

We've separated... how do we work out arrangements for our children?



This workbook provides an overview of our family law system, as well as the obligations of separating parents and their children's rights under our family law.

Disclaimer

The guidance provided in this workbook is not legal advice, it is information only. This workbook has been designed for you to use with legal help from a lawyer.

NQ Women's Legal Service believes the information provided is accurate as at May 2013 and does not accept responsibility for any errors and omissions.

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Where do we start?

The best place to start is by asking yourself **“What is in the best interests of our children?”** After separation, working out arrangements for your children with your ex-partner can be challenging.

Everyone’s circumstances are different, but there is one thing all separating parents have in common under Australian law — they must always put the best interests of their children first.

They also have to try and make sure (where possible) children have a relationship with both parents and other important people in their lives.

And, unless there are extenuating circumstances like domestic and family violence, parents must try and work things out between themselves before they consider going to court.

Why try and work things out?

Working things out with your ex-partner can sometimes be hard and stressful, especially if you find it difficult communicating with each other. If you have been in a relationship where there was domestic and family violence, working things out between yourselves might not be an option.

There are benefits to working things out between yourselves (or with the help of services like family dispute resolution and counselling) like:

Child focused outcomes — Parents can focus on what is best for their children rather than spending time and resources on going to court. The disruption to their children’s lives is reduced as parents can generally establish a workable and practical routine more quickly. This can help children adapt more easily to their changing family, and new routine, during a very difficult time.

Greater control — Parents usually have greater control over their parenting arrangements. Why? It means the parents are making the decisions, not a third party like a judge.

Save money and time — It is quicker and less expensive than going to court.

Less conflict and stress — Parents can avoid unnecessary conflict and the added stress of court proceedings.





Susan's thoughts on working things out...

We didn't have an easy separation. Actually sitting down and trying to work out arrangements for the kids was one of the hardest things I've ever done.

We were both so angry with each other and it took a lot of effort and emotional heartache to reach an agreement. But we wanted to make sure we did the best by Tess and Madison.

Having their Mum and Dad fighting all the time was going to be really hard and disruptive for Tess and Madison. My ex-husband and I also wanted to avoid spending tens of thousands on legal fees and having a bitter court battle.

We still struggle to get along but for the children's sake we try, and we now have a routine that works.





Should we formalise our arrangements?

It is up to you how formal you want to make any arrangements. There are different reasons why you might decide to formalise arrangements. For example, formalising arrangements can provide greater certainty and consistency especially in high conflict situations.



Georgia's experience formalising arrangements...

After we separated we tried to work things out between ourselves but Blake, my ex-partner, had a habit of not returning the children on the day we had agreed. When I went to the police they said they couldn't do anything because there wasn't a parenting order in place.

I decided we needed something more formal than the parenting plan we had agreed on. Blake and I went to family dispute resolution and worked out arrangements. We then made an application to the Family Court for a consent order. I feel a lot better about things now I have a parenting order we both follow and that can be enforced by the court.

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How can we formalise arrangements?

You might:

- » work things out between yourselves and want to put everything down in a written plan like a parenting plan
- » work things out between yourselves and make your arrangements legally enforceable by making an application to the court for consent orders
- » not agree about how to work things out and end up asking the court to decide the final arrangements.

What is a parenting plan?

This is a written agreement between both parents about matters relating to your children like who they live with, allocation of parental responsibility, how they will communicate with each parent, who will pay what, and how the plan can be reviewed to take into account changing circumstances.

A parenting plan, by itself, is not legally binding but it is still an important document as it is evidence of any agreement reached.

For example, if one parent does not follow the parenting plan, and the other parent asks the court to make an order — the court can take the parenting plan into consideration.

What are parenting orders?

These are legally enforceable court orders.

Each person has a legal obligation to follow a court order and there are serious consequences if you do not follow an order.

There are two types of parenting orders — ones you can make if you both agree and ones made by the court when you can't agree.

Parenting orders may deal with whom the children live with, spend time with, allocation of parental responsibility, how they will communicate with each parent, and who will pay what.





If we agree (consent orders)

If you can agree about arrangements you can make an application to the court for a consent order.

You do not need to attend a court hearing.

You will need to fill out an *Application for Consent Orders kit* and an *Application for Consent Orders kit - supplement* and lodge these documents with the Family Court.

Before you lodge your application you should get legal advice about filling out the kit and supplement, and the parenting arrangements you plan to make.

If we can't agree (parenting orders)

If you can't agree about arrangements and are unable to work things out between yourselves you can make an application to the court for a parenting order.

There will be a court hearing.

The court will make a decision by looking at all the evidence provided and working out what is in the children's best interests.

Before you can make an application for a parenting order you need to try and work things out through compulsory family dispute resolution (unless there are exceptional circumstances like domestic and family violence) or the matter is urgent.

If family or domestic violence exists or you believe the matter is urgent you should seek legal advice.



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Can we work things out ourselves?

If you can, try and come to an agreement with your ex-partner. If you can work things out between yourselves it is often a good idea to sit down together and create a parenting plan.

A parenting plan is a written agreement between both parents about matters relating to your children.

You don't have to go to court to make a parenting plan. There are organisations that can help you make a parenting plan like Family Relationship Centres (see page 32 for contact details).

On pages 27 to 31 we provide a parenting plan checklist to help you work out your own parenting plan. The checklist offers examples of important questions and issues you should ask yourself, and consider, when working with your ex-partner to develop a parenting plan.

Do I legally have to follow a parenting plan?

A parenting plan by itself (in other words you only have a parenting plan and no other parenting orders in place) is not legally binding.

This means if you do not follow the parenting plan you aren't breaking the law and you can not ask the court to penalise the other person for not following the parenting plan.

However, it is still a very important document. For example:

- » If you end up making an application to the court for a parenting order the court will look at your parenting plan before it makes a decision.
- » If one parent does not end up following a parenting plan — the other parent might apply for a court order. The court will want to know why the parenting plan was not followed. Depending on the circumstances, the court may not look favourably on a parent who fails to follow a parenting plan.



Some things you should know about Parenting Plans...

Parenting Plan under the Family Law Act

A parenting plan is any written, signed and dated agreement made between the parents of a child.

It must be made free from threat, duress or coercion.

Working out a parenting plan

It is a good idea to get legal help to work out a parenting plan.

Best interests of the children

A parenting plan should always put the best interests of your children first.

Think practically

A parenting plan covers practical issues about parental responsibility. When writing a parenting plan do not aim to plan for each minute of your children's lives.

It should help you and your ex-partner develop a broad guide about the really important things in your children's lives like who the children will live with and when, their education, how parents will communicate with each other, finances and religion.

Can we get help to work things out?

Yes, there are organisations, like Family Relationship Centres and Legal Aid Queensland, that provide services to help you negotiate with each other.

See page 32 for the contact details of some organisations that can help you work things out between yourselves.





Erin's parenting plan

My ex and I went to family dispute resolution and worked out a parenting plan.

After about 12 months he stopped following it because he said he has a new partner and the parenting plan no longer suits him. He is refusing to go to dispute resolution.

I got legal advice. My lawyer is helping me apply for a parenting order.

My lawyer said when the court works out its decision it will look at our parenting plan and ask why my ex didn't follow it.

My lawyer said it wouldn't reflect well on my ex-partner.





If we agree on the arrangements for our children how can we make them legally enforceable?

If you want any agreement (like a parenting plan) to be legally enforceable you and your ex-partner will have to apply to the court for orders by agreement (called consent orders).

What is a consent order?

Consent orders set out what each parent's responsibilities are and the arrangements for your children.

You do not actually have to attend a court hearing to get a consent order — you need to make an application to the Family Court using the *Application for Consent Orders kit* and *Application for Consent Orders kit — supplement*

If you have a parenting plan it will be a useful guide when developing consent orders. You can use the information and arrangements in the parenting plan to help you complete your consent order application.

You should get legal advice if you want to make an application for a consent order.

What happens if one parent does not follow the consent order?

A consent order is legally binding and enforceable by the court. This means when a consent order is made, each person must follow it.

Unless there is a reasonable excuse there are serious consequences if you do not follow a consent order.





How Tahlia and her ex-husband used a parenting plan to work out a consent order...

My ex-husband and I went to mediation and worked out a parenting plan.

We then each went to a lawyer and got legal advice about what we had agreed on.

My lawyer made some suggestions and then helped me fill out an Application for Consent Orders Kit and an Application for Consent Orders Kit — supplement.

I met with my ex-husband and we discussed the application I had completed. We were both happy with the application.

I then lodged the application with the Family Court.



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Can family dispute resolution help?

What is family dispute resolution?

Family dispute resolution is an opportunity for you to try and work things out with your ex-partner with the help of a trained family dispute resolution practitioner.

Family dispute resolution services are available through different organisations like Family Relationship Centres and Legal Aid Queensland.

Family dispute resolution offers a practical, efficient and low-cost way of working out arrangements for your children in a neutral and safe environment. You can try working things out using family dispute resolution at anytime during your family law problems.

How important is family dispute resolution?

Family dispute resolution plays a major role in our family law system. Before you can apply to the court for parenting orders (orders that the court decides) you need to show you have made a genuine attempt to really work things out through family dispute resolution.

Before you can go to court you will need a certificate from a family dispute resolution service explaining:

- » you and your ex-partner attempted family dispute resolution but were unable to agree on parenting arrangements, or
- » you were unable to attempt family dispute resolution because of issues like domestic and family violence, or the emotional, psychological or physical health of the parties, or
- » you have requested family dispute resolution take place but your ex-partner has refused to go.

In certain circumstances, like in situations where you feel your children need urgent protection from abuse or family violence, the court may grant you an exemption from having to file a certificate. You should get legal advice if you feel you need to go to court urgently.





What can I expect at family dispute resolution?

Is it just for working out parenting arrangements?

Some family dispute resolution services can help you and your ex-partner discuss issues, look at options and reach agreement on property and financial matters as well.

This means you could discuss making arrangements for your children and how you want to divide your property during the same family dispute resolution session.

It is a good idea to speak with the organisation assisting you with family dispute resolution about the different types of services they can provide.

Do I have to be in the same room as my ex?

No. You can try and work things out in the same room or you can be in different rooms with the family dispute resolution practitioner moving between each room.

Depending on your circumstances you can also attempt family dispute resolution over the phone or via video-conference.





Will our children be involved?

Some Family Relationship Centres have specialist child practitioners (called child consultants) who can talk to your children and then provide your children's perspective during the mediation process.

Check with the organisation assisting you with family dispute resolution about the different types of services they can provide.

Is it confidential?

Everything said during family dispute resolution is confidential except in certain circumstances.

A practitioner must report information that may prevent harm to someone's life or health and might prevent a crime from happening.

How much does it cost?

At Family Relationship Centres the first three hours of mediation are usually free. For more than three hours of dispute resolution services, centres are happy to discuss costs and your ability to pay on an individual basis.

Legal Aid Queensland's dispute resolution for parenting arrangements is free if you have been granted legal aid. If you want to use this service for making parenting arrangements you will need to get legal advice about your situation and then apply for a grant of legal aid. (For property matters, even if you are granted legal aid, there is a cost that is calculated on an individual basis.)

If your legal aid application is successful Legal Aid Queensland will write to the other parent and invite them to the dispute resolution conference.

The other parent can attend the conference on their own, with a private lawyer or with a Legal Aid lawyer if they have been granted legal aid. The other parent has to agree to attend the conference before it can go ahead.



Can I bring a lawyer?

Yes. If you use Legal Aid Queensland's dispute resolution services you can have a lawyer represent you.

Some Family Relationship Centres will allow legal representation if they think it is appropriate after assessing your circumstances. Both parties have to agree before a lawyer can be present.

You should consider if you really need a lawyer to help you communicate and mediate — will they help you achieve the outcomes you want?

How long will mediation go for?

This depends on your circumstances and how the session progresses. Sessions usually run for approximately three to four hours but they can take longer.

Do I have to reach an agreement at the end of our family dispute resolution session?

No. You don't have to reach an agreement at the end of your session. For example you can go away and get legal advice about what was said and how you want to move forward after dispute resolution.

Can we come back and try and mediate about the same issues?

Yes. You can come back and try and mediate about the same issues if you were not able to reach an agreement the first time or maybe want to discuss issues further. Family dispute resolution is there to help people work out things between themselves without having to go to court.

Will we focus on why we broke up?

No. The focus is not on why your relationship ended. The aim of family dispute resolution is to discuss and ultimately reach agreement on practical parenting arrangements that are in the best interests of your children.



Handy Tips for Family Dispute Resolution

The following suggestions may help you prepare for FDR;

- Get legal advice before going to FDR. It will help you focus on what is important and can assist in getting the most out of the session. Obtaining legal advice will also assist in helping you negotiate. Your solicitor will provide you advice on what is the best case scenario and worst case scenario if the matter proceeded to Court. It is not a requirement of FDR that you obtain legal advice prior to attending, but it is beneficial if you do.
- Prepare for FDR by writing down key points you wish to discuss. This will assist you in concentrating about the most important issues. Some may include the reasons why you believe your position is in the best interest of the children and matters about the children you have had difficulty discussing with the other parent.
- If you are feeling pressured or need a break from negotiations it is important that you let the FDR practitioner know. The FDR practitioner needs to determine that you have made a genuine effort to negotiate with the other parent, so it is important that you keep them informed if you are not coping.
- Try not to interrupt or raise your voice when the other person is speaking.
- Remember that you are not obligated to sign any agreement that you do agree with. Get legal advice if you feel you need the agreement looked over.



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I am applying to the Family Court for a parenting order. What happens next?

Before you apply to the court for a parenting order you should get legal advice so you can understand the law and the process involved. There are two types of parenting orders —*interim orders* and *final orders*

Why would I apply for an interim parenting order?

Interim orders are made if you need the court to make a decision quickly, usually in situations when you feel your children need protection.

“Going to court can be expensive and a lot of work.”

If your matter involves Family or Domestic Violence or child abuse you should get legal advice straight away as you may need an interim parenting order to protect your children.

I want to apply for a final parenting order — is it hard to do?

You should get legal help if you want to apply for a final parenting order. Going to court can be expensive and a lot of work. It can also take time before a final decision is reached.

Before the court will allow you to make an application you will need a certificate from a dispute resolution service that explains you have either:

- » done everything possible to work things out by negotiating with your ex-partner, or
- » there were extenuating circumstances preventing you from being able to successfully negotiate like family violence or allegations of child abuse.

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In certain circumstances, like in situations where you feel your children need urgent protection from abuse or family violence, the court may grant you an exemption from having to file a certificate. The court needs to be notified of the existence of family violence or abuse. You should get legal advice if you feel you need to apply to the court urgently.

Can I make an application for a final parenting order by myself?

Preparing an application for a final parenting order is not an easy thing to do. You are more than likely going to need a lawyer to help prepare your case and to stand up for you in court.

There are a number of steps you need to do before the court will let you file an application for a parenting order. Preparing an application can be complicated and it is always a good idea to get legal advice.

There is a lot involved before a judge will set a date for a trial and hear all the evidence and then make a decision.



Once you decide to apply to the court for a parenting order you should prepare a summary of all the issues and a list of witnesses and documents you would like to use (and the reasons why). This will help you not only organise your information but help your lawyer as well.

What is the process involved?

Before the court will allow you to file an application for a parenting order you need to:

- » give the other person/s written notice you intend to start a court





case (this is called a notice of claim), setting out:

- » the issues in dispute
 - » the orders you want
 - » a genuine offer to resolve any issues, and
 - » a date the other person must reply by (at least 14 days after the date of the letter).
- » you then have to wait for the other person to reply. They should communicate in writing if:
- » they accept the offer.
 - » they don't accept the offer:
 - » the issues in dispute
 - » the orders they want
 - » a genuine counter-offer to resolve any issues, and
 - » a nominated date you must reply by (at least 14 days after the date of the letter) .

There are different steps throughout a court case and not every case has the same court events. The judge will manage your case on an individual basis and according to what they believe is appropriate.

Where can I find out more about going to court?

Here are some websites where you can find information about going to court:

www.familycourt.gov.au (Family Court of Australia)

www.familylawcourts.gov.au (Family Law Courts of Australia)

www.legalaid.qld.gov.au (Legal Aid Queensland — there are a number of useful family law publications and information available from this website)

www.legalaid.vic.gov.au (Victorian Legal Aid — there are a number of useful publications about running a family law case available from this website)





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What will the court consider when it decides to make a parenting order?

When making a parenting order the court's number one priority is always the best interest of your children.

How does the court work out what is in the best interest of your children?

Firstly, the court always considers:

- The benefit of your children having a meaningful relationship with both of their parents.
- The need to protect your children from physical or psychological harm. This includes being subject to or exposed to, abuse, neglect or family violence.

The Court is required to give greater priority to the need to protect the children from physical or psychological harm if there is inconsistency between the above considerations.



Secondly, the court also considers:

- What the children want. When the court considers children's views they take into account their age and how much they understand.
- What kind of relationship the children have with their parents and any other people who play an important part in their lives like grandparents and other relatives.
- The extent to which each parent has taken or failed to take the opportunity to spend time and communicate with the children and participate in making decisions about major long term issues that concern the children.
- The extent to which each parent has fulfilled or failed to fulfill the parents obligation to maintain the children.
- The likely effect of any change to where the children have been living or staying. This includes separating them from either parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives or other people important in their lives.
- The practical difficulty and expense of children seeing each parent, and if that difficulty will impact on their rights to have a relationship with them. This includes the right to spend time with and communicate with each parent.
- How much each parent and any other person (including grandparents and other relatives) can provide for the children's physical, emotional and intellectual needs.





- The maturity, sex, lifestyle and background (including culture and traditions) of the children and of each parent, and anything else about their culture, including with others of that culture.
- Each parent's attitude to the children and to the responsibilities of being a parent.
- Any family violence involving the children or a member of their family.
- Any family violence order that applies or has applied to the children or a member of their family and the relevant inferences that can be drawn from that order. Taking into account the nature of the order, the circumstances in which the order was made, any evidence admitted in the proceedings, any findings made by the court or in the proceedings for the order.
- If the parenting order will mean less risk of everyone coming back to court.
- Anything else the court thinks is important.



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What happens if one of us wants to change a parenting plan or a parenting order?

Changing a parenting plan

You can change a parenting plan at any time as long as you both agree to the changes. You do not need to go to court.

Changing consent orders

If you want to change your consent order you should get legal advice about your options.

What if we agree about the changes we want to make?

If you and your partner can both agree to any changes then you can:

- » make an application to the court to change an existing order by consent, or
- » enter into a parenting plan.

If you are amending your existing consent order you don't have to "start from scratch".

In your application to change an existing order or your parenting plan you can refer to the sections of your existing order that you don't want to change and then go on to provide detail about the changes you want to make.

What if we can not reach an agreement?

If you can not agree then you will have to follow the steps discussed earlier in this workbook (family dispute resolution if appropriate and then if you still can't reach an agreement make an application to the Family Court for a parenting order).





Changing parenting orders

What if we agree about the changes we want to make?

Parenting orders can be changed by:

- » parents preparing a new parenting plan (unless their parenting order says they can not), or
- » parents entering into consent orders.

This means if you both agree, you do not have to go back to court.

You can use a new parenting plan to make changes, replace part or all of the parenting order or add arrangements to your order.

What if we can not reach an agreement?

Before you can apply to the court to change a parenting order you have to show it is because of a significant change of circumstances.

You should get legal advice about what the court will accept as a significant change of circumstances.

Any changes to your parenting order must be in the best interests of your children.

You can apply to the court to change an existing order by following the same process as if you were applying for the first time.



Frequently asked questions



How does the court work out how much time our children will spend with us?

Your children's best interests are always the most important consideration. When the Court begins to work out how much time children spend with each parent the starting point is equal shared parental responsibility.

This means the court applies a presumption that both parents should be responsible for making the major long term decision that affect their children. Parents must make a genuine effort to work together to make these decisions.

Equal shared parental responsibility will exist unless there are extenuating circumstances such as family violence or child abuse.

What is Parental Responsibility?

Parental Responsibility means all the duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority which, by law, parents have in relation to children.

Both parents are legally responsible for their children until they turn 18. When parties separate they are still legally responsible for their children unless a parenting order or plan allocates that responsibility solely to the other parent.

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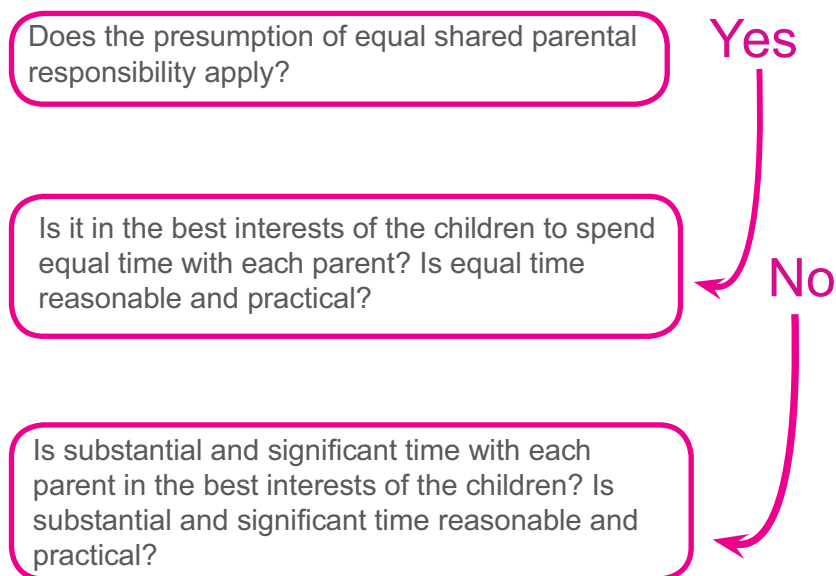
Does equal shared parental responsibility mean equal time?

If the court believes equal shared responsibility should apply this does not mean children automatically spend equal time with each parent.

However, if equal shared parental responsibility exists the court must consider if the children spending equal time with each parent is in the children's best interests and is reasonable and practical.

If they believe equal time is not appropriate, they then consider if substantial and significant time would be in the children's best interests.

The flow chart below provides an overview.





What is significant and substantial time?

Significant and substantial time with a parent means a child must spend time with a parent on both:

- » days that fall on weekends and holidays, and
- » days that do not fall on weekends or holidays.

The time a child spends with their parent must be enough to allow the parent to be involved in their children's daily routine, as well as occasions and events that are of particular significance to the child and particular significance to the parent.

What if I already have a parenting order and then need to take out a domestic violence order?

The law recognises your safety, and your children's safety, must always come first. You can apply for a domestic violence order that is different to an existing parenting order.

You should try and get legal advice, and make sure the magistrate at the Domestic Violence Court is made aware of any existing parenting orders.

I am being pressured to reach an agreement. What should I do?

You should never enter into a parenting agreement if you feel you have been pressured, threatened or intimidated.

The best interests of your children should always come first. If you genuinely believe a proposed agreement is not in the best interests of your children you should get legal advice before you agree.





Parenting Plan Checklist

Who should the children live with?

- » How much time should each child spend with Mum and Dad?
- » How structured and how flexible should these arrangements be?
- » If changes are needed how much notice is required?
- » What will we do during school holidays and other holidays?
- » How will the children move between houses? Who will be responsible for transporting the children?

How will we resolve any conflict?

- » Will we try to negotiate between ourselves?
- » Will we use family dispute resolution?

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How will the children maintain contact with Mum and Dad?

- » How will the children maintain contact with Mum when they are staying with Dad?
- » How will the children maintain contact with Dad when they are staying with Mum?
- » Will the children maintain contact by:
 - » talking over the phone
 - » emailing
 - » writing letters
 - » webcam (like Skype)

What will we do for any special days like Christmas, birthdays, Father's Day and Mother's Day?

- » What arrangements will we make for any days we consider special like
 - » religious celebrations like Christmas and Easter
 - » parent's birthdays
 - » children's birthdays
 - » other important days in our family

How will the children maintain any relationships with other family members like grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins?

- » Who are the important people in our children's lives?
- » How will we make sure our children stay in contact and maintain meaningful relationships with people like their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins?





What will we do about the children's educational needs?

- » What are our children's current and future educational needs?
- » What type of schools do we think they should be going to?
- » How much will each of us be involved in school activities?
- » Will we each receive information from the school?
- » Who should the school contact if there is an emergency?
- » How will we manage homework?
- » How will we communicate with our children's teachers?
- » How will we communicate about what happens at school ?



Why Jane used a parenting plan checklist...

My ex-partner and I used the parenting plan checklist to work out a practical parenting plan. We both agreed our children's schooling was really important and we wanted to know what was going on at school. The checklist helped us plan for how we would manage homework and communicating with our children's teachers.

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How will we make sure the children continue participating in their sporting and/or cultural activities?

- » Who will drive the children and when?
- » Who will pay for their activities?

Who will pay what?

- » How will we share the day-to-day costs of raising our children? How will we work out these costs?
- » How and when will payments be made?
- » How will the educational costs be met like uniforms, school books, school camps, sporting trips?
- » How will we meet health care costs? Who will pay for trips to doctors and dentists etc?
- » What will we do about pocket money?
- » How will we meet unexpected costs?
- » How will we work out when we should review costs? Should we review who is paying what every 12 months or earlier?

How will we make arrangements for looking after the children?

- » Who will wash the children's clothes?
- » Who will feed the children during the week? Will we have dietary guidelines each parent will aim to follow?
- » Will any of the children's belongings be shared between households?
- » How will we organise presents for the children? Will we share in the purchase?





How will we make any decisions about parenting?

- » What parenting decisions require us to work together?
- » How will we discuss any joint decisions? If we disagree what will we do?
- » Do we need to organise regular meetings to discuss parenting issues?
- » Do we need to discuss how we will communicate about parenting issues?
- » Should we include our children in these discussions?
- » Do we need to discuss how we talk to the children about the other parent?

What happens if something happens to one of us?

- » Do we need to discuss what would happen if one of us were to die?
- » Do we need to change our wills?

Is there anything else we need to discuss?

- » Should we discuss and work out arrangements about:
 - » religion
 - » special health needs
 - » emergency procedures

How will we review the parenting plan?

- » Will we review the parenting plan after a certain time period has passed. For example will we review every six months or every 12 months? How will we review it?
- » Will we review the plan if one or both parents believes there has, or will be a significant change in circumstances? How will we review it?
- » Will we review the plan if one or both parents believes the arrangements are not working? How will we review it?



Organisations that can help...

NQ Women's Legal Service (for women only)

Townsville 07 4772 5400

Free face to face appointments in Townsville and Cairns

Free telephone advice line

1800 244 504 (operates 9am to 1pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Note: calls are free from landlines only.

Also provide free legal clinics in Port Douglas, Mossman, Innisfail, Atherton, Mareeba, Ingham, Charters Towers and Ayr.

Family Relationship Centre (Townsville)

07 4779 4211

Address: Unit 1, 281-285 Ross River Rd, Aitkenvale

Family Relationship Centre (Cairns)

07 4041 6063

Address: 125 Grafton Street, Cairns

Legal Aid Queensland

1300 65 11 88 (for the cost of a local call)

Townsville Community Legal Service (community legal centre)

07 4721 5511 to make a face-to-face appointment

Cairns Community Legal Service (community legal centre)

07 4031 7688 to make a face-to-face appointment

Family Law Courts

1300 352 000 (cost of a local call)

Relationships Australia Qld

1300 364 277 (cost of a local call)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NQ)

Cairns 07 4046 6400

Townsville 07 4722 5111

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services (NQ)

07 4721 6007

NQ Domestic Violence Resource Service - Townsville

07 4721 2888

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

07 4033 6100

DV Connect (24 hour telephone support service)

1800 811 811 (free call)

Family Relationship Advice Line

1800 050 321 (free call)





Who we are

We provide free legal help for women who live in North Queensland -from Sarina, north to Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands, and west to Mount Isa.

Our office is based in Townsville and we conduct weekly face to face appointments in Cairns and Townsville. We run legal clinics each month in Ayr, Charters Towers, Ingham, Innisfail, Atherton, Mareeba, Port Douglas and Mossman.

Our free telephone advice line runs 9 am to 1 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays.
Call 1800 244 504

Contact us

Phone 07 4772 5400
Fax 07 4772 5315
Mail PO BOX 2209,
Townsville, QLD 4810

Would you like a copy of this booklet?
Please contact our office.

Our Website
www.nqwls.com.au