

## Where Our Children Will Live

### **Basic information:**

Deciding where the children will live can be one of the most important issues you need to address. It can also be one of the hardest. To make any schedule work, you need to be specific and to find ways your children can spend as much time as possible with each parent. All plans, though, should reflect your children's needs for stability, routine, and emotional and physical safety. Remember, that this first agreement doesn't have to be the last. Many parents make changes to their agreements every year or two as their own or their children's needs change.

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

The ages, needs, wishes, and temperaments of your children

- The distance between your homes
- Available transportation
- What you can afford, and
- How well you and the other parent work together

**Negotiation tip:** If you find that you and the other parent cannot reach an agreement on this issue right away, consider creating a plan for "Parent A" and "Parent B". When you are finished, you can come back to this and decide which of you will be Parent A, and which will be Parent B.

**CAUTION!** Be careful if children live much more with one parent than the other. Parents and children might begin to think that the parent children live with more is the "real" parent, and that the other parent is the "fun" parent. It is important that children know both of their parents are "real." Both parents should mix fun activities with the routines of everyday life. Familiar, daily routines often provide openings for conversations about thoughts and feelings. If all visits are filled with activities, the parent and children will have few opportunities to "talk" about what matters, and may drift apart.

### **Solution Ideas:**

#### \_\_\_ One primary residence

Children spend more time with one parent. For example, you could agree that the children live with one parent during the week, and the other parent on weekends or alternating weekends)

#### \_\_\_ Alternating homes

Children spend approximately equal amounts of time with each parent. For example, you could agree that the children alternate weeks, or half-weeks, in each parent's home.

#### \_\_\_ Alternating weekends

This arrangement allows approximately four-six overnights in 28 days (depending on whether a weekend consists of Friday – Sunday or Saturday and Sunday evenings; the days between contacts with the noncustodial parent can be too long for many children-especially younger children; the relationship between the noncustodial parent and child might become less important to the child; the noncustodial parent might become less involved in school or academic/ achievement activities; the custodial parent has little time "off duty."

#### \_\_\_ Alternating weekends, midweek visits/overnight

This arrangement allows four-six overnights in 28 days, and provides the noncustodial parent and child contact at least every seven days. The three-hour visit on Wednesdays can be “rushed” (especially for school-aged children, for example that need time for homework); the transition back into the custodial parent’s home after an overnight each week can be difficult.

### — Bird Nesting

Bird nesting means that the children remain in one home and the parents alternate moving in and out. The parents might have separate homes, sleep at a friend’s house, or stay with a relative. This is not a common arrangement, but it can be especially good for infants or very young children. It requires an unusual degree of coordination and cooperation between the parents and can be expensive if each parent maintains another home. And, you must be clear about who will make decisions about the layout, furnishing, and routines of the shared household.

## Agreement Choices

### # \_\_\_ Where Our Children Will Live.

\_\_\_ Our children will alternate living in each parent's home as follows:

\_\_\_ They will live primarily with \_\_\_\_\_, and will live with \_\_\_\_\_ on:

\_\_\_ Alternating weekends from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ [give days and times if possible]

\_\_\_ During the week on \_\_\_\_\_ [day(s) of the week] from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Overnight

\_\_\_ They will live primarily with \_\_\_\_\_ during the school year, and will live with \_\_\_\_\_ during the summer months.

During the time they are living primarily with one parent, they will live with the other parent on:

\_\_\_ Alternating weekends from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ [give days and times if possible]

\_\_\_ During the week on \_\_\_\_\_ [day(s) of the week] from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Overnight

\_\_\_ The children will live in each parent's home for approximately the same amount of time, and will change homes:

\_\_\_ Every \_\_\_ days

\_\_\_ Every \_\_\_ weeks

\_\_\_ Every \_\_\_ months

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Our children will not live primarily with either parent, but with \_\_\_\_\_ instead. Our children will spend time with \_\_\_\_\_ [parent's name] as follows:

\_\_\_ Alternating weekends from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ [give days and times if possible]

\_\_\_ During the week on \_\_\_\_\_ [day(s) of the week] from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Overnight

And with \_\_\_\_\_ [parent's name] as follows:

\_\_\_ Alternating weekends from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ [give days and times if possible]

\_\_\_ During the week on \_\_\_\_\_ [day(s) of the week] from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Overnight

\_\_\_ Our children will live in one home, and each parent will take turns living there:

