



## **Parenting Plan Workbook**

To help you decide what's best for your child after a separation or change in family situation

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## You have the right to feel safe

You can get help if you or someone else feels unsafe.

- If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 111
- Visit [justice.govt.nz/family-violence](https://justice.govt.nz/family-violence)
- Visit [areyouok.org.nz](https://areyouok.org.nz)
- Freephone 'Are You OK' on 0800 456 450



If you or your child are not safe, you can apply to the Family Court for a Protection Order. For more information:

- Visit [justice.govt.nz/protection-order-info](https://justice.govt.nz/protection-order-info)
- Freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

## **How to use the Parenting Plan Workbook**

This workbook is for parents, guardians\* and whānau (family and friends) who are involved in the day-to-day care of a child, after a separation or change in family situation.

\*A guardian is an adult who is responsible for the upbringing and care of a child.

## **Help making a parenting plan together**

After a separation or change in family situation, there are important decisions to make about how your child is looked after. This workbook will help you think about these decisions.



Usually, it's better for everyone involved to work together to make a parenting plan that everyone agrees with. This doesn't have to mean your child's care is split 50/50 between two parents. You can decide what will work best for your child.

### **Children are the focus of any parenting plan**

This workbook is to help you come up with the best plan for your child. Focusing on your child's wants and needs can sometimes mean putting aside your own thoughts and feelings. It may help to keep this in mind, especially if you're finding it hard to agree on things.

## Make your parenting plan

Follow these steps to make your own parenting plan

1. Use the ideas in this workbook to help make decisions together about your child's care
2. Write everything down – either using this workbook or by making your own plan
3. Sign the agreed parenting plan – everyone involved should do this
4. Make sure everyone who has signed the parenting plan gets a copy

## Services to help you reach an agreement

Agreeing on how to care for a child after a separation or change in your family situation isn't always easy. It may take time for everyone to be on the same page. You may find

going to a free Parenting Through Separation course can be helpful. This course helps parents, guardians and whānau to understand and focus on their child's best interests after a separation or change in your family situation.

You can also try mediation with Family Dispute Resolution. Mediation is a service where parents, guardians and whānau can focus on reaching an agreement. An independent person or family mediator will help keep things on track.



To find out more about Parenting Through Separation and Family Dispute Resolution, check out page 23 of this workbook.

Children's names

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# Part 1: Day-to-day care and contact, changeovers, holidays, special occasions

You'll need to agree on the details in Part 1 if you want to apply to the Family Court to make your parenting plan into a court order.

Think about where your child will spend their time.

To start, try making a weekly or monthly calendar showing who'll be looking after your child at different times. You don't have to use the example calendars in this workbook. If they don't work for your whānau, it might help to cross out some things and replace with your own, or create your own calendar.

Example: Weekly plan (helpful for younger pre-school aged children)

An example of a weekly plan for a pre-school aged child is below. The green shaded parts are when the child spends time with Person A. The blue shaded parts are when the child spends time with Person B and the purple with Person C.

Description: The child will be in the care of Person A from 8am Monday until 9am Tuesday, and from 8am Friday to 1pm Saturday. The child will be in the care of Person C every Wednesday from 4pm-8pm. The rest of the time the child will be in the care of Person B.

	Days of the week						
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8am	Person A	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person A	Person B
9am	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person A	Person B
10am	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person A	Person B
11am	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person A	Person B
Noon	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person A	Person B
1pm	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
2pm	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
3pm	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
4pm	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
5pm	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
6pm	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
7pm	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
8pm	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B
overnight	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person A	Person B	Person B



## Your weekly plan

In our example we called the people looking after the child's care Person A, Person B and Person C. Make sure to write the names of the people who will be looking after your child's care in the in the boxes provided so everyone understands the plan.

	Days of the week						
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8am							
9am							
10am							
11am							
Noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
overnight							

**Example: Monthly plan** (helpful for school-aged children)

An example of a monthly plan for a school-aged child is below. The green shaded times are when the child spends time with Person A. The blue shaded times are when the child spends time with Person B. The purple shaded time is when the child is with Person C.

Description: For the week below, the child will be in the care of Person A on Monday and Tuesday, Person B on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and Person C on Sunday.

Tip: It might help to make copies of the calendar for everyone involved in your child’s day-to-day care. You could also make a shared calendar online, or keep photos of the calendar on your phone.

	Days of the week						
Weeks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Person A	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person C
Week 2	Person A	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person C
Week 3	Person A	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person C
Week 4	Person A	Person A	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person B	Person C



## Your monthly plan

In our example we called the people looking after the child's care Person A, Person B and Person C. Make sure to write the names of the people responsible for your child's care in the boxes provided so everyone understands the plan.

	Days of the week						
Weeks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							



## Changeovers – moving between homes

Changeovers are times when a child moves from the care of one parent, guardian or whānau member to another.

Example:

- Person A will drop off the child at school on Wednesday morning and Person B will pick up the child on Wednesday after school.
- Person A will pick up the child on Sunday 9am from Person B's home (or meet Person B at the local park for the changeover).

Changeovers can be tricky as they can bring up different feelings.

It may help to think carefully about who should, and shouldn't, be involved in the changeover, including dropping off or picking up the child. Make sure everyone agrees who can do this.



Work together to come up with the best place for changeovers to happen. If your child needs to travel, for example if parents and whānau live in different towns, it may help to plan how this will work for everyone. Your plan may include how transport costs are shared.

Having a checklist can also be helpful as your child may need to bring items from one home to another. These might include school uniforms or special toys.

### **Your plan for changeovers**

Tip: It may help to think about a back-up plan for changeovers in case something unexpected happens, like someone running late, or school finishing early. How will everyone involved in the changeover stay in touch? It may help to have a separate emergency contact person that everyone agrees on.

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## Keeping in contact with whānau and others

**Example:** On Friday in week 1 and every second week, our child will spend time with their maternal grandparents after school and tea together. On Saturday in week 2 and every second week, our child will spend time with their paternal aunt and whānau from 10am to 3pm.



Tip: Need help reaching an agreement? Try setting aside time when you and the other person can talk, away from the children. Try not to let your child see you arguing over them. They may think the problems between you are because they've done something wrong.

Your plan for contact with whānau and others:

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## Special occasions and holidays

How will you share the care of your child during special occasions such as birthdays, as well as holidays like Matariki, Christmas and school holidays?

Example: If a child's birthday falls on a day where Person A has the day-to-day care or contact, Person B will have contact with the child from 3 to 7pm on that day. During school holidays, each parent will share the day-to-day care of the child (Week 1 – Person A, Week 2 – Person B).



Tip: Need help reaching an agreement? Try to think about how important it is for your child to spend time with both parents as well as other guardians and whānau.

Your plan for special occasions and holidays:

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## After-school activities

Who'll be dropping off and picking up your child from after-school activities?



Example: A child goes to art class from 3-5pm. Person A has day-to-day care of the child on Tuesdays but works until 4.30pm. On Tuesdays, Person B will pick up the child from school at 3pm and take the child to art class. Person A will collect the child from art class at 5pm and carry on with the agreed day-to-day care.

Tip: Need help reaching an agreement? Focus on your child's needs. You can take about relationship issues another time.

Your plan for after-school activities:

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## **Part 2: Guardianship decisions (home life, school, healthcare, and other decisions)**

Guardians are adults who are responsible for the upbringing and care of a child. When most children are born, their parents automatically become guardians. The Family Court can make other adults, like a grandparent, an extra guardian. After a separation or change in a family situation, guardians should work together to decide how a child will be raised.

## Home and schooling

Agree on the city or town where your child will continue to live  
For example, Wellington or Tauranga

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## School

Think about which school you want your child to go to. Who will go to parent/teacher interviews? How will school decisions be made (for example, fees and donations, camps, sport)?

It may also help to think about whose contact details are given to the school in case of emergencies.

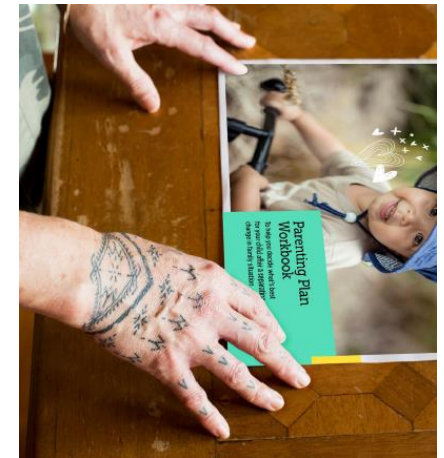
Your plan for schooling:

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## Healthcare

Think about where you'll take your child when they need to go to the doctor or dentist. How will these costs be shared between parents and guardians? It may help to keep a record about medicines your child may take, or any health conditions or special needs they might have.



Tip: Need help reaching an agreement? The first parenting plan you make doesn't have to be the final plan. There's room to review and make changes to a parenting plan if things aren't working out.

Your plan for healthcare:

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## Communicating with the people involved in your child's life

How will everyone involved in your child's life keep in contact with each other if the plan needs to change?

This could be due to something unexpected, for example, Person car breaks down on the way to pick up the child from school. Do you have a plan to get hold of each other if there's an emergency? It may help to have a separate emergency contact that everyone agrees on.

Tip: A notebook or journal that is kept with the child during changeovers (moving between homes) may help parents and whānau communicate about anything non-urgent.



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Your plan for communicating with the people involved in your child's life:

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## Paying for things your child needs

Is anyone making regular payments to the other parent, guardians or whānau members for your child's care? How will your child's everyday needs, such as clothes and school uniforms be paid for? How will you pay for your child's school expenses, after-school activities, doctor's visits, and childcare?



Your plan for paying for things your child needs:

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## Other decisions that are important to your whānau

There may be other decisions to make about your child's care that are important for you and your whānau. You can choose to include these decisions in this section.

Examples: Some examples might include:

- How you'll manage food preferences or dietary needs your child or home may have. For example, if your child is gluten-free
- When and where your child can travel to, including where their passport is kept
- How much screen-time your child is allowed
- If you want your child to go to a place of worship, for example, church
- What vaccinations you want your child to have
- How much involvement any new partners will have in your child's life
- Special needs



Tip: You can apply to the Court to turn your Parenting Plan into a Parenting Order. If you can't agree on guardianship decisions, you can apply to the Court for an Order to Settle a Dispute Between Guardians.

Your plan for other decisions:

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## Part 3: Review, commitment, and signatures

### Reviewing your plan

As your child grows up, things may change. It can help to set a date to regularly review and update your parenting plan. If everyone agrees, you can review your parenting plan or make a new one at any time.

### Committing to the parenting plan

Date of review:

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It may be helpful to add a reminder of the review date to your calendar or phone.



As parents, guardians and whānau named in this parenting plan, you understand and agree to the decisions made in this parenting plan. You'll follow this plan until it ends or is reviewed. The Court cannot take action against someone for not following this parenting plan.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Helping you make a plan that will work for your child

As parents, guardians\* and whānau, your focus will be on your child. While this page includes things to think about when arranging care for your child, it's about finding out what will work best for your child. Have a chat with your child and try to keep them involved in these decisions.

\*A guardian is an adult who is responsible for the upbringing and care of a child.

### Babies and pre-schoolers birth to age 5

Babies and pre-schoolers often rely on you to make the right decision for them. Some families find it works best for their young child to live with one parent most of the time while the other parent, guardians and whānau visit regularly. On the other hand, some families prefer to share the day-to-day care between more than one home.

If you choose to have one home base for your child, think about how you can make visits between your child and the other parent, guardians or whānau valuable for everyone. How often should the visits be? How long should they last? Should they be overnight?

If you decide to share child care between homes, think about how you can keep an eye on your child's stress levels. How long should they spend at each home? What can you do if your child is at one home and wants to see the other parent? How can you help your child if they feel tired from moving between homes?

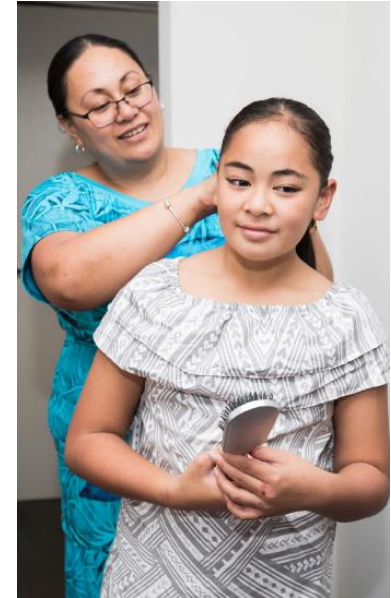


Think about ways you can help your child deal with changeovers (moving between homes). If your child finds changeovers upsetting, how can parents, guardians or whānau help?

### **School children aged 5-11**

School children will often be more comfortable spending time away from their parents. For example, when they go to school and take part in other activities.

Think about if it will work better for your child to have one home base with regular visits with the other parent, guardians or whānau. Your child may prefer to split their time more evenly between homes. It can help to include your child in these talks.



### **Teenagers aged 12 and older**

Teenagers may want to have more of a say in where and when they spend their time with parents, guardians and whānau.

Have a chat with everyone involved to find out what your teenager wants. Some teenagers may prefer to have one home base with regular visits with the other parent, guardians and whānau. Other teenagers may prefer to split their time more evenly between homes.

As their lives change with things like school exams, part-time work and social life, a parenting plan may also need to change. Think about how you can keep an eye on your child's stress levels and make sure they're getting time to relax.

### **You can also ask the Family Court to consider making your parenting plan into a court order**

This isn't a necessary step but if you're interested, you can find out more by scanning the QR code with your phone camera or following the link below:



- [justice.govt.nz/consent-order](https://justice.govt.nz/consent-order)
- Freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

### **What to do if a parenting plan isn't being followed**

The Family Court can't take action against someone for not following a parenting plan. However, there are ways to get a parenting plan back on track.

#### **You can:**

Talk to the person who isn't following the plan. It may be that they didn't understand how the parenting plan would work, or they'd like to make changes. Remember you can review and update your parenting plan any time if everyone agrees.



## **Get in touch with your local Kaiārahi.**

Kaiārahi (Family Court Navigators) can help guide you as a whānau, through your options after a separation or change in family situation so you can make the best decision for your child. They may also help you find support in your community. To get in touch with a Kaiārahi, visit your local court, email [kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz](mailto:kaiarahi@justice.govt.nz) or freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733.

## **Try Parenting Through Separation.**

This is a free course that helps parents, guardians and whānau understand and focus on their child's needs after a separation or change in family situation. You can go to a Parenting Through Separation course at any time. It may help you to write a parenting plan or be the first step if things aren't working out. Find out more about Parenting Through Separation by scanning the QR code on your phone camera or following the link below:



- [justice.govt.nz/parenting-through-separation](https://justice.govt.nz/parenting-through-separation) or freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

## **Try Family Dispute Resolution.**

This is a mediation service where an independent person or family 'mediator' will work directly with parents, guardians, and whānau to reach agreement about their child's care after a separation or change in family situation. Family Dispute Resolution can be a useful way to work through issues whānau disagree on, while focusing on the child. Find out more about Family Dispute Resolution by scanning the QR code with your phone camera or following the link below:



- [justice.govt.nz/family-dispute-resolution](https://justice.govt.nz/family-dispute-resolution) or freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

## **Talk to a lawyer.**

It may help to get advice from a lawyer. If you're not sure if you can afford a lawyer, it can help to talk to someone at your local Community Law Centre. You may also be able to get help from the Family Legal Advice Service, which lets you meet with a lawyer in the early stages of a separation or change in family situation. Find out more about the Family Legal Advice Service by scanning the QR code on your phone camera or following the link below:



- [justice.govt.nz/lawyers-for-parents-and-children](https://justice.govt.nz/lawyers-for-parents-and-children) or freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733

## **Apply to the Family Court.**

The Family Court can make decisions about the care of your child if you can't reach agreement, usually after trying Parenting Through Separation and Family Dispute Resolution. Find out more about applying to the Family Court by scanning the QR code using your phone camera or following the link below:



- [justice.govt.nz/apply-to-the-family-court](https://justice.govt.nz/apply-to-the-family-court) or freephone the Ministry of Justice on 0800 224 733



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