

Make a Parenting Plan

Instructions and Forms



Northwest Justice Project

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Part 1. Important Info

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- ❖ Use this only if you are involved in a family law case in a Superior Court in Washington State.
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A. Should I use this?

Use this packet **only** if you are one of these:

- Petitioner (you are starting the court case) or Respondent (you are responding to the petition) in a divorce or petition to end domestic partnership case
- Petitioner or Respondent in a case to change a parenting/custody order
- A party involved in a Petition for Parenting Plan, Residential Schedule and/or Child Support, Petition to Decide Parentage, or another type of parentage case

This packet should help you fill out the forms for parenting plans.

Do not use this packet by itself. Use it with other packets you are using, for example [File for Divorce](#) or [Petition for Parenting Plan, Residential Schedule and/or Child Support: Parentage Cases](#).

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- ❖ If you want to fill out a Parenting Plan on the computer, we have a new program called [Washington Forms Online](#). It helps people fill out family law forms. Visit [WashingtonLawHelp.org/resource/Washington-Forms-Online](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/Washington-Forms-Online).
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Before using this packet, you should read whichever of these fact sheets applies to your situation. Get them at WashingtonLawHelp.org:

- [Changing a Parenting Plan/Child Custody Order](#)
- [Parentage and Parenting Plans](#) (parentage cases)
- [Divorce and Other Options for Ending Your Marriage with Children in Washington State](#)

- [Military Service and Petitions to Change Parenting Plans: Your Rights in Washington State](#) – if you or the other parent is in the military


You should also get the other do-it-yourself family law packets needed in your case.

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- ❖ This packet often refers to “the other parent” to mean the other party or person involved in your court case. It could be someone other than a parent (**Example:** A grandparent or other party petitioning for non-parent custody). Where your case involves parties other than the parents, anything required for “the other parent” is also required for every other party.
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This packet has no forms or instructions for filing and serving papers or for getting ready for or going to hearings. Visit [WashingtonLawHelp.org](#) for more information.

This packet does not cover other types of claims for child custody or visitation a person who is not a biological or adoptive parent might make, such as a petition for recognition as a “de facto” parent.

B. Try Using Washington Forms Online

 Washington Forms Online helps people fill out family law forms on a computer.

Answer interview questions on LawHelp Interactive to create completed forms and instructions that are ready for your use. Visit [WashingtonLawHelp.org/resource/Washington-Forms-Online](#) to see what forms are available. Other packets we recommend here may also be available.

C. What if I have questions that this packet does not answer?

Talk to a lawyer familiar with family law before filing anything with the court. Some counties have family law facilitators who can help fill out forms or free legal clinics where you can get advice about your case.

- Do you live in King County? Call 211. 211 is open weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. From a pay or public phone, call 1-800-621-4636. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- Apply online with [CLEAR*Online -nwjustice.org/get-legal-help](#)
- Call the CLEAR Legal Hotline at 1-888-201-1014.



Part 2. Other court forms and documents you may need to get

Our packets provide only the forms you need at the stage you need them. You need more than one packet to file and finalize your case. Read the info below carefully. Check the boxes by the other packets you need.

The Northwest Justice Project has a program called Washington Forms Online. It helps people fill out family law forms. Visit [WashingtonLawHelp.org](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org) to download packets or use Washington Forms Online.

If you have a very low income, you can get packets by mail by calling CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

- [Child Support Worksheets and Order](#) – if someone has asked for a child support order.
- [File for Divorce](#) - to start a divorce.
- [File a Petition to Decide Parentage](#) – if you and the child’s other parent never married.
- [File a Petition to Change Your Parenting Plan, Residential Schedule, or Custody Order](#) – if the court already entered a final parenting plan in your divorce or parentage case, and you want to change that parenting plan.
- [Respond to Divorce](#) – if you have been served with a petition for divorce. Or use our do-it-yourself interview program, [Washington Forms Online](#), to complete the forms at WashingtonLawHelp.org.
- [Respond to Petition to Decide Parentage](#) –if you have been served with this type of Petition.
- [Respond to Petition to Change Your Parenting Plan, Residential Schedule, or Custody Order](#) –if you have been served with this type of petition.
- [Finalize a Divorce \(with children\) by Agreement](#) **or** [Finalize a Divorce by Default](#) – if you have filed or responded to a divorce and need to finalize.
- [Finalize a Petition to Change a Parenting Plan](#) – if you have filed or been served

with this type of petition and need to finalize.

- [Ask for Temporary Family Law Orders: Divorce Cases](#) or [Ask for Immediate Restraining Orders: Divorce Cases](#) - to ask for an order covering the period between the time your case is filed and when it is final, or to ask the court to appoint a Guardian ad Litem. These packets have the Sealed Personal Health Care Records Cover Sheet and Sealed Confidential Reports Cover Sheet.
- [Ask for Temporary Family Law Orders: Petition to Change Parenting Plan Cases](#) or [Ask for Immediate Restraining Orders: Petition to Change Parenting Plan Cases](#) - to ask for an order covering the period between the time your case is filed and when it is final, or to ask the court to appoint a Guardian ad Litem. These packets have the Sealed Personal Health Care Records Cover Sheet and Sealed Confidential Reports Cover Sheet.
- [Respond to Motions for Temporary Family Law Orders or Immediate Restraining Orders](#) - if the other party has served you with one of these.
- [Ask for Temporary Family Law Orders: Parentage Cases](#) or [Ask for Immediate Restraining Orders: Parentage Cases](#) -for an order covering the period between the time your case is filed and when it is final or you want a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL). (The main parentage packet you are using and our [Guardians Ad Litem in Family Law Cases](#) publication have more about GALs. These packets also have the Sealed Personal Health Care Records Cover Sheet and the Sealed Confidential Reports Cover Sheet you will need if filing this kind of confidential info.)
- [Respond to Motions for Temporary Family Law Orders or Immediate Restraining Orders in a Family Law Case](#) - if the other party has served you with one of these motions, use this packet to respond.
- Declaration about Public Assistance (FL All Family 132): This optional form is not in our packets. You may need this form if your county requires it, or if you need to verify that no child in this case has gotten public assistance or been in foster care or out-of-home placement. You can get this form at courts.wa.gov/forms.
- [Serving Papers on the State](#) – If a party asks for a child support order, and any of the children has gotten public assistance (TANF) or medical coupons/Medicaid, or is in foster care or out-of-home placement, you must include the state as a party and serve them with papers you file.

- **Notice of Address Change (FL All Family 120):** If you move during or after your case fill this out, file it with the court, and get all other parties a copy. Get it at courts.wa.gov/forms.
- **Other: Local Do-it-Yourself packets:** In some counties, you may need other forms or packets that local rules require. Check with the court clerk or family law facilitator (if your county has one) about whether your county needs more info.

Under state law, the court must:

- Check the judicial information system and databases to identify any info relevant to placing the child before entering a permanent or modified parenting plan.
- In cases where a limiting factor such as domestic violence or child abuse is claimed, have both parties screened to determine if a comprehensive assessment is appropriate

Ask the clerk or family law facilitator about procedures your court is using under this law. You may need to use local forms and procedures not in this packet.



Part 3. Instructions for filling out the Parenting Plan

A. Tips before completing the form

Before you start, make at least one extra copy of the parenting plan and keep it.

You may need **three or more versions** of your parenting plan:

- one to file with your petition or response
- one to file when finalizing your case
- and one if you have a motion for temporary family law orders or immediate restraining orders.

❖ If you will ask for the same parenting plan with your petition (or Response) and motion for temporary family law orders, make copies of the form after filling most of it out. Fill out the entire Parenting Plan *except* for Section 1. Make several copies.

Read the instructions carefully. Take your time.

If you need hands-on help, your superior court may have a family law facilitator who can give more info or help filling out problem spots in the forms. Ask your local superior court clerk if your county has one.

If you are filling out this form as a **proposed** parenting plan (**Example:** with your petition, or as part of a motion for immediate restraining orders or temporary family law orders), have it show what you want the court to order.

If you are filling this out **after the judge has made a decision** (at a temporary family law orders hearing or trial), have it show the judge's actual decision, even if different from what you asked for.

If you and the other party have reached **agreement**, it must show the agreement you made.

B. Completing the parenting plan

Fill out the caption.

1. **“This Parenting Plan is a:”** Check **proposal** if this is a proposed parenting plan. Check **court order** if true. Then check the box immediately underneath showing what kind of order it is.
2. **Children.** List the names and ages of the children under age 18 you want the parenting plan to cover.
3. **Reasons for putting limitations on a parent.** This is where you tell the Court if it ought to limit the other parent’s time with the children, and why.

3a. Check the first box and skip to **3b** if the other parent or someone living with them has **not** done anything listed here. Check the second box if someone **has** done anything listed. Then underneath check which apply. Put the parent’s name where needed.

3b. Check the first box and skip to **Section 4** if neither the other parent nor anyone living with them has any of the listed issues. Check the second box if someone does have any listed issues. Then underneath, check which issues. Put the parent’s name where needed.

❖ If the Court agrees the issue exists, it will probably order restrictions.

Examples: The court may order supervised visits, or that the other parent cannot make any major decisions about the children.

Neglect. If you check this box, in **Section 14 (Other)** you can ask the court to order supervised visitation for the other parent until they successfully complete a parenting skills program and give the court and you written proof of this.

Abusive Use of Conflict. Check this box if the other parent has made derogatory comments to the children about you or untrue accusation to others (**example:** makes repeated calls to CPS on you for no reason). In **14 (Other)**, you can ask the court to order the other parent to stop doing these things. In **4 (limitations on a parent)**, under **Evaluation or treatment required**, you can ask the court to stop visits if the other parent engages in this behavior and order that visits will only start back up once the other parent completes a parenting skills class.

4. **Limitations on a parent.** Check the first box and skip to **5** if you checked the first boxes in **3a** and **3b**.

- Check the second box and skip to **5** if you checked problems or behaviors in **3a** and/or **3b** *but* you do not believe there need to be limitations on the parent. In the blank, explain why.
-
- ❖ If this is a proposed parenting plan, you must convince the judge the children will be safe when they are with the other parent. Otherwise, the judge might not sign your parenting plan.
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- Check the third box if you checked problems or behaviors in **3a** and/or **3b** **and** you believe these are harmful to the children, or the court found they are harmful. In the blank, put the other parent’s name. Then check all boxes underneath that apply.
 - **Supervised contact.** Check this if you want the judge to order supervised visits OR the judge ordered this after hearing. Put the other parent’s name.
 - Check the first box underneath if you want (or the judge ordered) a professional supervisor. Put their name.
 - Otherwise, check the second box underneath. Put the supervisor’s name.
 - Check the third box if the schedule for supervised visits will be in **Sections 8 - 11**.
 - Check the fourth box and fill in the blanks if you can briefly list the schedule here. Visitation times in **Sections 8 - 11** be consistent with the supervision in this paragraph. **Example:** If visitation lasts all weekend, you may not be able to have someone supervise.
 - Check **other limitations or conditions** if, for example, the supervisor must follow any standard “supervised visitation order” your court uses and/or you want the court to set conditions during visits, such as the supervisor being there for the entire visit and being required to stop any conduct that could harm the children.
-
- ❖ The supervisor must be someone who can and will protect the children from harm. If you choose a relative or household member to supervise visits, the plan must include conditions for the relative or household member to follow during visits.
-
- ❖ The judge will not appoint someone who does not want to be a supervisor.
-

Evaluation or treatment required. Check this box and put the other parent's name if you want the judge to order them to be evaluated for and/or complete any kind of state-certified treatment program before allowing unsupervised or (or, in severe cases, any) visits, OR the judge ordered this after hearing.

- Check the first box directly underneath if you want the court to order an evaluation or the court ordered this. Put the type of evaluation. **Examples:** drug or alcohol, sexual offender, domestic violence.
- Check the second box directly underneath if you want the judge to order the other parent to start and complete treatment, or the judge ordered this. Check the box underneath showing the specifics.
- Check the third box if you want the judge to order the other parent to submit proof of their evaluation and other records of treatment, OR the judge ordered this.
- In the last blank, put what happens if the other parent does not follow this part of the parenting plan. **Examples:** The other parent gets supervised visits only. The other parent loses all visitation rights. The other parent's visits stop immediately until you can go back to court.

5. Decision-making.

a. Major Decisions. If both parents should decide together about a type of major decision, check **joint** next to it. If only one parent should decide, check **limited**. At **other**, put any major issues not listed elsewhere. **Examples:** Getting a driver's license, getting married before age 18, or enlisting in the military before age 18.

b. Reasons for limits on major decision-making.

- Check the first box and skip to **Section 6** if you did not check any boxes in **Sections 3a or 3b**.
- Check the second box if you checked anything in **3a**.
- Check the third box if both parents are against joint decision-making OR one of the boxes below applies.

- Check the second box if you think only one parent should have decision-making authority. Check the box next to that parent. Check the box showing the reason.

6. Dispute Resolution.

❖ Skip this and go to 7 if you put limitations in 3a.

The parenting plan has three alternative dispute resolution processes. You must use the option you check **every time** you and the other parent have a big disagreement about the children that you cannot work out. The process may cost a lot. Still, it can be easier and cheaper than going back to court.

6a. Mediation: commonly used. You and the other parent meet with a **mediator** (a neutral person who could be a lawyer, professional mediator, or mental health professional) to try to work out the problems by agreement.

- **Arbitration:** you and the other parent meet with an **arbitrator** (a neutral person who is usually a lawyer or retired judge). The arbitrator listens to you both and makes a decision you both must follow if you cannot reach an agreement.
- **Counseling:** you and the other parent meet with a **counselor** to try to reach agreement.
- **Court.** Check this if you should not use the other options, such you cannot afford it, or one parent has committed domestic violence against the other.

6b. If you chose mediation, arbitration, or counseling, you must also choose how one parent will notify the other that they want to use it. Under **the parents will pay for the mediation**, check the box for how you will divide the cost.

❖ You can divide the cost of dispute resolution 50-50 or some other percentage, based on your incomes in the child support worksheet. Or you can let the mediator, counselor, or arbitrator help you decide.

7. **Custodian.** Put who the children will be living with more than half the time. Do not make any other changes to this **Section**.

If you and the other parent have agreed on joint custody, and you will each have the children one-half of the time, you may alternate the designation by odd and even year. Get legal advice about your case. Find out if this would be a good idea for you.

Parenting Time Schedule.

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- ❖ This section may be confusing. Talk with a lawyer or the family law facilitator. Reading [Divorce and Other Options for Ending Your Marriage with Children in Washington State](#) may help.
 - ❖ Check the first box and skip to **Section 12** if the only contact the other parent will have with the children is in **Section 4**. Otherwise, check the second box. Make sure the schedule you write is best for your children.
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8. School Schedule.

8a. Children under School-Age.

- Check the first box **and skip to 8b** if all the children are in school already.
- Check the second box if the schedule will be the same as for school-age children.
- Check the third box if the schedule for children under school age will be different from the one for school-age children.

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- ❖ “Every other week” is different from “first and third week.” There are sometimes five weeks in a month.
-

8b. School-Age Children. Fill this **Section** out even if none of your children is yet in school. Check the boxes showing when you want this schedule to apply (or when the court ordered it to apply).

After **the children are scheduled to live with**, in the first blank, put who they will live with most of the time. In the second, put the other parent’s name. Then check the boxes underneath showing when they will live with the other parent.

-
- ❖ “Every other week” is different from “first and third week.” There are sometimes five weeks in a month.
-

9. Summer Schedule.

- In the first sentence, check the first box if you want “summer” to start and end according to the school calendar, or the court ordered that.
- Check the second box if you want something other than the school calendar, or the court ordered something different.
- Check “the summer schedule is the **same** as” and skip to **Section 10** if that is what you want, or what the court ordered.
- Check the third box if the parents should each have uninterrupted vacation time with the children. Fill in the blank.
- Check “the summer schedule is **different** than” if that is what you want, or what the court ordered. Check the box showing when you want the summer schedule to take effect. After “During the summer the children are scheduled to live with,” in the first blank, put who they will live with most of the time. In the second, put the other parent’s name. Then check the boxes underneath showing when they will live with the other parent.
- Check **other** if you do not want to set specific dates. In the blank, you can put that one or both parents notify each other by a certain date of the time they would like for that summer.

Example: “The children will live with the father during the summer except for four weeks with the mother. The mother shall tell the father by May 15 which weeks she wants.”

You can also put if the time will be all at once or split up. **Example:** “Four weeks, taken in two, two-week sessions.”

10. Holiday Schedule. Check the first box and skip to **Section 11** if you will follow the school schedule.

❖ You do not need a special schedule for holidays if you do not want one.

- Otherwise, check the second box. Then check the box showing which children the holiday schedule applies to.
- Fill in the table showing what you want the holiday schedule to be, or what the court ordered.

-
- ❖ If you will alternate holidays by year, specify “odd” and “even” years.
 - ❖ If you will split a holiday each year (**Example:** Christmas morning with one parent, Christmas afternoon and evening with the other), check “Every” for both parents. Fill out the split times for that holiday in the section below in the **begin day/time** and **end day/time** blanks.
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Other occasion important to the family (page 10): You can use this for

- Any special religious or cultural holidays not otherwise listed. Some of the listed holidays may not be important in your family. The form does not list other important holidays.
- A child’s birthday, a parent’s birthday, an annual family reunion, and so on.

11. Conflicts in Scheduling. This section says what happens when parts of the Parenting Time Schedule conflict, such as when mom’s Christmas Day falls on dad’s weekend.

Check the box showing what you want, or what the judge ordered. You can check **other** to create your own priorities, or if the judge ordered something different from the first two options.

12. Transportation Arrangements. In the first paragraph, check the box showing where you will exchange the children. You can check **other location** if you want a neutral, public place, like a local fast-food restaurant or park. Do this if you know you and the other parent will fight in front of the children or you have reason to be scared the other parent will hurt you. You can put more safeguards to protect your safety if you are at risk during exchanges.

In the second paragraph, check the box showing who is responsible for arranging transportation.

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- ❖ Arrangements for the cost of transportation go in the Child Support Order.
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Use the **other section** to put other conditions on transportation.

Example: If the other parent does not have a driver’s license, you can put here that the other parent must arrange for someone with a license to transport the children.

- 13. Moving with the Children (Relocation).** This section is about the laws that apply when a parent wants to move with the children. Do not delete or change this section.
- 14. Other.** Here are some suggestions for how to use this section:

Following Requirements of Other Court Orders: You can ask the court to order the other parent to complete requirements already required by another court order (such as a dependency order or an Order for Protection) before she can have time (or unsupervised time) with the children. You can ask the court to order the other parent to provide written proof of completion of the requirements.

Example: You have a Protection Order requiring the other parent to complete domestic violence treatment. You can put here “[Other parent] shall successfully complete all domestic violence treatment required under the Order of Protection entered on [date] under case number [protection order case number], and provide the court and all parties written proof of such successful completion, before she may request residential time with the children.”

Removal of Children from the State: You can put here that the other parent may not remove the children from the State of Washington without your written consent.

Example: You already know the other parent will be taking the child to another state for an annual family reunion. You would state that as an exception.

If you want other rules in your parenting plan, such as giving or denying access to school or medical records, being able to go to or get notice of school or extra-curricular events (sports, church events, music recitals, and so on), or phone contact, put them here.

Sample language:

Phone Calls: Each parent may call the children at reasonable times when they are with the other parent.

Activities Outside of School: Neither parent shall sign the children up for activities that will interfere with the other parent's time, without the other parent's agreement.

Address and Phone of Parents: Both parents shall keep each other advised of their current home address and phone number.

School and Activities: Both parents shall have the right to go to school, sports, and other activities of the children.

- 15. Proposal.** Check the first box and skip to 16 if you are writing this parenting plan as a court order.

Otherwise, check the second box. At “parent requesting plan signs here,” and sign and put the date and place you are signing.

If the other parent agrees with your proposed parenting plan, they should sign and date underneath.

- 16. Court Order.** Check the first box if this is a proposed parenting plan. Check the second box if this is a final order or a temporary parenting plan after a hearing. **Leave the rest of this section for the judge to fill out and sign.**

If this is a court order, the parties sign below: In the left-hand column, check **is an agreement of the parties** if true and have the other parent check the same in the right-hand column. Check **is presented by me**.

You will sign in the space on the left-hand side and put your name and the date under that.

If the other parent agrees to your parenting plan, they sign in the space on the right-hand side and put their name and the date under that.

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- ❖ When you have finished filling out your Parenting Plan, read through it **several times**. Make sure you understand it and have filled everything in you want.
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Part 4. Blank Forms

This packet has blank forms for your use.

Make a copy of each form so you have an extra in case your first draft needs lots of changes. You may need forms from other packets. You may not need all the forms in this packet.

Or fill out the forms online using the **Washington Forms Online** program at WashingtonLawhelp.org. It helps people fill out family law forms on a computer.

EVALUATION FORM: How was this 3209EN Make a Parenting Plan packet? Your comments are appreciated and will help to make this packet more useful to others. Please take a moment to complete this form and return it to:

LeeAnn Friedman
Northwest Justice Project
500 W. 8th, Suite 275
Vancouver, WA 98660

Or email to wlheditors@nwjustice.org

1. Where did you get this packet?
 CLEAR WashingtonLawHelp.org Court Clerk or Facilitator
 Other: _____
2. What is your primary language? _____
3. Are you low-income? yes no
4. What is the last grade you finished in school? ____
5. Did you read the instructions? yes no
6. Did you need the help of an agency, court facilitator, or advocate to complete your case? yes no
If yes, what agency or individual helped you? _____
7. Did you find anything hard to understand? yes no
If yes, please tell us what. _____

8. Did you find any mistakes? yes no
Describe mistakes. Include the page #. _____

9. Additional Comments [use back if you need to]: _____

10. Today's Date: _____