

# **From Crisis to Cooperation**

**A guide for helping families cope with divorce**

**Lorain County Domestic Relations Court  
Family Court Services  
225 Court St.  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
(440) 326- 4846**

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# INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a difficult and stressful time for parents as well as children. Parents are attempting to manage their own lives and the changes they are experiencing emotionally, financially, socially, and legally. At the same time, parents are also called upon to support their children and make decisions that are best for the children.

Lorain County Domestic Relations Court Judges decided that there was a need to provide those citizens in the process of divorce with pertinent information. Hopefully, this information would assist parents so that they might proceed with their divorces in a healthier manner and, therefore, lessen the negative impact that divorce can have upon children.

Therefore, a “Seminar for Separating Parents” was designed and implemented for the citizens. Pursuant to Court Rule 8, all parties filing initial actions in which there are minor children shall attend an educational seminar for parents sponsored by the Court. Seminar attendance may also be required by order of the Court after the filing of motions concerning the modifications of parental rights and responsibilities and modification or enforcement of parenting time. Initial actions include divorce, dissolution, and legal separation.

## **The following issues will be covered:**

- Court procedures- the legal process
- Family Court Services
- Telling the children
- Children’s responses
- How to help the children cope
- Co-parenting tips
- Parenting Do’s

# **COURT PROCEDURES**

You are here because one of you has decided to seek relief from the Court – that relief being a divorce. In order to accomplish that, you will go through certain procedures. The following steps indicate what happens in a usual divorce.

## **STEP ONE: FILING FOR A DIVORCE**

Filing a complaint begins the procedure. The person filing the complaint for the divorce is known as the Plaintiff, and the person receiving the complaint is the Defendant. Who filed first does not make a difference. To those of you receiving the complaint, you have 28 days after receipt in which to file an answer. If you choose not to do so and do not appear, this matter will proceed uncontested which means that you are agreeing with the complaint. When the case is filed, a case number is designated, and the Judge who will hear the case is randomly assigned.

## **STEP TWO: A CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

The first procedure after the filing of the complaint is the case management conference, which is held at the Court. Your attendance is required. The purpose of the conference is to establish a discovery timetable, to evaluate the appropriateness of dispute resolution programs, and to further schedule additional hearings.

## **STEP THREE: A TEMPORARY HEARING**

The first hearing is called a temporary hearing and is heard by a Magistrate. The Magistrate will determine who will have temporary parental rights (custody) of the children, what the companionship (parenting time) schedule will be, who will pay the bills, the amount of child support, and the need and amount of spousal support. Again, this is on a temporary basis, and the result of this hearing does not in any way prejudice you from a different result from the final hearing in this matter.

Many temporary hearings are resolved by agreement; however, if there is a need, a formal hearing is provided.

#### **STEP FOUR: A PRE-TRIAL PROCEDURE**

There may be three or more pre-trials, scheduled about one to two months apart. This allows time for the attorneys to gather the necessary figures and information. Counsel and unrepresented parties shall be present unless otherwise ordered or deemed unnecessary by counsel.

#### **STEP FIVE: SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE**

Prior to trial, parties and counsel are required to meet with the Judge at a settlement Conference. Disputed and agreed issues are discussed with the goal of achieving resolution or narrowing disputed issues.

#### **STEP SIX: A TRIAL**

If the matter is not resolved at the Settlement Conference, it goes to trial. The trial may last for a day or more. At that time all of the issues are decided. First to be determined is whether there are grounds for divorce. Then the allocation of parental rights and responsibilities (custody of the children) is determined. The statute from the Ohio Revised Code provides criteria on which to base this decision, and the remaining matters are decided. There is the division of marital assets such as personal property, pensions, real estate, and a consideration of whether spousal support is appropriate. Again there are statutes providing criteria for making those determinations. After the trial is concluded, a decision is rendered.

# **FAMILY COURT SERVICES**

The mission of the department of Family Court Services is to serve the best interests of the child and his/her family. Families and children are involved with the department by order of the Court when the parties are involved in divorce action, dissolution allocation of parental rights and responsibilities (custody), or when parenting time is an issue.

## **HOME INSPECTION**

A home inspection may be ordered by the Court. Family Court Services will go to both parties' homes and give a detailed report to the Court of the contents and condition of the homes. This service is for parties who have concerns about the living arrangements, conditions or safety of the home, and are currently involved with the Court. A court order is required for this service.

## **INVESTIGATION REPORT**

An investigation may be ordered by the Court. Family Court Services will provide assistance by investigating all pertinent parties involved in the case and submit a detailed report to the Court. All pertinent parties will be interviewed in the Family Court Services Department, and background information will be gathered. If desired, Family Court Services will develop and recommend a parenting time schedule. This service is for parties involved with the Court. A Court Order is required for this service.

## **MEDIATION**

The purpose of Mediation is to use alternative methods to dispute resolution to design residential placement/parenting time agreements that are in the best interests of the family and developed by the parents. This is done by assisting the parents in defining issues of dispute and designing individual parenting agreements.

# TIME CONSIDERATIONS

The Supreme Court of Ohio dictates that a **DIVORCE** with children must be concluded within eighteen (18) months of the filing date. If the parties involved are able to reach a mutual resolution, the divorce may be granted within a shorter time period.

The Supreme Court of Ohio dictates that a **DISSOLUTION** must be concluded within ninety (90) days of the filing date. As the parties have already arrived at a mutual resolution of all matters, this action proceeds more quickly.



# TELLING THE CHILDREN

## PREPARING TO TELL THE CHILDREN

Listed below are things that should be discussed *before telling the children*:

- Who will tell them
- What to tell them (provide with enough information to explain the situation, considering the children's ages and developmental stages). Do not involve them in legal and financial differences.
- When will the separation occur
- Who will be the departing parent
- Where will the children live (primary residential parent)
- Where will the parents live
- How will the children spend time with the parents

## TELLING THE CHILDREN

- Although you do not want to upset your children, it is necessary that you treat the matter serious. If you make light of the issue, it will only cause confusion. Remember, the family unit that your children have known is with you as a couple.
- You must speak on your children's level. For some this may include explaining the meaning of divorce – simply put, mom and dad will be living in separate homes.
- Tell them why you are getting divorced and provide them with enough information so that they do not blame themselves. However, do not involve them with personal detail. Be honest when telling them. Avoid blaming and/or attacking the other parent; however, do not “cover” for him or her. If the parent is chemically dependent, mentally ill, or criminally involved then the children should know the truth.



## **TELLING THE CHILDREN - CONT'D**

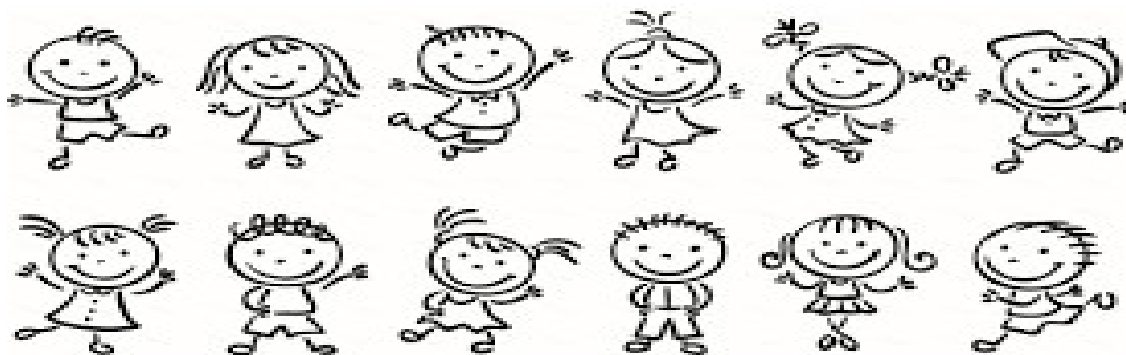
- Tell them when they will spend time with each parent. Children need to know that they will continue to see both parents.
- Tell them you will keep them informed of any major changes, such as moving or changing schools.
- Ensure the children that both parents will continue to take care of them.



# CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

It is very detrimental for children to witness intense parental conflict. Separating parents can do much for their children by protecting them from such scenes. Children adjust best to divorce when they have more stability in their lives and fewer pressures to deal with. Parents can facilitate their child's adjustment by providing as much stability as possible during this process. Parents should maintain stability with: school, childcare, friends, bedroom, extracurricular activities and schedule. Children adjust better when there is more structure and routine, and consistency in limits and consequences across both households. This requires parents to co-parent effectively to provide as much stability and consistency as possible given the realities of shared custody.

Children often times fear that their parents may not be available when they need them, that they may not continue to love them, and that they may even leave or abandon them. Children in most cases share some common experiences as a result of divorce but their reactions to divorce and their resulting adjustment differ based on the age and gender of the child.



# **CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO DIVORCE AT DIFFERENT AGES**

## **INFANTS AND TODDLERS**

Infants and toddlers are in the beginning stages of life so their responses are in a pre-verbal manner involving changes in behavior. Some of the behaviors may include: increase in crying, clinging behavior, and aggressiveness. But they may also develop sleeping problems, eating problems, and a delayed development process.

## **PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**

Preschoolers are still in the beginning stages of the development process so their responses overlap with the responses of infants and toddlers. Preschool age children may also regress, regression is a psychological defense mechanism where a child abandons age-appropriate coping strategies in favor of earlier patterns of behavior. Parents should notice their children becoming oversensitive to real or imagined injuries on top of the behaviors listed above in the section for *Infants and Toddlers*.

## **EARLY SCHOOL AGE**

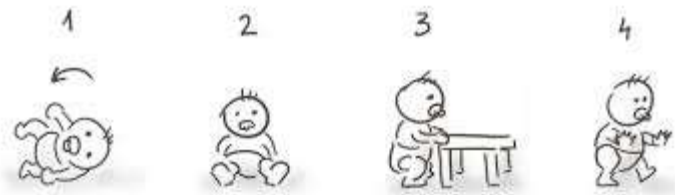
Children between the ages of 6 and 8-years old responses differ a little in relation to the earlier stages. These children may tend to still cry and display periods of increased aggressiveness. It is also likely the children began to miss the absent parent, become concerned about their parents' well-being, and fear losing a relationship with one of their parents. Some children will feel responsible for the divorce which may result in anger, guilt, and difficulty experiencing pleasure.

## **OLDER SCHOOL AGE**

Children between the ages of 9 and 12-years old, display different responses to divorce simply because they view the divorce in black or white terms. Children tend to blame one parent for causing the divorce while ultimately becoming closer to the other parent. They also cover up their distress and have intense anger during this process which can have an effect on their bodies (e.g. headaches and stomachaches).

## **ADOLESCENTS**

During adolescence children begin to establish their independence. They either become more or less involved with their family during a divorce. Some adolescents began to perform delinquent acts: substance abuse, inappropriate sexual behavior, problems in school, etc. They oftentimes internalize emotional distress which can lead to them becoming depressed, feeling suicidal or developing a low sense of self-esteem.



# CO-PARENTING

“This is probably one of the most difficult challenges any parent could face, learning to love the other parent enough to make the children first.”

-Iyanila Vanzant

## Obstacles to Avoid While Co-Parenting:

### ❖ Resisting Communication

Forcing children to act as a messenger based on the refusal of communication among parents.

### ❖ Discussion of Financial Matters

Basing the relationship of one parent with their children on if they pay child support or not.

### ❖ Character Assassination

Stating negative comments to win child's affection by alienating the other parent. These comments can cause children to interpret them as a perception of themselves.

### ❖ Confrontation in Front of Children

Verbal and/or physical confrontations between the parents occur in front of the children.

### ❖ Power Struggle or Need to Control

One parent refusing to allow the other parent to see the children unless they adhere to specific demands. Parents should not try to control the other's lifestyle unless abuse, neglect, or safety of the children is involved.

### ❖ Making Allies

A parent attempting to set up an alliance with the children by convincing them that the divorce was the other parent's fault.

# CO-PARENTING - CONT'D

## ❖ Inquisition

Interrogating the children to get information about the other parent either out of curiosity or because there is difficulty terminating the marital relationship.

## ❖ Parental Absence

A parent becomes uninvolved in their child's life because he/she believes it is the best for the children or because it is emotionally difficult for that parent.

## ❖ Bribery

Out of guilt, insecurity, or anger, a parent may buy/give the children an abundance of materialistic things and/or special outings. This act causes the relationship between that parent and child to be based on material things and not a genuine relationship with that parent.



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# PARENTING DO'S

## **1. Make it clear the child is loved**

- Maintain consistent contact
- Try to understand their feelings
- Create new memories/experiences for the children
- Share positive memories that were experienced as a family
- Create a comfortable home for the child(ren) in both residences

## **2. Encourage your child to communicate**

- Allow children to express disappointment

## **3. Don't fight in front of your children**

- Be willing to alter the visitation schedule
- Resolve disagreements away from children
- Limit the negative language of the other parent to yourself
- Limit conversations to child-related issues only, if necessary
- Find an effective way of communicating with the other parents

## **4. Aim for peaceful transitions**

- Realize that your child loves both parents
- Send a positive goodbye/welcome home message to your children
- Set up an alternate arrangement to divert possible let down for the child

## **5. Get others involved**

- Involve other caring and reliable adults in your child's life
  - ✓ Unbiased friends and family members
  - ✓ Counselors
  - ✓ Mediators

<https://www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/coping/11-rules-for-helping-your-child-deal-with-divorce/>

## **WORDS YOU MAY NEED TO KNOW**

### **Allocation of Parental Rights and Responsibilities-**

The determination made by a court as to where the children will live and the rights and responsibilities of the parents to the children. Also known as “allocation order.”

### **“Best Interests of the Child”**

When parenting issues are decided, the judge determines what is best for the child based on all the information.

### **Chambers –**

The Judge’s private office

### **Contempt of Court –**

When a person intentionally fails to comply with the order or directives of the Court.

### **Contested –**

Any issue on where you and your spouse cannot agree. A contested divorce is one where the Court will decide on the parties’ claims.

### **Co-Parenting –**

Parents working together to raise a child, even when they are not married and do not live together.

### **Court Order –**

A written order made by a Judge that must be followed.

### **Custodial Parent –**

The parent who has physical custody of the child.

### **Custody –**

The right of a parent to make major decisions for the children.

### **Defendant/Respondent –**

The person who receives the complaint for divorce.

### **Docket –**

The Court’s calendar schedule which will tell you when your case is set for certain hearings.

### **Discovery –**

Disclosure of pertinent factual information.



**Dissolution of Marriage –**

The legal process of ending a marriage when a couple does not agree on all aspects of property division, child and spousal support and parenting issues.

**Divorce –**

The legal process of ending a marriage when a couple does not agree on all aspects of property division, child and spousal support and parenting issues.

**Exchange –**

Pick-up and drop-off of a child between parents or other caregivers.

**Hearing –**

A scheduled appearance in court.

**Holiday Schedule –**

A part of the parenting schedule that specifies how children will spend holidays with each parent and defines each holiday so both parents know when the holiday begins and ends.

**Joint Custody –**

A term no longer used in Ohio. See *Residential Parent*, *Shared Parenting and Sole Residential Parent*.

**Motions –**

Written or verbal appeals to the court for some sort of relief, such as alimony, child custody, child support, attorney's fees, etc.

**Motions to Modify –**

A motion heard by the Court requesting that changes be made in physical or legal custody, or in child support payments, thus modifying the existing arrangement.

**Non-Custodial Parent –**

The parent with whom the child is not physically living with.

**Parental Rights and Responsibilities –**

The rights and responsibilities of a parent to determine and control matters affecting a child's welfare and upbringing, as well as contact with a child. Parental rights and responsibilities can be allocated in the following ways:

***shared parenting* or *sole residential parenting*.**

**Parenting Order –**

A court order that states when the child will be with each parent and who will make decisions. The parenting order may be developed by the parents on their own or with the help of a professional, such as a mediator, an attorney or a judge.

**Parenting Time –**

The time a child spends with a parent according to the parenting time schedule.

**Paternity –**

A legal action that results in a court order naming the child's father.

**Plaintiff/Petitioner –**

The person who files the complaint for divorce.

**Residential Parent –**

The parent with whom the child physically lives according to a court order. In a shared parenting plan “residential parent for school purposes” or

“school placement parent” is the parent in whose school district the child can attend school.

**Rules of Court –**

A set of rules that control court procedures. The Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure apply to divorces and dissolutions. Individual courts may have local rules of practice.

**Shared Parenting –**

Both parents share making major decisions for their children, unless stated otherwise in the Shared Parenting Plan. It does not necessarily mean equal time with each parent.

**Shared Parenting Plan –**

The document that states how the parents will make decisions for their children and the parenting time schedule.

**Spousal Support –**

Alimony

**Trial –**

A formal hearing with witnesses and evidence. (See ***Hearing***.)

**Visitation –**

A term for parenting time that is not preferred.

**Visitation, Parenting Time –**

Words used to describe the schedule of time a child has with each parent.

# CO-PARENTING APPS

Listed are several Online Apps that can help co-parents. The app puts all communication and information about the child/ren in a central location for the co-parents. The apps allow co-parents to communicate online, share calendars, change/schedule exchanges, share medical information, update contact information, share expenses, reminders, events, journal, etc.

Some of the apps allow you to request certified copies of communication exchanges for legal purposes. Some apps have a higher cost than others. Look into the different apps available and use the one best suited for your situation.

- **Our Family Wizard**
- **Coparently**
- **Cozi**
- **Talking Parents**
- **2Houses**
- **Kidganizer**
- **Custody Junction**
- **AboutOne**
- **Skedi**
- **SharedCare**
- **Parentship**
- **FamCal**
- **Parenting Apart**
- **Custody Connection**
- **AppClose**
- **Fayr**
- **Co-Parent Central**
- **Google Calendar**

# Parenting and Divorce Books

**Parenting Apart: How Separated and Divorced Parents Can Raise Happy and Secure Kids-** by Christina McGhee

**Parenting After Divorce: Resolving Conflicts and Meeting Your Children's Needs-** by Philip Stahl, PhD.

**Putting Children First: Proven Parenting Strategies for Helping Children Thrive Through Divorce-** by JoAnne Pedro-Caroll, PhD.

**Mom's House, Dad's House: A Complete Guide for Parents Who Are Separated, Divorced, or Remarried-** by Isolina Ricci, PhD.

**Co-Parenting Works!: Helping Your Children Thrive after Divorce-** by Tammy G Daughtry

**The Co-Parenting Handbook: Raising Well-Adjusted and Resilient Kids from Little Ones to Young Adults through Divorce or Separation-** by Karen Bonnell and Kristin Little

**Talking to Children About Divorce: A Parent's Guide to Healthy Communication at Each Stage of Divorce-** by Jean McBride, MS, LMFT

## For Children

**Living with Mom and Living with Dad-** by Melanie Walsh *(3-7 years)*

**Why Can't We Live Together?: The Kid-Sized Answer To A King-Sized Question About Divorce-** by Madison Lovato and Lucas Lovato *(4-7 years)*

**The Weekend Kid-** by Denice Deveaux-Rowe *(4-8 years)*

**Divorce Feels Yucky!: The Kids' Secret To Feeling Better-** by Madison Lovato and Lucas Lovato *(4-10 years)*

**When Your Parents Divorce: A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Dealing with Divorce-** by Kimberly King *(6-12 years)*

**Divorce Is Not the End of the World: Zoe's and Evan's Coping Guide for Kids-** by Zoe Stern and Evan Stern *(8-12 years)*

**Teen Survival Guide to Parent Divorce or Separation: A Teen First Self-Guided Workbook-** by Jeremy D. Jewell, PhD. *(12-17 years)*



## **Lorain County has options for parents who need an attorney or legal expertise, but cannot afford it:**

### **(1) Waiver of costs if indigent**

### **(2) Lorain County Bar Association Modest Means Program**

### **(3) Legal Aid Pro Se Clinics**

## **Modest Means Program**

The Lorain County Bar Association is excited to be able to offer the Modest Means Program (“MMP”), which is a much-needed service to the community and to the members. At this time, the only areas of practice for the MMP are family law, landlord/tenant, foreclosure and consumer law (debtor only). (Family law includes: dissolution, divorce, post-decree support, post-decree contempt, post-decree custody, child custody and support, etc. Additionally, unbundled services are also offered at a reduced rate.)

This program is geared to assist low-income individuals in the Lorain County area living paycheck to paycheck that cannot afford market rate legal representation or a large retainer fee. This program will match up these individuals with an attorney that is willing to assist them with their legal needs for a reduced fee.

Individuals who are eligible to participate in the MMP must meet the eligibility requirements set forth by the Lorain County Bar Association, which is up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. If the LCBA determines that you are financially eligible and legal aid or pro bono services are unavailable, you will be referred to an attorney that is participating in the MMP. The program keeps a rotating list of attorneys who are willing to accept cases at a reduced rate of \$75 per hour and a reduced retainer of \$500. Please remember that the referral is not for a pro bono (free) attorney. The client will be required to pay the reduced rates.

The LCBA will forward to the client the Financial Disclosure Statement that is to be filled out completely and returned to them along with the required documentation. Once they receive the completed financial statement, they will advise you if you are eligible and, if so, provide you with the name and contact information of an attorney.

For attorneys that join the MMP as a referral source, you will not only help out members of the community that would otherwise have nowhere to turn, you will gain valuable experience, expand your client base, establish yourself in the legal community, and maintain a steady work flow.

Please contact Jeannie or Tammie at the LCBA office (440-323-8416) for more information on this program. [Download Financial Disclosure Statement Form »](http://loraincountybar.org/Resources/Documents/financial_disclosure.doc)

[http://loraincountybar.org/Resources/Documents/financial\\_disclosure.doc](http://loraincountybar.org/Resources/Documents/financial_disclosure.doc)

# Standard Order of Parenting Time

- A. Alternating weekends from Friday at 6:00 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m., commencing the first weekend after the date of filing the journal entry.
- B. One midweek day from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. If the parties cannot agree upon a day for the midweek parenting time it shall be Wednesday.
- C. For the purpose of parenting time, there are ten (10) holidays as follows:

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. New Year's Day         | 6. Fourth of July (Noon 7/4 until noon 7/5) |
| 2. Martin Luther King Day | 7. Labor Day                                |
| 3. President's Day        | 8. Thanksgiving                             |
| 4. Easter                 | 9. Christmas Eve                            |
| 5. Memorial Day           | 10. Christmas Day                           |

In the odd-numbered years, the mother shall have the children on odd-numbered holiday; and the father shall have the children on even-numbered holidays. In the even-numbered years, the father shall have the odd-numbered holidays; and the mother shall have the even-numbered holidays. Holiday parenting time shall supersede regularly scheduled parenting time and is from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted above.

- D. The alternating weekend parenting time sequence shall not be interrupted as a consequence of the holiday schedule. If the weekend immediately preceding a Monday holiday and holiday parenting time are both scheduled with the same parent, holiday parenting time shall commence Friday at 6:00 p.m. and end Monday at 8:00 p.m. Should the parent having the Thanksgiving holiday also have the weekend immediately following the holiday, holiday parenting time shall commence Thursday at 9:00 a.m. and end Sunday at 6:00 p.m.
- E. On Mother's Day and Father's Day no matter whose weekend for parenting time, children will be with the appropriate parent.

- F. For children of school age the parents shall split the Winter vacation from school in the following manner:
- The parent designated to have the Christmas Eve holiday shall have the children for the first half of the winter vacation, beginning 9:00 a.m. the day immediately following the last day of school until December 24<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m.
  - The parent designated to have the Christmas Day holiday shall have the second half of the winter vacation, beginning 8:00 p.m. December 24<sup>th</sup> until 8:00 p.m. December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- G. For children of school age the parents shall alternate the Spring vacation from school in the following manner.
- The parent designated to have the Easter holiday shall have the children from 9:00 a.m. the day immediately following the last day of school until 8:00 p.m. the day prior to reconvening of school. Spring vacation parenting time will supersede any regular weekend visitation.
- H. Four (4) weeks of parenting time each summer. Notice shall be given to the other parent of the dates of intended parenting time thirty (30) days in advance of such parenting time. The parent exercising extended summer parenting time has priority in scheduling over the other parent's choice provided the thirty (30) days notice is given, unless the other parent's vacation choice is an annual mandatory shutdown of their place of employment. If either parent chooses to exercise extended summer parenting time for three or more consecutive weeks, the other parent is entitled to exercise their alternating weekend parenting time schedule during that time period, unless the extended summer parenting time involves travel out of the local area.
1. Children are to be in the residential home for school purposes one week before commencement of the school year. No extended summer parenting time is to be scheduled by either parent for the week prior to commencement of school.
  2. Children not of school age may go for extended parenting time throughout the year, provided the parents comply with the thirty (30) day notice requirement.
- I. Children shall celebrate their birthday in the home of the residential parent for school purposes, unless it falls on a day when the other parent is exercising parenting time. The other parent may make up for the birthday with a separate birthday party if desired.
- J. Such additional times as may be agreed between the parties.
- K. Absent reasonable notice and good cause for delay, children and/or the other parent have no duty to wait for the other parent for more than thirty (30) minutes of a scheduled parenting time. A parent who is later than thirty (30) minutes without reasonable notice and good cause for delay shall forfeit that scheduled parenting time.



- L. The parent exercising parenting time is responsible for transporting their children to and from the other parent's residence. If the parent is unavailable for the pick up or return of their children, an alternate driver may be used provided that driver has a valid driver's license and is known to the children. Any person transporting children must adhere to all child restraint laws. Both parents are expected to have their own child restraint devices. No person transporting children may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- M. If either parent intends to move from his/her current residence. That parent shall file a notice of intent to relocate with the court pursuant to Ohio Revised code Section 3109.051(G)(1).

# Uniform Ohio Domestic Relations Forms for PRO SE Litigants

The Domestic Relations Forms may be completed online and printed. The PDF files may also be downloaded to your computer. It is suggested that you download the latest version of Acrobat Reader. The forms are also available as Word documents, by clicking on the Word link beside each form.

## OHIO SUPREME COURT

<http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/jcs/cfc/drforms/default.asp>

## LORAIN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

**Modest Means Program**

**Lawyer Referral Service**

(440) 323-8416

[www.loraincountybar.org](http://www.loraincountybar.org)

## LEGAL AID SOCIETY

(440) 324-1179

(888) 817-3777

[www://lasclev.org/](http://www.lasclev.org/)

## LORAIN COUNTY DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT

**Local Rules**

[www.loraincounty.com/domesticrelations/court-rules/](http://www.loraincounty.com/domesticrelations/court-rules/)

Please remember that preparing the appropriate forms with the appropriate information is only the first step in the Court process. If you are representing yourself, you are held to the same standard as an attorney and will have to become knowledgeable about the applicable Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure, Ohio Rules of Evidence, all applicable statutory laws, and Local Rules of the Court. Additionally, you will be required to prepare the final judgment entry with all the applicable forms in an accurate and legal format.

**DISCLAIMER:** Please be aware that these forms do not include instructions or legal advice regarding your rights, responsibilities, and legal options. To be fully informed and get answer to your questions, you seek the advice of an attorney.

## How to be an Effective Parent and CoParent

Your patience, reassurance, and listening ear can minimize tension as your children learn to cope with unfamiliar circumstances. By providing routines your kids can rely on, you remind them that they can count on you for stability, structure, and care. And by maintaining working relationship with their other parent, you can help your kids avoid the stress and anguish that comes with watching parents in conflict. With your support, your kids can not only successfully navigate this unsettling time, but even emerge from it feeling loved, confident, and strong—and even with a closer bond to both parents.

### What your child wants from both parents

- I need both of you to stay involved in my life. Please call me, email, text, and ask me lots of questions. When you don't stay involved, I feel like I'm not important and that you don't really love me.
- Please stop fighting and work hard to get along with each other. Try to agree on matters related to me. When you fight about me, I think that I did something wrong and I feel guilty.
- I want to love you both and enjoy the time that I spend with each of you. Please support me and the time that I spend with each of you. If you act jealous or upset, I feel like I need to take sides and love one parent more than the other.
- Please communicate directly with each other so that I don't have to send messages back and forth between you.
- When talking about my other parent, please say only kind things, or don't say anything at all. When you say mean, unkind things about my other parent, I feel like you are expecting me to take your side.
- Please remember that I want both of you in my life. I count on my mom and dad to raise me, to teach me what is important, and to help me when I have problems.

### Allow your children to express their feelings

You can help your children adjust to new circumstances by helping them express their emotions.

**Listen.** Encourage your child to share their feelings and really *listen* to them. They may be feeling sadness, loss or frustration about things you may not have expected.

**Help them find words for their feelings.** It's normal for children to have difficulty expressing their feelings. You can help them by noticing their moods and encouraging them to talk.

**Let them be honest.** Children might be reluctant to share their true feelings for fear of hurting you. Let them know that whatever they say is okay. They may blame you at times, but if they aren't able to share their honest feelings, they will have a harder time working through them.

**Make talking about feelings an ongoing process.** As children age and mature, they often have new questions, feelings, or concerns about what happened, so you may want to go over the same ground again and again. Let them set the pace.

**Acknowledge their feelings.** You may not be able to fix their problems or change their sadness to happiness, but it is important for you to acknowledge their feelings rather than dismissing them. You can also inspire trust by showing that you understand.

## **How much information should I share?**

You'll need to pick and choose how much to tell your children. Think carefully about how certain information will affect them.

**Be age-aware.** In general, younger children need less detail and will do better with a simple explanation, while older kids may need more information.

**Share logistical information.** Do tell kids about changes in their living arrangements, school, or activities, but don't overwhelm them with the details.

**Keep it real.** No matter how much or how little you decide to tell your kids, remember that the information should be truthful above all else.

**Avoid blaming.** It's vital to be honest with your kids, but without being critical of their other parent. This can be especially difficult when there have been hurtful events, but with a little diplomacy, you can avoid playing the blame game. Be respectful of their other parent when giving reasons why you are not together.

## **Take care of yourself**

**Exercise often and eat a healthy diet.**

Exercise relieves the pent-up stress and frustration. And although cooking at home (or learning to cook for one) involves more effort than ordering in, eating healthfully will make you feel better, inside and out—so skip the junk and convenience food.

**See friends often.**

It may be tempting to hole up and avoid seeing friends and family but the reality is that face-to-face support from others is vital for relieving stress and getting you through difficult times.

**Keep a journal.**

Writing down your feelings, thoughts, and moods can help you release tension, sadness, and anger. As time passes, you can look back on just how far you've come.

**Lean on friends.**

Talk face-to-face with friends or a support group about any difficult emotions you're feeling—such as bitterness, anger, frustration—so you don't take it out on your kids. If you've neglected your social circle, it's never too late to build new friendships.

**Never vent negative feelings to your child.**

Whatever you do, do not use your child to talk it out like you would with a friend. This includes your teenagers!

**Keep laughing.**

Try to inject humor and play into your life and the lives of your children as much as you can; it can relieve stress and give you all a break from sadness and anger.

**See a therapist.**

If you are feeling intense anger, fear, grief, shame, or guilt, find a professional to help you work through those feelings.

**Keep focused on the bigger picture.**

Remember that your goal for yourself and your child is happiness, fulfillment, and a good life. Try to stay focused on the long term, and don't let petty annoyances in the moment derail you!

### **Children's Bill of Rights**

- 1) The right **not** to be asked to "choose sides" between the parties.
- 2) The right **not** to be told the details of bitter, nasty divorce proceedings, separation or Court proceedings.
- 3) The right **not** to be told "bad things" about the other party's personality and/or character.
- 4) The right to privacy when talking to either party on the telephone.
- 5) The right **not** to be cross-examined by one party after having visitation or talking with the other party.
- 6) The right **not** to be asked to be a messenger from one party to the other.
- 7) The right **not** to be asked by one party to tell the other party untruths.
- 8) The right **not** to be used as a confidant regarding the Court proceedings by one party or the other.
- 9) The right to express feelings, whatever those feelings may be.
- 10) The right to choose **not** to express certain feelings.
- 11) The right to be protected from party warfare.
- 12) The right **not** to be made to feel guilty for **LOVING BOTH PARTIES.**