

September 12, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- There are many important considerations in divorce. But, for those divorces involving children, where the kids will spend their time often overshadows all other issues.

[Child custody](#) arrangements in Washington State are set out in a legal document known as a parenting plan. While former spouses may not agree on every aspect of a parenting plan, divorcing couples and their attorneys are often able to come to a compromise -- if they do not, a Washington judge will decide what the parenting plan should look like. Because the threat of judicial action underlies parenting plan negotiations, a basic understanding of the factors a court will use to make a parenting plan is important for anyone with kids who is anticipating a divorce.

Child's relationships key to parenting plan

A parenting plan will detail where the child will live, including day-to-day arrangements as well as contingencies for holidays and any applicable visitation schedules. It will also spell out how decisions affecting the child will be made. Finally, parenting plans will set out a framework for resolve any future disputes that may arise between the parents. Parenting plans can be modified once they have been approved by a Washington court, but obtaining a modification is very difficult.

The overarching guiding principle when a judge creates a [parenting plan](#) is the best interests of the child. One of the reasons it is important to work with the other side in reaching a parenting plan agreement is that nobody knows your kids and your situation like you do; while Washington judges do their best to enact parenting plans that are in the best interests of the child, they only have a few hours to familiarize themselves with each individual case based on their perception of a few important factors.

One of the most important considerations in determining what is best for the child is the child's relationship with each parent. Is the child's relationship with the parent stable and secure, and does the potential to continue a healthy parent-child relationship after the divorce exist? Does one parent display a greater ability to meet the child's basic needs, including personal care, financial support and help with schoolwork? The answers to these questions are instrumental for a judge who is putting a parenting plan in place.

Along with the child's relationship to each parent, the child's ties to others in the community are also important if the parents are going to live a substantial distance apart after the divorce. The

Parenting plans in Washington State: How custody will be determined

Written by Australian Business

types of opportunities available in one location versus the other may come into play too, such as educational, extracurricular and social opportunities.

Finally, the child's wishes will be considered if the child is old enough and mature enough to express an opinion.

A Washington family law attorney can facilitate negotiations

Knowing what a judge will consider in making a parenting plan can help you and your lawyer make compelling arguments in court to support the custody plan you would like to have in place. Even so, it is usually better if you can come to an agreement with your former spouse outside of court.

Divorce can be a contentious process. Emotions run high, and it might seem next to impossible to agree with your spouse on anything. But, coming to a compromise on a parenting plan is often the best thing not only for you, but for your kids.

An experienced family law attorney can help make negotiations productive without sacrificing the things that are important to you in a parenting plan. Talk to a Washington family law attorney today to learn more about parenting plans.

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