

Guidelines for Parallel Parenting Memos

Parallel parenting is a temporary relational tool utilized between parents who are having difficulty communicating due to sudden life stressors. The best interest of the child is to see healthy mature responses between parents through co-parenting after a time of parallel parenting. This temporary parenting style is implemented when circumstances such as death in the family, chronic illness crisis, terminal illness, serious injury, incarceration, long distant parenting, loss of a job, moving household, divorce, court proceedings, substance abuse issues, etc. occur. In most circumstances each parent makes all the decisions and does all the parenting when the kids are with them. Schedules are adjusted gradually to become as close to 50/50 in parenting responsibilities. The current parent contract, or court order as possible once again and are laid out in great detail through the courts or through mediation and a notary. Contact between the parties is minimal, utilizing a business approach through memos when communicating more than polite regards and do not involve catching up about personal circumstances. Negotiations from parenting contract or court order are discouraged and used only as needed to benefit child's needs or unavoidable circumstances. They are done through written communication (memos) to lessen emotional reactions and to create mature responses. The memos may be able to become legal documents that can be reviewed by a third party if needed. The end goal of parallel parenting is to become mature co-parents that can interact productively over the life span.

1. Formatting of memos should be business like and based on a standard business memo style.
2. Memos should be presented with a Title/Re: "Schedule Change"
3. Memos should note the date it was written and by whom
4. Statements should be listed as they apply to the circumstance addressing: Who, What, When, Where, Why (not always necessary), How and Response Date as needed in one sentence statements. No further explanations are needed. Item lists (school supplies, menu items, gift lists) can be added after memo content with no other discourse.
5. Both parents should sign and date the memo.
6. Memos should not be signed during exchange of child(ren). This should be done away from children and returned to other parent during next exchange, via e-mail (scan signed document) or mailed to meet deadlines. Memos should not be given to children to give to other parent. Children should not read memos as a standard practice.
7. If one parent refuses to sign, the parent that wrote the memo or third party should date, initial and write "parent refused to sign". No other explanation is needed and should not be added.
8. Memos should be sent or hand delivered through a third party during the initial application of parallel parenting if possible (1 week-1 month depending on circumstance). This will decrease the trigger reactions that people may feel a need to release when experiencing increased life stressors.
9. Third party should receive and deliver memos with no small talk other than greetings and gratitude.
10. All decisions and responses about memos are made by parents not third party.
11. After the third party fades from the relational dynamics the parents apply the same standards avoiding small talk until life stabilizes and co-parenting can be applied cooperatively.
12. All subject matter in the memos should be geared towards Providing, Protecting, and Preparing the child's positive growth. All other topics do not apply to the direct needs of parenting and should be avoided to reduce the possibility of emotional triggers.