



Back-to-School Pointers for Separated Parents

It's that time of year again. The last days of summer vacation are being enjoyed before it's time to buy the new school year's supplies. Back-to-school time can be an exciting but anxious time. For a child of separated parents, the anxiety can be even greater. The following pointers can help ease the back-to-school transition:

- Discuss scheduling issues before the school year starts.**
 By obtaining a copy of the school calendar and being aware of school holidays, the parents can avoid later scheduling surprises. For children needing supervision, the parents should make plans for holidays and ensure that child care will be provided. The parents should be up front with each other and attempt to resolve any scheduling issues before they arise.
- Ensure school records are up-to-date.** Both parents should be listed as an emergency contact for the child and have equal access to the child's school records. Many schools now provide attendance and grade information online. Access to such online records should be made available to both parents.
- Coordinate any extracurricular activities.** If any parenting plan has been entered, it may require the parents to agree on an extracurricular activity before the child is enrolled. The parents should discuss the details of the activity, including the schedule, cost, equipment needed and any other obligations. Both parents should be aware of any impact that an extracurricular activity may have on time-sharing.
- Share school and extracurricular event information.** Unless there are extenuating circumstances, both parents should have an equal opportunity to attend a child's school or extracurricular events.



Natalie C. Lashway

TEL 941.639.1158

EMAIL nlashway@farr.com

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To accomplish this, each parent should inform the other of any parent-teacher conferences, open houses, science fairs, games, graduations or other such activities.

- **Ensure that the child understands the time-sharing schedule.** To lessen confusion, the child should be made fully aware of the regular time-sharing schedule. It may be helpful to put a copy of the schedule on the child's calendar or put a daily note in the child's backpack to remind the child who is picking him/her up from school or where to go after school.
- **Communicate.** The child should never be used as a message carrier; instead, the parents should speak directly with one another outside the presence of the child. As education or behavior issues arise, the parents need to communicate with one another. With both parents aware of problems, the parents are more able to take a unified front and reinforce any plan to improve any such issues.

Parenting issues can be all-encompassing, but the focus of the parents at all times should be the best interest of the child. Alleviating the child's stress and anxiety regarding any time-sharing issues or parental disputes, especially during the school year, will help the child succeed.

If you have any questions regarding parenting issues, please consult with a marital and family law attorney.

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