

Holiday parenting schedules for California co-parents

Negotiating child custody and visitation schedules after divorce can be complicated enough at any other time of year, but during the holidays it can be especially stressful. California co-parents can help make the holidays easier on their kids and themselves by taking some time out to coordinate their schedules and work out any potential conflicts ahead of time.

As in many other aspects of co-parenting, as well as life in general, good communication can go a long way toward helping things flow smoothly - especially around the holidays. Although these conversations can be uncomfortable, and may require both parents to compromise, they can pay off in the form of a happier holiday for everyone.

Check your parenting plan

The first step to take when making plans for the holidays after divorce is to review your child custody agreement - known in California as a parenting plan. This agreement specifies in general terms how child care responsibilities and visitation rights are divided between the parents, and in some cases may specifically address holiday schedules.

If your parenting plan includes an agreement about child custody and visitation during the holidays, this will help provide a good starting point for the conversation, even if you and your ex decide that you want to make changes to the schedule. As long as both parents agree, California law typically allows parents to negotiate changes to their holiday parenting schedules without going through a formal process. In certain cases, however, it may be necessary to get approval from a judge before making any changes to your parenting plan.

Similarly, if you and your children's other parent cannot reach an agreement about child custody during the holidays, you may need to get your attorney involved to help settle the disagreement and pave the way for smoother holiday scheduling in the future.

Holiday scheduling options

There are a number of different options when it comes to scheduling parenting time during the holidays, and each has its own set of benefits and drawbacks. For example, many families choose to have children spend part of every holiday with each parent, often by spending the morning in one parent's household and the evening in the other. This type of plan has the benefit of allowing children and parents to spend

time together at every holiday. However, the logistics of shuttling kids back and forth can also add stress to what may be an already difficult time.

As an alternative to dividing individual holidays between households, some divorced parents opt to alternate holidays with their children. For instance, they may agree that the children will spend Thanksgiving with one parent and Christmas with the other, in many cases alternating holidays every other year as well. This has the advantage of giving parents and children uninterrupted time together during the holidays. However, some children may find it difficult to be entirely separated from either parent on a special holiday.

For help, call a child custody lawyer

For help exploring the options and creating a parenting plan that is uniquely tailored to meet your needs and the needs of your children, get in touch with an experienced family law attorney near you.