

## Medical, Mental Health, Dental, and Vision Care

### **Basic information:**

When parents live close to each other and share the legal authority to make their children's healthcare decisions, they often find it easy to work out who will provide services, which parent will take the children for regular check-ups, and where to take children if there is an emergency. If parents live far apart, however, it might make more sense for your children to become established with separate care providers near each parent's home. If only one parent has the legal authority to make healthcare decisions, then that parent will need a medical release from the other parent to get your children treated in an emergency. If your children will have duplicate health care providers, be sure to exchange names, addresses, phone numbers, and releases among the separate providers so they can share records and information.

You will also need to specify how any special medical, dental, or vision care needs, such as hospitalization, surgery, medication, or experimental treatment, will be met. Most parents who share legal custody (or joint custody in states that do not differentiate between legal and physical custody) require parents to discuss and agree before allowing this level of treatment.

### **Things to think about:**

Some children have medical or physical conditions (such as diabetes, a physical disability, poor vision, or periodontal disease) that require attention for months, years, or even the rest of their lives. In these situations, you must decide whether medications, physical supports, or enhancements (such as crutches or prosthetics) will be kept in each home or will travel with the children.

Clearly state how much authority each parent has to seek treatment in a medical emergency. If the children spend a fair amount of time with both of you, you will probably want to allow either parent to obtain emergency treatment without first consulting the other. If you choose to restrict a parent's authority to seek emergency treatment, the parent who must make, or be consulted about, emergency decisions must bring a medical release during visits with the other parent, or be available at a moment's notice.

- Do your children need regular and ongoing medical, dental or vision care?
- Who will provide medical care for your children?
- Who will have the authority to make decisions about your children's medical care? (Both parents? Either parent? The parent your child is with at the time care is needed?)
- How you will make sure each parent has any/all medications your children take
- How you will exchange important medical information (every cold and scrape? only major illnesses and accidents?), and
- Who will take the children for their regular checkups.

### **Solution Ideas:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Medical, Dental, and Vision Care.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Our children's medical, dental, and vision care providers will be [choose one]:  
\_\_\_\_\_ We will use only the following health care providers:  
\_\_\_\_\_ [medical]  
\_\_\_\_\_ [dental]  
\_\_\_\_\_ [vision]

\_\_\_\_\_ We will each choose health care providers. We will exchange names, addresses, phone numbers, and releases so that our providers can share records and information.

\_\_\_\_\_ [parent] will see to it that our children receive their routine care.

\_\_\_\_\_ Our children's special health care needs will be met as follows [specify]:

\_\_\_\_\_ In a medical emergency [choose one]:

\_\_\_\_\_ Either parent may seek medical treatment and must inform the other parent as soon as possible thereafter.

\_\_\_\_\_ Either parent may seek medical treatment, except for the following procedures or interventions:

\_\_\_\_\_ [parent] is the only person who may seek medical treatment.

\_\_\_\_\_ If our children develop an ongoing medical condition or have other special health care concerns, we will assure consistency in their care as follows [choose all that apply]:

\_\_\_\_\_ We will share all medical records.

\_\_\_\_\_ We will include the medications with our children as they travel between our homes.

\_\_\_\_\_ We will each fill all prescriptions and dispense the medications when caring for our children.

\_\_\_\_\_ We will exchange written instructions on needed care.

\_\_\_\_\_ We will each keep whatever physical supports or enhancements our children need in our home.

\_\_\_\_\_ Our children will receive the following dental care [specify]:

\_\_\_\_\_ Our children will receive the following vision care [specify]:

\_\_\_\_\_ We further agree that [specify]: