.e. Each parent is responsible for contacting the school for notice of meetings, report cards, etc. on their own.

- If any deviation or change from the agreed-upon plan or order is requested, negotiations will take place with the assistance of a pre-determined neutral.
- A parent coordinator may be necessary to arbitrate parenting issues that are not specified by the parenting plan