



PARENTING PLAN: WHAT IS IT?

Am I required to have a parenting plan?

The court requires parties to submit a parenting plan in any Maryland case that involves the custody of a child. Parties will receive parenting plan documents ([Instructions](#) and a [Tool](#)) at their first court hearing. Parties who cannot agree on a plan must submit a [Joint Statement \(CC-DR-110\)](#). [Learn about child custody at \[mdcourts.gov/childcustody\]\(http://mdcourts.gov/childcustody\)](#).

Is a “party” a parent?

A party is any person who wants to ask the court to establish or maintain a parent-child relationship with a child. This includes biological, adoptive, and *de facto* parents and legal guardians.

In what kind of case is a parenting plan required?

A parenting plan is required in any case a party asks the court for custody or to modify custody of a child. Custody can also be addressed as part of a divorce case. A parenting plan is not required in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) cases.

What is a parenting plan?

A parenting plan is a written document that outlines how parties will raise a child. It covers how parties will make major decisions about a child (decision-making authority or legal custody). The plan also addresses the time the child spends with each party (parenting time or physical custody). [Learn more at \[mdcourts.gov/parentingplans\]\(http://mdcourts.gov/parentingplans\)](#).

Why are parenting plans important?

Parenting plans are a guide for how parties will handle child-related issues. With a parenting plan, parties – not the court – decide what is best for their family after considering the child’s unique needs. While parenting plans are child-focused, they also foster collaborative co-parenting, ensure the child’s continued relationships with each party, and give each party a chance to come up with solutions to problems. The goal is to provide predictability and structure for how the family will function when parties do not live together.

For the court, parenting plans provide insight to the family dynamic and help make child custody orders and modifications uniform and equitable. The hope is that a parenting plan will be a roadmap for how parties navigate conflict without needing to go to court.

How do I create a parenting plan?

Review the [Maryland Parent Plan Instructions \(CC-DRIN-109\)](#) to learn how to create a parenting plan. The Instructions include factors to think about when developing one. Use the [Maryland Parenting Plan Tool \(CC-DR-109\)](#) to create a plan for your family. You will receive both documents at your first appearance in court.

Your parenting plan can be general or detailed. A more detailed plan provides your family with a predictable roadmap for how to navigate conflict without the court.

What online resources can help with parenting issues?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has helpful webpages:

- Child Development Basics. [Visit cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html)
- Positive Parenting Tips. [Visit cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html)

Also see Zero to Three for young children. [Visit zerotothree.org/resources/series/parent-favorites](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/parent-favorites)

