Reach a Fair Agreement

Tips and Ideas for Reaching the Agreement You Want

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Introduction

If you are reading this book, you are likely a new user of Custody X Change. Welcome! We hope you find the information we have compiled useful in your situation.

In the first part of this book, you will find general guidance for using the software in various circumstances. This section, called “Ways to Use” is a situational guidebook that gives examples and ideas on how you can use Custody X Change’s powerful scheduling, calculating, and document-creating features to make your custody case easier to handle.

The second section, called “Quick Help” contains more traditional help documentation. Refer to these pages if you are stuck on a specific feature of the software, or are not sure how various software features function.

The final section of the book includes a glossary, state resources, and a list of further reading.

Thanks for reading. Soon you’ll join the ranks of the Custody X Change “power users”!

Ben Coltrin (and daughter Eleanor)
Founder, Custody X Change

Disclaimer

This e-book is not intended or offered as legal advice. These materials have been prepared for educational and information purposes only. Please consult a qualified legal professional if you have legal questions.
Ways to Use

There are many situations in which Custody X Change can be useful. In this section, we have made an attempt to illustrate how the software can provide assistance in whatever stage of the custody process you are in. We recommend reading all the way through from start to finish, though you can glean plenty of information by skipping around as well. Here are short summaries of each chapter:

✓ **What to Ask Before Creating Your Schedule**
   *This is a checklist of things you should know before you start putting together a custody schedule.*

✓ **Scheduling with the Other Parent**
   *This chapter provides guidelines on negotiating a fair and workable schedule with the other parent.*

✓ **Creating a Balanced Schedule**
   *This chapter covers the ways that schedules are sometimes manipulated to favor one parent, or how an unfair schedule can be improved for the other parent.*

✓ **Tips for Staying Organized**
   *The functionality of Custody X Change makes it easier to keep everyone on the same page in your co-parenting situation. Here are some tips we have collected.*

✓ **Reaching a Parenting Agreement You Both Like**
   *Here are some ideas on how to construct a parenting agreement with the other parent. Includes tips on negotiating without arguing.*

✓ **Assisting with Mediation**
   *This is a step by step example of how using Custody X Change can make your mediation experience quicker, less expensive, and more productive.*

✓ **Working with an Attorney**
   *How the software can help your voice be heard as you work with a legal professional.*

✓ **Preparing for Court**
   *Scheduled for a court hearing? Be prepared to present your case accurately.*

✓ **Tracking Your Plan for Renegotiations**
   *This chapter shows how tracking your agreement after it is signed can help you make changes in the future.*

✓ **Calculations and Child Support**
   *One of the main factors affecting child support payments is the amount of time each parent spends with the children. How to use calculations to get accurate support.*
What to Ask Before Creating Your Schedule

Determining a custody schedule does not have to be an overwhelming process. We have compiled a list of questions to ask yourself and help you determine the best option for you, the other parent, and especially your child.

The best situation for any child is to be a part of both parents’ lives—parents who are committed to a good co-parenting relationship. Remember to always put your child's needs first.

Are you filing for joint or sole legal custody?

Filing for joint or sole legal custody may or may not make a difference in your custody schedule. The location of the parents, needs of the child, and other issues may be more of a factor. With either custody situation, you can split the time 50/50 or have exchanges only a few times a year due to proximity. This question is to get you thinking about your unique situation and any barriers that may exist.

Is there any past history of substance, physical or sexual abuse? Will there have to be supervised visitation for any reason?

A past history of abuse will come into play when determining how much time the child will have with each parent. Many times the courts will arrange a supervised visitation program. Make sure you know how long supervised vision will take place and what happens after it is over. Example: Do you and the other parent set up a new schedule, does it go back to the court to decide, etc.

Are you planning on splitting the child’s time equally or will one parent have more time than the other?

There are a number of different time schedules available. Many of these depend on the current situation and location of the parents. Think about any current and possible situations that would limit how much time the child has with you or the other parent.

Do both parents get along? Can you talk to each other without fighting?

Your relationship with your ex is vital in choosing a schedule. Does your relationship allow you to exchange the children frequently or are there too many hard feelings? If you are unable to hold a civil conversation, you would want to choose a schedule that has fewer exchanges. This might be more difficult for you but you do not want your child to dread exchanges because of fighting.
What is the distance between the parent's homes, child care, schools, etc? Is it practical to have frequent visitation exchanges?

It is easier to have more frequent visitation exchanges if the parents live close to each other. You will both be able to share in the life of your child. Create a plan which will allow equal or somewhat equal time with each parent.

It is more difficult to split the time equally with a parent who lives further away and is usually not practical to have frequent visitation exchanges. There are a few exceptions if both parents are willing to commit to the travel time and the children are not in traditional school or have other needs.

Do both parents have stable home environments?

It is important the child feels safe at both homes. They should feel a part of the family and not like a visitor. If you do not have a stable home environment, you may want to make a temporary schedule. The schedule can change to be more permanent once you establish this environment.

What are the schedules and lifestyles of each parent? Does one parent travel frequently?

The life of the parents makes a huge difference in what custody schedule you create. It will be harder to follow a standard plan if one of the parents has an irregular work schedule or travels frequently. You may have to develop a custody schedule to your unique situation.

The lifestyle you and your ex have also is important to consider. Are you involved in school or a hobby which takes a lot of time? Is having a social life important to you? Will you be starting to date again? Arrange your custody schedule if possible so your child can spend as much time with the other parent while you are busy.

What is the age of the child?

The age of your child is very important. Some states have recommendations or requirements of what the visitation schedule should be if your child is very young.

Infants and toddlers do better when there is a stable home base and it might be best to schedule the visit at the child's residence. When your child is school age, they can more easily adapt to moving back and forth. Older children in high-school care the most about their schedule and having their life disrupted.

Realize that a single schedule will probably not work for the life of the child.
What is the temperament of your child? How well do they adapt to new situations? What special needs does your child have?

How your child adapts to new situations is very important. Some children like consistency and changing homes frequently can cause them a great amount of anxiety. Your child may feel like they just get settled in to a new home and then they have to switch. A longer exchange would work best in this situation.

Perhaps your child loves change and enjoys going back and forth as much as possible. A shorter exchange schedule works great in this situation. If you have multiple children, decide what would be best for them as a whole. Make sure you keep them together and on the same schedule.

A child can have a variety of special needs which should be considered. Do they have any specific medical conditions or medications that prevent them from being easily exchanged? Are they involved in any early child intervention programs and what are their time commitments? These are all important to consider when determining the frequency and length of custody exchanges.

Is your child in school? How are they doing academically? What amount of homework do they have? Will they be able to remember all their assignments and papers each time they exchange homes?

School age children may find it difficult to go back and forth between parents. Emotionally and physically they are ready but you must communicate frequently with your child, the other parent, school, and teacher. You and your ex must be committed to making sure all the homework, folders, papers, and books go with the child each time there is an exchange.

Consider how much homework your child has and if they can handle the workload while going back and forth. Some teachers do not like the mid-week switching because it is too hard for both parents to know what is happening and the child can fall behind. Establish an organized system for your child if you decide to change midweek. Base your schedule on what works best for you and your family and not what a teacher may prefer.

What activities is the child involved in? What time commitments are involved in these activities?

Children are involved in many activities which require a lot of time, especially as they get older. You will want to consider this when determining a schedule especially if your child is regularly involved in many activities.
Create a special schedule if your child is involved in a seasonal activity. Use it for a specific time period and follow a different schedule for the majority of the year. Make sure you allow plenty of time for the other parent to be a part of the child's life while they are involved in these activities.

**What is your goal in creating this schedule?**

Both parents should have the same goal: to be involved in the life of their child and have a successful co-parenting relationship where the needs of the child are first.

You might find yourself choosing a schedule that works best for you and not well for the other parent. Now is the time for you to realize your relationship with them needs to change. Start looking at them as an equal part in creating your child. Put any negative or hurt feelings to the side and move forward in the new situation.

**Are you committed to doing whatever it takes to make a successful schedule?**

You will have to communicate with the other parent and they will be a part of your life. There is no one successful schedule for everyone and there is no way to tell in advance if a certain schedule will work best for your situation. If the schedule needs to be adjusted, change it. Be flexible as you all move forward in this new journey.

Now that you have assessed your situation mentally, you are prepared to negotiate with the other parent, whether that means meeting one-on-one, in mediation, or as a last resort—at a court hearing.
Scheduling with the Other Parent

Now that you’ve given thought to your schedule, it’s time to find one that fits your situation. A custody schedule should contain the following parts:

*Residential or school schedule:* this is the everyday schedule of where your child spends time. This is also called the repeating cycle of custody and visitation.

*Holiday schedule:* this schedule shows which parent your child will be with on the holidays.

*Vacation or school break schedule:* sometimes the everyday schedule changes when the child is on school break or vacation and a separate everyday schedule is needed. You can also schedule vacation time when each parent takes the children on vacation.

*Extra or special events:* these are the one-time changes to the custody schedule because of extra or special events that arise.

The first decision to make for the residential schedule is where your child will live. Depending on the needs of your child, you can choose to make a schedule where the child spends significant time with both parents (a joint custody schedule) or a schedule where the child has a home base with one parent and visits the other parent (a sole custody schedule).

**50/50 Residential Schedule**

The 50/50 physical custody schedule means the child's time is divided equally between you and the other parent. It is also referred to as a rotating schedule or joint physical custody. It has become the new and popular alternative to having a child live primarily with one parent and have a few "visitations" with the other. Many parents, psychologists, and judges feel it is very important for the child to be a part of both parents lives.

The 50/50 time schedule can work in a variety of ways. You can have frequent exchanges where the child goes back and forth multiple times a week or have your child stay for longer periods at each residence. Keep in mind, this requires a great deal of communication with the other parent. You will have to frequently discuss the life of your child, school, health, and social situations. Additionally, you will need to work with the other parent's family and significant other. It also helps if you and the other parent live in close proximity.

**Pros & Cons:**

- Child builds a close relationship with both parents.
- Both parents are able to be consistently involved in their child's life.
- Child knows they are loved and cared for by both parents.
- Child has two homes instead of one primary residence.
Both parents must be able to get along and discuss the child without fighting.
Child has to be able to adapt and handle the pressures of constant change.
Parents need to live close to each other.

50/50 Examples

This is how an Alternating Weeks schedule looks in the software. Time with the mother is represented in pink and the father blue.

This first schedule is called the 3-4-4-3 schedule. It has minimal exchanges and your child can spend time with both parents each week.

The second schedule is the 2-2-5-5. There are more exchanges with this schedule and the weekends alternate.
This schedule is called a 2-2-3 schedule. Again the child goes back and forth multiple times a week.

The following schedule is known as the Two Weeks Each schedule. This is different because the child spends much longer periods with each parent.

This last schedule is called the Every Weekend with School Time Removed. The child spends the week with one parent and the weekend with the other. It is considered a 50/50 schedule because the time the child spends at school is not counted toward either parent's time.
Other schedule options

If a typical joint custody schedule isn’t going to work for you and the other parent, here are some other options to try. Keep in mind that all these schedules can be found in the software, under Repeating Schedule > Use Template.

Every Weekend (60/40)

Pros & Cons:

✓ Consistent and easy to implement.
✓ Children who struggle with change and require consistency do well on this schedule.
✓ Good if you and the other parent are in conflict.
❖ One parent has the child every weekend.
❖ More restrictive but can work well depending on your lifestyle.

Alternating Weekends (80/20)

Pros & Cons:

✓ More traditional schedule: consistent and easy to implement.
✓ Great if you and the other parent live further apart or have demanding work/school schedules.
✓ Children who struggle with change and require consistency do well on this schedule.
✓ Good if you and the other parent are in conflict.
✓ One parent only sees the child every other weekend.
Creating a Balanced Schedule

One of the most powerful features of Custody X Change is the ability to see the timeshare split between each parent. Every time you make a change in the schedule, these numbers are automatically updated, so check back often to see how time is being divided!

We bring this up because some visitation schedules can be misleading. For example, you may have a schedule where the father only gets the kids every other weekend. This 80/20 time split may feel unfair to the father, but after factoring in holidays, vacations, and summer break, the split may end up somewhere closer to 60/40.

Custody X Change makes it easy to see how these changes affect your timeshare over an entire month, year, or any other length of time you choose. See Calculations in the Quick Help section for more detailed information on how the calculation feature works. Right now, we will discuss how holidays, school breaks, 3rd party time, and exchange times all have more effect on your parenting timeshare than you think.

Holiday time

Carefully assigning the holidays between the parents can have a dramatic impact on the timeshare percentage. As you set up your holiday schedule, you’ll be able to see this percentage slowly change one way or the other.

Most parents remember to put the big holidays into their schedule, like Christmas, Easter or Thanksgiving. You can also include smaller holidays like Columbus Day and Veterans Day. Some parents include as many holidays as possible so that the schedule is more fair. The software comes with a built-in list of holidays, but you can also add your own. This is helpful for religious holidays, state holidays, and school holidays.

It is also important to take a close look at pick-up and drop-off times. They can usually be optimized to increase holiday time with the kids. Some holidays make sense as weekend time, and parents can agree on the entire weekend instead of just one day. For other holidays, you can schedule earlier pick-up times and later drop-off times.

Another way that parents use holidays to work together on balancing the schedule is by choosing holidays that aren’t in their scheduled parenting time. After setting up a residential
schedule, look through the calendar to see what holidays fall into each parent’s allotted visitation time. When dividing the holidays, you can make sure it is balanced evenly.

**Divide summer breaks and vacations**

Scheduling the right kind of summer break and vacation time is an easy and fair way to balance your time with the children.

Everyone's schedules are more structured during the school year, but once your children are on school break in the summer or other school holidays, you don't have to stick to the same schedule. Often a 50/50, Alternating Weeks schedule can be set-up during the summer months. You can set this up using the *Seasonal Schedules* tool in the software.

There is also Vacation time. This is a period of time set aside in a visitation plan for each parent without any specific dates attached. Usually, an unspecified vacation allows for a parent to take the children for a week or two during the year for vacation. When one parent wants to use the unspecified vacation, he or she must give the other parent advance notice. You can set this up using the *Vacations* tool.

If you know specific vacation dates or certain one-time events, you can always schedule that right into the calendar. Custody X Change allows you to add blocks of time for either parent and label them so you are guaranteed to have some vacation time with your child. You can also add smaller vacations by adding in some overnight special events if you don't have a week-long vacation planned. You can do this using the *One-time Events* function.

**Assign 3rd party time**

There may be large parts of the day where your child is not with you or the other parent. Instead, your child may be at school, daycare or with relatives.

Factoring in 3rd party time can have different effects to the timeshare, depending on how it is implemented. Here are some examples:

- Dividing the 3rd party time between both parents to balance the timeshare percentage
- Scheduling 3rd party time to a 3rd party to keep each parent's timeshare percentages strictly accurate
**Add quality time**

You can also use 3rd party time to keep track of quality time with you kids. This can more accurately show how much actual parenting time each parent gets. You can add time that the children spend at school, as well as times that they are asleep. This way, each parent only gets credited for the waking hours that they take care of the children.

**Choose the right exchange times**

Scheduling pick-up and drop-off times is a key part of a successful parenting time schedule. Sometimes when parents make a schedule by hand, they set exchange times on the hour. There's no real advantage to that other than it is simple to remember.

With Custody X Change, you can easily set the exchange times for whenever you want. This means that you can lengthen every visit by a half hour to an hour if you adjust the exchange time.

For example, instead of having a visit every week from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., you can schedule a visit for 3:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., or 3:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. Because you can be so specific with the software, you can schedule some extra time with your child. You'll also get an accurate total of your parenting time because the software doesn't round to the nearest hour.

**Change the starting week**

If your repeating schedule repeats every 2 or more weeks, you can move or swap weeks to balance out the schedule. Use the Move Week button in the Repeating Schedule window to shift weeks around. As you do so, watch the timeshare calculations and see if they become more balanced with a certain arrangement. This is an easy way to make things a little more even.
Tips for Staying Organized

Even after you have a custody schedule in place, the software is a useful tool for keeping everyone on the same page. Here are some ideas on how you can reduce stress and better manage your situation.

Print calendars out for the kids

Kids thrive on a predictable, consistent schedule. Many parents have told us that they print out a calendar every month and tape it to their child’s bedroom door. This can help kids of all ages be better prepared for exchanges between parents. It is recommended that you print the calendar in color if you can, time with mom in pink, dad in blue. This is especially helpful for younger children.

Export the calendar to both parents’ smartphones

Use the software’s export feature to save your schedule as an iCalendar data file. The filename will be something like “schedule.ics”. This type of file is the standard calendar import file, and can be used with Android, iPhone, Blackberry and other smart devices. Imagine if each parent had this calendar on their phones and could receive notifications on exchange times. This can definitely reduce friction in your co-parenting situation. See Calendar in the Quick Help section for more information on exporting your calendar to devices.

Track expenses

Even after a divorce, financial arguments can arise. Who pays for dance lessons, school supplies, clothing, medical expenses, and so forth? That’s why we included the expense tracking tool. There are some useful things you can do with this, besides just entering expenses. You can create your own categories, and print expense reports that only show certain categories. You can set a payment percentage for each expense that the other parent has agreed to reimburse. You can also set negative amounts for money that the other parent pays back. See the Quick Help section for instructions on each of these functions.

Keep a journal

Lots of our customers enjoy keeping a journal, just because it helps them store fun memories that they have with their kids. Writing down these experiences makes them much easier to remember later. Of course, the parenting journal can have other uses as well. We cover that more in the chapter on Tracking Your Plan for Renegotiations.
Reaching a Parenting Agreement You Both Like

It can be difficult to sit down with your ex to discuss how you will co-parent your children, but it is something that must be done. The quickest and least expensive way to do this is by meeting on your own. Another option is meeting with a mediator. Or you could start a lengthy court battle by hiring attorneys—this is typically only necessary in highly complex and hostile situations.

This chapter will cover some advice and ideas we have gathered over the years on how to best reach an agreement with someone with whom you may not see eye-to-eye.

Balance the power

Don’t meet at your home or theirs. Make sure that you meet somewhere neutral so that no one is at an advantage. To help prevent unhelpful outbursts of anger or arguments, you could meet in a public place like a library, park, or restaurant.

Leave the skeletons in the closet. Don’t use the other parent’s weaknesses and failings as ammunition. Agree to focus only on how you want things to work out in the future, not how they have happened in the past.

Build on common ground

Start your discussion at the easy-to-agree points and work forward from there. The one thing all parents can agree on is that they both love the kids. Your mutual desire for their well-being is the best foundation to build your agreement on.

Next, find stipulations in the software that you both can agree on without any argument. Here are some examples of “low-conflict” provisions:

- Requiring the child to wear a seat belt whenever they are in either parents' car
- Neither parent will speak negatively about the other parent in front of the children
- A parent must notify the other parent if she/he applies for a passport for the child
- No smoking or drinking alcohol around the child, etc.

Be businesslike

It can help to imagine the other parent as though they were a business associate. This can help you to limit emotional outbursts, listen more attentively, and compromise more reasonably.
When you meet, set an agenda of the items you want to cover, and have documents printed out that you can discuss. Most importantly, expect to successfully reach some kind of agreement. Believing that you and the other parent can cooperate on a parenting plan will help you have the right attitude throughout the process.

**Items to cover**

When creating an agenda, here are some topics to keep in mind:

- Transportation to and from exchanges
- Resolving disputes and making changes to the plan
- Changing parenting time
- Handling extra expenses for the child
- Traveling with the child
- Child care expenses

Having these topics covered in your parenting provisions makes it easier to implement and follow the parenting plan after negotiations.

**Be specific**

If you and the other parent get along famously, and will get along forever, then this section (and much of this book) doesn’t apply in your situation. To prevent future problems, the provisions in your plan should be as specific as possible. This means leaving little room for misinterpretation.

Which of these two provisions will be easier to interpret? Which will provide more protection for your kids?

“Each parent shall notify the other well in advance of vacation plans.”

or

“A vacationing parent must notify the other parent a minimum of 30 days before the vacation. The other parent has 10 days to respond if there is a problem with the schedule. Vacations shall not last longer than 7 days each and shall not amount to more than 21 days in a year. The vacationing parent must provide a travel itinerary, copies of any airline tickets, and an address and phone number where the children can be reached at all times. Travel shall not exceed 750 miles or leave the 48 contiguous United States without written approval from the other parent.”
Assisting with Mediation

In mediation, both parents sit down with a neutral third person and decide the terms and conditions of the parenting agreement. Before you go, you should prepare and organize your thoughts so you can explain your ideas clearly and effectively.

Many parents meet several times in mediation before they work out an agreement. You can use the software during the 3 main stages of mediation: preparation, presentation, and perfecting.

*Preparation* is the work you do on your own before the first mediation session.

*Presentation* involves sharing your ideas, concerns, and plans at mediation.

*Perfecting* is the process of making changes and concessions in your plan, then returning to mediation and presenting the revised agreement.

**Preparation**

Start by looking through the *Schedule Templates* that are included in the software under *Repeating Schedules*. As you do so, write down what factors are important for you in your schedule. This helps you realize where you stand with regard to spending time with your children, and will help you reach an agreement faster.

Next, go to the *Parenting Plan* tab and read each item carefully (you can always read more by clicking the + button next to each title). As you look through the provisions, think about your unique circumstances and come up with some personal provisions you think will help make the parenting plan work. Think specifically about any problem areas so that you and the other parent can find some solutions.

Once you have organized your thoughts and opinions on the schedule and parenting provisions, you are ready to create some documents to present at mediation.

**Schedules: show and tell**

To prepare for a successful mediation session, create a few schedules to present at the meeting. With different options to show the other parent, you can quickly determine which one is most appealing to you both. You can also show each parent's timeshare percentage from each parent schedule.

Once you have chosen the best schedule, the other parent or mediator may suggest additional changes. As long as the changes are reasonable, you can make notes directly on the printed calendar, and then make the changes in the software for the newly negotiated schedule.
Create each schedule as a separate file in the software using the *Save As* function. This allows you to keep working on the option that was chosen at mediation. Simply re-open the file and make the needed changes using the scheduling tools. You can then print and bring the revised schedule to the next mediation, or save it as a PDF and e-mail it to the mediator and/or other parent.

**Propose parenting provisions**

Along with showing sample schedules, you can prepare a list of parenting provisions you want in the agreement. Custody X Change includes a list of provisions to choose from. These will also prompt you to think of additional provisions that are unique to your case. Simply print off the list of provisions so you can discuss them during mediation.

It is useful to divide the list of provisions into “needs” (items that you are not flexible about) and “wants” (items that would be nice but are negotiable). It is always easiest to make a decision when the options are clearly stated and available for both parties to look over. If you have several options that are acceptable to you, you can be more flexible in your negotiations.

After the first mediation meeting, you may think of additional provisions to put in the agreement, or you may want to make some wording changes. Just go back to the document in the software and add the provisions or you can export the information to Word and make whatever changes you want.

**Documentation – do it!**

Use the documents from the program to present your information in an organized manner. You can organize the documents however you want. For example, you can show entire plans together, or you can show multiple examples of each part of the plan.

Some applicable documents that you can print from the program include: Calendar version of the parenting time schedule, written report of the parenting time schedule, written report of the custody provisions and the entire agreement, and timeshare percentage report that shows the exact time each parent has the children.

You can print copies of these documents so that the other parent and the mediator can actually see what you’re explaining when you talk about your parenting plans. The other parent can even take some of your plans home to think about it and write down any questions. This allows you and the other parent to reach an agreement more quickly during mediation sessions.
All of these documents can be printed directly from the software or they can be exported to Word, Excel, and PDF. Exporting them to Word allows you to make some personal changes to your plans so you can present exactly what you want. See the Quick Help section for more information on how to prepare these documents.

**Perfecting your plan**

So, you have presented your ideas, documents, and samples at mediation. Now it’s time to return to the software and make final revisions. Files in Custody X Change are always editable. There’s no need to start over from scratch, you can add and remove parenting provisions with a few clicks. You can also adjust visitation time and make schedule changes that will instantly apply to your entire schedule.

**Present new plan options**

When you and the other parent meet again for mediation, you will have some new plan options to present that have the changes from the other parent, plus any changes you want. This will help you reach an agreement more quickly because you don’t have to spend hours rewriting plans. Instead, you make a few changes in the software and print out your new plans.

**Reaching a final agreement**

The goal of mediation is for you to come away with a custody agreement that both parents support. You can facilitate this process by being prepared and organized for your meetings. This will allow you to focus on the issues surrounding parenting time and come up with an agreement you both like.

Once you have reached an agreement, you can use the parenting plan directly from the software as a legal document. Both parents can sign the plan, and you can have it recognized as official.
Working with an Attorney

If you decide to work with an attorney to handle your case, you can stay involved by using the software to do one of the following:

✓ Show your attorney sample parenting plans and explain what you want in your plan
✓ Save money in legal fees by creating part of your parenting plan yourself
✓ Work with your attorney to prepare for court
✓ Track your actual time to make sure the plan is being followed, give the tracking documents to your attorney so you can make modifications to your plan
✓ Calculate the timeshare percentage to make sure that you are paying the right amount of child support
✓ Provide visual calendars and documents to the other parent so that both of you are on the same page concerning your plan

Since you are the one who is actually involved in your custody situation, you want to do everything in your power to make sure that your parenting plan works. Don’t allow your attorney to run away with your case and make it more adversarial than necessary.

Finding an attorney

Usually it is best to ask for referrals from friends or family when looking for a lawyer. You can also contact your local bar organization. Try to find someone who has experience in family or matrimonial law, but is not known for being a “bulldog” lawyer. Getting a highly contentious lawyer may seem like a good option, but often court cases take on a life of their own. You may end up spending a lot more time, energy and money on a custody battle than you need to.

When first meeting with an attorney, make a list of questions to ask them. Include questions about their fee, how long they predict it will take to settle, and what specialized experience they have. You can also bring an example schedule and plan from Custody X Change to show them what you want to have happen. This will help them see that you know what you want and that you aren’t going to take a backseat in the legal process.

The next chapter covers how to best prepare for a custody hearing, whether you choose to work with an attorney or represent yourself (pro se).
Preparing for Court

If you and the other parent are not able to work out a parenting plan together, you will need to go to court and present your plan to a judge. In court, you or your attorney and the other parent will both show your proposed custody agreement and explain why it is in the best interest of the child. The judge will then decide which plan to accept.

Custody X Change can help you prepare and present a plan in court so that the judge understands how your plan benefits your child. You can use Custody X Change when representing yourself and when working with an attorney to make sure your plan is the one the court chooses.

Representing yourself (pro se)

Though it can be scary to represent yourself in court, many parents have found that it goes smoother when they use Custody X Change to prepare, organize, and present your custody information to the judge. The reports and documents from the software will help the judge see why your plan is the best one for your child.

The software guides you through the process of making a thorough parenting plan. Begin by making a parenting time schedule that has a residential schedule, holiday schedule, school breaks, vacation schedules, and special events. Then you can add important custody stipulations and provisions to your agreement.

In court, you must explain your custody agreement clearly and succinctly. Simply follow the format of the printed agreement as you present your plan. Your ideas on this important matter will be contained and organized so your presentation will be easy to follow.

Print the documents out from the software and show them to the judge. This will help the judge understand your parenting plan. Here are some ideas of how you can use the documents available in the software when presenting your case:

- Show the court a visual calendar with each parent's time clearly marked
- Explain your parenting time schedule using a report that shows the breakdown of the timeshare percentage of each parent
- Use the report of your entire plan to help the judge see how it benefits your child
- Give copies of your plan to the other parent and the judge while you present
Working with an attorney

If you are working with an attorney, you can still use Custody X Change to help with court. Even though you won’t be the one who shows your plan to the judge, you’ll be working with your attorney to present the plan you want.

It’s an advantage to be proactive when working with your lawyer so that he or she understands what kind of custody agreement you want. Use Custody X Change as a tool for communicating your ideas to your attorney. This allows your attorney to present a precise agreement to the court.

You are the one who understands your custody situation the best. This means that you need to stay actively involved in the process of creating a parenting plan, even if you have an attorney working for you.

Conclusion

If at all possible, most parents prefer to settle out of court. However, if you are in a contentious situation, going before a judge may be your only option. Many parents find that using Custody X Change during their custody hearing makes the process go more smoothly.

Many judges have reacted very positively when presented with parenting plans made with our software. It can never hurt to be prepared, organized, and confident when you step into the courtroom.
Tracking Your Plan for Renegotiations

Things change. A schedule and agreement that worked for your infant will change when she’s a toddler, and again when she goes to school. And again and again, until she’s all grown up. When things change, it is time to renegotiate your agreement. Besides your child’s ever-changing needs, there are other changes that may come up. What if one of the parents gets a job further away and has to move? What if a disability causes a decrease in income? What if one parent no longer holds up their end of the agreement?

Many of these situations can’t be predicted or avoided. However, you can use the tracking tools in Custody X Change to make sure that the other parent is holding up their end of the agreement. There are three main areas that you can track – the schedule, the parenting plan, and expenses.

Tracking actual time

It’s frustrating when you have a parenting plan in place and the other parent is repeatedly late in dropping off the children, continually misses visitation or makes last minutes changes to the schedule. If the schedule is not being followed, this is a good reason to renegotiate the schedule to something more realistic for each parent.

The software makes this easy using a feature called actual time. The actual time window shows a copy of your custody calendar, only it is entirely editable. If the other parent is an hour late, you can click on the exchange time for that day and drag it forward an hour. Every time you make one of these edits, it automatically adds an incident to the list on the right. You can label each incident with an explanation of why it is there. As incidents stack up, you have more and more reasons to renegotiate your plan.

Or, consider a situation where the other parent is avoiding parenting time or missing scheduled visitations. This extra parenting time should be recorded in the software. You can then print out a timeshare difference report that shows the actual breakdown of time with each parent. It compares what was agreed upon with the actual timeshare. It highlights any differences and
discrepancies. This document can be helpful in mediation, court, or face-to-face with the other parent.

Keep in mind that while the information you record can be used as evidence in court, it is still your word against theirs, unless you have a third party involved in recording these incidents.

**Parenting journal**

Keeping a parenting journal is a surprisingly helpful tool that you have at your disposal. Not only does it help you keep records of great moments with your kids, but you can use it to record how well your parenting agreement is being followed.

Here’s a simple example. In your parenting agreement, you added a stipulation that there would be no smoking around the kids. At every exchange, your kids come back smelling like second-hand smoke. The kids complain about the other parent’s smelly habit. You’ve asked the other parent politely, but the behavior hasn’t stopped. So you decide that the plan may need to be renegotiated. Because of the other party’s belligerence, the case ends up in court.

When you arrive for the hearing, you have a few months of journal entries on hand—recording all the times your children have complained, as well as all the requests you have made to the other parent. The other parent hasn’t been keeping a parenting journal. You have exact dates, exact words used, and a whole lot more credibility. Who do you think will get the plan changed in their favor?

Keeping a journal in the software is a pretty simple task. Just go to the Journal & Expenses tab and start typing in the big box. This will start an entry for the current day. If you need to “go back in time” and record an entry for a previous day, click the Select Entry Date button and choose the correct date. Every time you add an entry, it is added to the list on the right side of the screen. These are ordered by date, and can be printed off using the Journal Report tool.

**Expense tracker**

Many arguments during and after a marriage are connected with finances. Who pays how much for what? It is so easy to get caught up in the cycle of “he said, she said” in money matters.

Often, a parenting plan will include information about how expenses, especially those related to medical, educational, and childcare will be split up. Even if one parent is paying child support, these expenses can be included in addition to those payments. You can keep track of each expense in the software. They can be sorted and printed out by date or by category. The
default categories are Clothes, Medical and School, although you can add as many custom categories as you need.

Each expense has a box asking for a reimbursement percentage. This should be the amount that the other parent has agreed to pay. For example, if you agreed that all medical costs would be split halfway, you would put 50% in this box. Then when you print your expense report, it will show the total expenses, as well as the dollar amount that the other parent owes.

You can also use the expense tracker to show whether you are receiving the correct amount of child support or not. Every time you receive a child support check, you can enter it in the expense tracker as a negative amount. Then you can track all the expenses related to raising your children. This includes feeding them, clothing them, transporting them, and anything else that child support is supposed to cover. Then at the end of the month, you can print out an expense report that shows that you spend much more on your children than you receive in child support. Of course, there will always be some minor discrepancies between what you spend and what you receive, so this method should only be used in situations where you truly feel you are receiving too little support.

### Track a temporary agreement

If you have a temporary agreement in place, it is a good idea to track it so you know how well it is working. Use the software to keep track of how well each parent follows the schedule and write notes about what is and isn't working with the plan.

When it's time to make a permanent plan, you will have all the information you need to make adjustments and improvements, so you can create the best plan for your situation.
Calculations and Child Support

You can use the software to ensure that child support payments reflect the reality of your custody situation. Here are some tips on calculating the correct amounts.

Almost every state uses at least these two factors to calculate child support:

- How much time each parent has with the child
- How much income each parent has

Generally speaking, the parent with the least amount of time with the children pays child support to the parent who has more time.

The amount of time you have with your children is calculated as the:

- Timeshare percentage that shows the percentage of time each parent has the children
- Overnight timeshare percentage which shows the percentage of overnights each parent has the children

To get a correct child support calculation, you need to have the right timeshare percentage. Your payments may change just by having the right timeshare percentage. And, if they don’t, you can take steps to increase your timeshare percentage so your payments are lower.

**Calculate your timeshare percentage**

First, you need to know your state’s formula for calculating child support so you know what type of timeshare percentage to calculate. Your state may want the parenting timeshare (also called the visitation timeshare) or the overnight timeshare.

Once you know what numbers you need, you can simply look in the software. You can also export a timeshare report if you need a very detailed readout. We recommend trying a few different schedule variations and seeing if any of them will affect child support either way.

The chapter, *Creating a Balanced Schedule*, covers some ways to make sure that the timeshare is accurate and fair. If you feel your current schedule doesn’t accurately reflect your parenting time, look there for some helpful tips.

Need help with the calculations? See *Calculations* in the Quick Help section of this book.
Quick Help

Calendar

1. Schedules Tab – These are tools for building your custody schedule. Each of these tools has its own section within the Quick Help pages.
2. Print – You can view, print, or save a PDF version of your calendar.
3. Move backward and forward by month.
4. Move backward and forward by year.
5. This shows the timeshare percentage for each parent. For more information on the Settings and Report features, see Calculations.
6. You can export your calendar to various calendaring programs such as Google calendar, or to a device like an iPhone or Blackberry. See Export Calendar
7. This is the calendar view. Time with the father is in blue, time with the mother is in pink, and 3rd-party (neutral) time is shown in gray.
1. Use Template – This brings up a window with common schedules. You can choose schedules that repeat, every week, every other week, every month and more. Once you have found the closest template, you can click Edit and make adjustments to it.

2. Start from Scratch – This option is for users who know exactly what they want. You get to choose every aspect of the schedule and start from a blank slate as far as visitation times.

3. Move day – This button shifts the schedule to the right by one day every time you click.

4. Move week – In the case of a two-week schedule, it swaps the weeks. If you have more weeks, it shifts things forward by one week when clicked.

5. Making other adjustments – To make adjustments to your schedule, click and drag on the borders between different colored areas. You can use this functionality to adjust existing exchange times. You can also click anywhere in the schedule view to add a new visit for a parent or a third party (neutral time). You can also click on a visit to remove it. Right-clicking will show a zoomed-in view of the day that you click. Right-click again to zoom back out.
Seasonal Schedules

1. Starting date – This is when the seasonal schedule goes into effect. It can be an exact date, or a relative monthly date (i.e. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Monday in June)
2. Ending date – This is when the seasonal schedule ceases. The schedule will return to the residential schedule on this day. (To change the exact time when the seasonal schedule starts and ends, go to the File menu, select Preferences, and then click Seasonal Start/End times.)
3. Templates – This brings up a template window for choosing your schedule.
4. Start from scratch – Use this if you want to build a schedule yourself.
5. Move day – This button shifts the schedule to the right by one day every time you click.
6. Shift/ swap week – In the case of a two-week schedule, it swaps the weeks. If you have more weeks, it shifts things forward by one week when clicked.
7. Erase schedule – If you no longer want the seasonal schedule as part of your custody agreement, click this to remove it.
8. Make adjustments – Edit times, and add/edit/remove visits. See item #5 on the previous page for more detailed information.
9. You can have up to 4 seasonal schedules throughout the year. Use these tabs to view them. Common uses for seasonal schedules are winter break and summer break. Summer breaks may even have multiple seasonal schedules for different months.
Vacation Time

This function is for adding *non-specific* vacation time to your custody agreement. These are addendums to your visitation schedule and are similar in effect to parenting provisions.

You can select which parents get vacation time, how long the vacation may be (in days or weeks), and how many times a year the parent may take the kids on vacation.

The notification section states how long in advance the parent going on vacation must notify the other parent.

Time options: by checking these boxes, you indicate that non-specific vacation time may be used during these parts of the schedule.

As vacation time is not date specific, it will not appear on the calendar. It will appear in the Parenting Plan document.
1. Break editor – This window is used to choose what dates will constitute the first and second halves of longer breaks (as opposed to single-day holidays).
2. Holiday details – Use the checkboxes to select the holidays you’d like to include. The first selector box determines how the holiday will be shared among the parents. The other boxes are used to show when the holiday time will begin (From) and end (To).
3. Consecutive weekends – If one parent gets the kids two weekends in a row, this modifies the schedule to give the other parent custody the next one or two weekends.
4. Add new holiday – Use this to add holidays to the list, such as birthdays, etc.
5. View ideas – Ideas for which holidays to include for kids at certain ages.
One Time Events

1. **Event List** – Here is a chronological list of all one-time events that you have added to your schedule. They will appear with the event name, or the date, if no name was given. By clicking on the event, it will be highlighted in the calendar view. You can edit the name of the event, or click and drag to change its start and end times.

2. **Move months** – Use these arrows to move backward and forward by month.

3. **Move Years** - Use these arrows to move backward and forward by year.

4. **Add/Remove events** – Click anywhere on the calendar view to add an event. Click on an existing event to edit or remove it.

5. If you choose to add or edit an event, it will bring up this window. Choose the correct parent, or neither parent for 3rd-party time. You can use the selector boxes to change the start and end times. You can name the event in the Reason box. Click OK when done.
Export Calendar

When you click the export button in the Calendar or Actual Time tabs, it brings up this window. First, choose which parent’s exchanges to include. Give the calendar a title if you wish.

The From and To boxes are the boundary dates, the calendar file will include all information between these dates, including info for the two selected days.

Once you click the Export Calendar button, you will be able to save the file to computer, or directly to your device if it is plugged in. Perform a web search for your individual device for assistance importing the calendar file. (It will be an.ICS file.)

Calculations

This is the calculations settings window.

You can change whether the calculations shown in the software are done by percentage of hours (Time) or by Overnights. The timeshare report will still show both figures.

The software and the timeshare report will only show calculations for the days included in this date range.

Choose how many decimal points are shown in the software’s percentage calculations (0, 1, or 2)
Parenting Plan

1. Children’s Info – Add your children’s names and birthdates as you’d like them to appear on your parenting plan.
2. Case Info – Enter names for the petitioner (that’s you) the respondent (other parent) and a case number if you have one.
3. Effective Date – This is the date that the agreement will go into effect.
4. Calculation Settings – Choose how you would like timeshare displayed in the document.
5. Document Title – If you need a specific title for the document, you can enter that here.
6. Phrasing options – Choose whether to use legal terms like custody and visitation or not.
7. Include signature section – Check this box to include a section for parents’ signatures.
8. Export plan document – You can preview your agreement, print it out, or save it as a PDF. If you need to make fine-tune adjustments, you can export it to Word and make edits there.
9. Add, remove, and edit provisions – Use the plus(+) and minus(-) icons show and hide the various provisions and categories. Select the provisions you would like to include using the radio buttons or check boxes next to the text. Some provisions have small text boxes that require input from the user. You can type in custom provisions in the boxes labeled Other. Everything you select will appear in your final document, along with the schedule that you created in the Calendar tab.
Journal & Expenses

1. Select date – This button selects the date for the current entry and expenses.
2. Dates – Select the date range for your journal or expense report. Default is all entries.
3. Journal report – View, export, or print a listing of all entries in the selected date range.
4. Expense report – Print or export your expense report (PDF, Word, Excel sheet)
5. Author – Choose the author name to use. Defaults to name of registered user.
6. Categories – Choose which expense categories will be included in the expense report.
7. Entry box – Type your journal entry for the current date here. Use Ctrl+C to copy and Ctrl+V to paste text in this field. Entries may be as long as necessary.
8. Entries list – All of your entries, ordered by date. Select an entry to edit it.
9. Expense details – Enter an expense amount, description. (Use negative amounts for incoming payments) Choose a category, or simply start typing to create a new one. The reimbursement percentage is how much the other parent has agreed to pay for this expense.
10. Expenses list – List of dates with expenses attached. Select an item to view or edit it.
Actual Time

1. Print Actual Time calendar – You can view, print, or export this calendar as a PDF.
2. Export actual time calendar – Send your modified calendar to a smartphone or software.
3. Time Difference Report – This report details all actual-time incidents and gives a comparison between the planned timeshare and what actually happens.
4. Event list – This is a list of all incidents recorded. Click an event to edit it on the calendar.
5. Difference percentages – These additional percentages show the discrepancy between the planned parenting schedule and what has actually taken place, as you record it.
6. Add/remove event – Click anywhere on the calendar view to add an event. Click on an existing even to edit or remove it.
7. If you choose to add or edit an event, it will bring up this window. Enter in the correct information, give a reason for the incident, and click OK when finished.
### Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual Time</td>
<td>In the software, this refers to the way the schedule is actually carried out. The planned schedule is not always followed perfectly, and in some cases it is totally ignored. Actual time is used to record the actual parenting time that each parent has with the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Custody</td>
<td>In sole custody, one parent has all decision making power. This doesn’t mean the other parent doesn’t get to see the child. But the parent with sole custody does have the power to schedule said visitations. In joint custody, both parents must agree on custody issues mutually. Typically the child will spend equal time with each parent, or some other schedule will be implemented. Split custody means that the children are separated-some go with one parent, some go with the other. Some states differentiate between legal and physical custody. Legal custody refers to decision-making power for the child, while physical custody means the actual physical care and living arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Parenting</td>
<td>Whether parents are divorced, separated, or unmarried, co-parenting is the shared responsibility of raising children when the two parents are no longer in a romantic relationship and no longer living together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>An alternative to litigation, mediation is when two divorced parents meet with a neutral third party to discuss, and ultimately agree upon, a parenting plan and custody agreement for their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time Events</td>
<td>In the software, this refers to events that do not repeat. They may be added for events that are not part of the normal residential schedule, but still need to be part of the custody schedule. One-time events take precedence over all other scheduled items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overnights</td>
<td>Overnights are how many states measure parenting timeshare. This refers to the amount of nights in a year that the child spends at a certain parents house. Therefore it usually appears as a fraction, i.e. 160/365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Plan</td>
<td>A legal document, agreed upon by both parties, that defines how children will be cared for and raised. It addresses decision-making, finances, healthcare and other topics. It also usually includes a visitation schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions</td>
<td>Provisions are individual items in a parenting plan that each address some aspect of the co-parenting arrangement. A plan may have few or many provisions, and they may be generic or specific, depending on the needs of the custody situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renegotiation</td>
<td>The process of reevaluating, revising, and changing a parenting agreement. Renegotiations are usually initiated by a change in a parent’s location or occupation, a child’s developmental needs, or by failure to follow the plan currently set forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating Schedule</td>
<td>The basic custody schedule that determines what time a child spends with each parent. It may repeat on a daily, weekly, monthly basis. See <em>residential schedule</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Schedule</td>
<td>Another term for a repeating schedule. This is the basic visitation schedule that shows where and with whom a child will be living. It may include additions such as holidays, vacation time, seasonal changes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Schedule</td>
<td>When the residential schedule changes for a period of time each year, it is a seasonal schedule change. The most common example is a change in the schedule during summer break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipulations</td>
<td><em>See provisions.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeshare</td>
<td>The amount of time, typically in a percentage or fraction, that each parent has custody of the child over a given period of time. The software provides this figure in one of two ways: by a percentage based on total hours, or overnights, in a given time frame (usually one year).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitation</td>
<td>This term is usually applied in a sole physically custody situation, when the non-custodial parent is allowed to visit or spend time with the child. Can also refer to a custody schedule in general.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources by State

Custody Forms and Laws

Alabama
HTTP://EFORMS.ALACOURT.GOV/CHILD%20SUPPORT%20FORMS/FORMS/ALLITEMS.ASPX

Alaska
HTTP://WWW.CSED.STATE.AK.US/FORMS/FORMS.ASP
HTTP://WWW.TOUCHNGO.COM/GLCNTR/AKSTATS/STATUTES/Title25.HTM

Arizona
HTTP://WWW.SUPERIORCOURT.MARICOPA.GOV/SUPERIORCOURT/SELF-SERVICECENTER/FORMS/FAMILYCOURT/
HTTP://WWW.KEYTLAW.COM/AZ/ARS/ARSTITLE25.HTM

Arkansas
HTTP://WWW.DFA.ARKANSAS.GOV/OFFICES/CHILDSUPORT/RESOURCES/PAGES/CHILDSUPORTCHARTS.ASPX
HTTP://ARKANSASCOALITIONFORJUVENILEJUSTICE.ARKANSAS.GOV/%5CIMAGES%5CSTORIES%5CSTLUTE%209.PDF

California
HTTP://WWW.CHILDSUP.CA.GOV/RESOURCES/FORMS.ASPX
HTTP://WWW.LEGINFO.CA.GOV/CGI-BIN/CALAWQUERY?CODESECTION=FAM&CODEBODY=&HITS=20

Colorado
HTTP://WWW.BRETTWMARTIN.COM/COMPONENT/CONTENT/ARTICLE/200-REFERENCE-MATERIAL/787-CRS-14-10-115-COLORADO-CHILD-SUPPORT-GUIDELINES

Connecticut
HTTP://WWW.CT.GOV/DSS/CWP/VIEW.ASP?A=2353&Q=305184
HTTP://WWW.JUD.CT.GOV/LAWLIB/LAW/DIVORCE.HTM

Delaware
HTTP://WWW.DHSS.DELAWARE.GOV/DCSE/FORMS.HTML
HTTP://DELCODE.DELAWARE.GOV/TITLE13/INDEX.SHTML

Florida
HTTP://DOR.MYFLORIDA.COM/DOR/CHILD_SUPPORT/APPLY.HTML
HTTP://WWW.LEG.STATE.FL.US/STATUTES/INDEX.CFM?APP_MODE=DISPLAY_INDEX&Aamp;TITLE_REQUEST=XLIII#TITLEXLI

Georgia
HTTP://DCSS.DHS.GEORGIA.GOV/APPLICATION-SERVICES
HTTP://WWW.LEXISNEXIS.COM/HOTTOPICS/GACODE/DEFAULT.ASP
Hawaii
HTTP://HAWAII.GOV/AG/CSEA/QUICKLINKS/FORMS/
HTTP://LRBHAWAII.INFO/LRBRPTS/01/FAMLAW.PDF

Idaho
HTTP://WWW.HEALTHANDWELFARE.IDAHO.GOV/CHILDREN/CHILD_SUPPORT/FORMS/TABID/394/DEFAULT.ASPX
HTTP://LEGISLATURE.IDAHO.GOV/IDSTAT/TITLE32/T32.HTM

Illinois
HTTP://WWW.STATE.IL.US/DCFS/LIBRARY/COM_COMMUNICATIONS_FORMS.SHTML
HTTP://WWW.ILGA.GOV/LEGISLATION/ILCS/ILCS2.ASP?CHAPTERID=59

Indiana
HTTP://WWW.IN.GOV/JUDICIARY/SELFSERVICE/2333.HTM
HTTP://WWW.AI.ORG/LEGISLATIVE/IC/CODE/TITLE31/INDEX.HTML

Iowa
HTTP://WWW.IOWACOURTS.GOV/COURT_RULES_AND_FORMS/
HTTPS://WWW.LEGIS.IOWA.GOV/IOWALAW/STATUTORYLAW.ASPX

Kansas
HTTP://WWW.KSCOURTS.ORG/PROGRAMS/PARENTING-PLANNING/DEFAULT.ASPX
HTTP://KSLEGISLATURE.ORG/LI/B2011_12/STATUTE/023_000_0000 CHAPTER/

Kentucky
HTTP://CHFS.KY.GOV/FORMS/DEFAULT.HTM
HTTP://LRC.KY.GOV/KRS/TITLES.HTM

Louisiana
HTTP://DSS.LOUISIANA.GOV/INDEX.CFM?MD=PAGEBUILDER&TMP=HOME&PID=137
HTTP://WWW.LEGIS.LA.GOV/LEGIS/LAWS_TOC.ASPX?FOLDER=67&LEVEL=PARENT

Maine
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.ME.US/FEES_FORMS/FORMS/INDEX.SHTML#FM
HTTP://JANUS.STATE.ME.US/LEGIS/STATUTES/19-A/TITLE19-ACH0SEC0.HTML

Maryland
HTTP://WWW.MDCOURTS.GOV/FAMILY/FORMSINDEX.HTML
HTTP://LAW.JUSTIA.COM/CODES/MARYLAND/2010/FAMILY-LAW/

Massachusetts
HTTP://WWW.LAWLIB.STATE.MA.US/SUBJECT/FORMS/INDEX.HTML
HTTP://WWW.MASS.GOV/LEGIS/LAWS/MGL/GL-209B-TOC.HTM

Michigan
HTTP://COURTS.MI.GOV/ADMINISTRATION/SCAO/FORMS/PAGES/DOMESTIC-RELATIONS.ASPX
HTTP://WWW.LEGISLATURE.MI.GOV/(S3n5q0d45wmztwx3lqmaf2045))/MILEG.ASPX?PAGE=GetObject&OBJECTNAME=MCL-CHAP722
Minnesota
HTTP://WWW.MNCOURTS.GOV/DEFAULT.ASPX?PAGE=513&CATEGORY=42
HTTPS://WWW.REVISOR.LEG STATE.MN.US/STATUTES/?ID=518

Mississippi
HTTP://WWW.MDHS.STATE.MS.US/CSE.HTML
HTTP://WWW.MSCODE.COM/FREE/STATUTES/43/019/0101.HTM

Missouri
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.MO.GOV/PAGE.JSP?ID=525
HTTP://WWW.MOGA.MO.GOV/STATUTES/C400-499/4520000375.HTM

Montana
HTTP:// COURTS.MT.GOV/LIBRARY/TOPIC/CHILDCUSTODY.MCPX
HTTP://DATA.OPI.MT.GOV/BILLS/MCA_TOC/40.HTM

Nebraska
HTTP://SUPREMECOURT.NE.GOV/5471/PARENT-AND-DIVORCE-INFORMATION
HTTP://UNIWEB.LEGISLATURE.NE.GOV/LAWS/BROWSE-CHAPTERS.PHP?CHAPTER=43

Nevada
HTTP://WWW.CLARKCOUNTYNV.GOV/DEPTS/DISTRICT_ATTORNEY/FS/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX
HTTP://WWW.LEG.STATE.NV.US/NRS/INDEX.CFM

New Hampshire
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.NH.US/SUPERIOR/SELFHELP/DIVORCEFORMS.HTM
HTTP://WWW.GENCOURT.STATE.NH.US/RSA/HTML/NHTOC/NHTOC-XLIII.HTM

New Jersey
HTTP://WWW.JUDICIARY.STATE.NJ.US/FORMS.HTM

New Mexico
HTTP://NMSUPERECOURT.NMCOURTS.GOV/LEGAL-FORMS/PDFS/DistDR/4A-205.PDF
HTTP://WWW.HSD.STATE.NM.US/CSED/GUIDELINES.HTML

New York
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.NY.US/COURTHELP/FORMS.HTML
HTTP://PUBLIC.LEGINFO.STATE.NY.US/LAWSSEAF.CGI?QUERYTYPE=LAWS+&QUERYDATA=@LLDOM+&LIST=LAWS+&BROWSER=+&TOKEN=25290072+&TARGET=VIEW

North Carolina
HTTP://WWW.AOC.STATE.NC.US/WWW/PUBLIC/COURTS/MECK/DISK01/CUSTODY.HTML
HTTP://WWW.NCGA.STATE.NC.US/GASCRIPSTS/STATUTES/STATUTESTOC.PL?CHAPTER=0050
North Dakota
HTTP://WWW.NDCOURTS.GOV/COURT/FORMS/DIVORCE/INSTRUCTIONS.HTM
HTTP://WWW.LEGIS.ND.GOV/CENCODE/T14.HTML

Ohio
HTTP://WWW.FRANKLINCOUNTYOHIO.GOV/CLERK/DRFAQ.CFM
HTTP://CODES.OHIO.GOV/ORC/31

Oklahoma
HTTP://WWW.OSCN.NET/STATIC/FORMS/START.ASP
HTTP://WWW.OKLEGISLATURE.GOV/OSSTATUSTITLE.HTML

Oregon
HTTP://COURTS.OREGON.GOV/OJD/OSCA/CPSD/COURTIMPROVEMENT/FAMILYLAW/FAMILYLAWFORMSPAGE
HTTP://WWW.LEG.STATE.OR.US/ORS/ORSTC.HTM

Pennsylvania
HTTP://WWW.WARRENFORESTCOURT.ORG/DOWNLOAD/FORMS
HTTP://WWW.LEGIS.STATE.PA.US/WU01/LI/LI/CT/PDF/23/23.PDF

Rhode Island
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.RI.GOV/JUDICIALRECORDSCENTER/PAGES/REQUEST%20FORMS.ASPX
HTTP://WWW.RILIN.STATE.RI.US/STATUTES/TITLE15/INDEX.HTM

South Carolina
HTTP://WWW.JUDICIAL.STATE.SC.US/FORMS/INDEXSRLDIVORCEPACKET.CFM
HTTP://WWW.SCSTATEHOUSE.GOV/CODE/T20C003.PHP

South Dakota
HTTP://WWW.SDJUDICIAL.COM/FORMS/PROSEDIVORCE.ASPX

Tennessee
HTTP://WWW.TN.GOV/HUMANSERV/FORMS/FORMS.HTML
HTTP://MEMPHISDIVORCE.COM/RESOURCES/STATUTES/GENERAL-DIVORCE-STATUTE-36-3-701/

Texas
HTTP://WWW.TEXASLAWHELP.ORG/DOCUMENTS/CLUSTERS/TX/525/ENGLISH/TEXASWITH.SHTML
HTTP://WWW.STATUTES.LEGIS.STATE.TX.US/

Utah
HTTP://WWW.UTCOURTS.GOV/OCAP/UTAH/DIVORCE/
HTTP://LE.UTAH.GOV/UtahCode/section.jsp?code=30-3

Vermont
HTTP://WWW.VERMONTJUDICIARY.ORG/MASTERPAGES/COURT-FORMS-FAMILY-ALL.ASPX
Virginia
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.VA.US/FORMS/HOME.HTML
HTTP://LEG1.STATE.VA.US/CGI-BIN/LEGP504.EXE?000+COD+TOC

Washington
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.WA.GOV/FORMS/?FA=FORMS.ATTRIBUTE&FORMID=13
HTTP://APPS.LEG.WA.GOV/RCW/DEFAULT.ASPX?CITE=26

West Virginia
HTTP://WWW.COURTSWV.GOV/LOWER-COURTS/FAMILY-FORMS/INDEX-FAMILY-FORMS.HTML
HTTP://WWW.LEGIS.STATE.WV.US/WVCODE/CODE.CFM?CHAP=48&AMP;ART=1

Wisconsin
HTTPS://MYFORMS.WICOURTS.GOV/
HTTP://WSLL.STATE.WI.US/TOPIC/FAMILYLAW/CHILDCUSTODY.HTML

Wyoming
HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.WY.US/DANDCS.ASPX
HTTP://LEGISWEB.STATE.WY.US/STATUTES/STATUTES.ASPX?FILE=TITLES/TITLE20/TITLE20.HTM
Further Reading

Here are some of the books that we have found helpful on custody and related subjects. We recommend reading them if you have the time and inclination.

Families Apart: Ten Keys to Successful Co-Parenting
by Melinda Blau

Building a Parenting Agreement that Works: Child Custody Agreements Step by Step
by Mimi Lyster Zemmelman

Custody Chaos, Personal Peace: Sharing Custody with an Ex Who Drives You Crazy
by Jeffrey P. Wittmann

The Best Parent is Both Parents: A Guide to Shared Parenting in the 21st Century
edited by David L. Levy