



Checklist on Separation Parenting Matters

When you separate there is a great deal of anxiety for all members of the family. It is important for your children that agreement on future care arrangements be reached as soon as possible. We suggest the following action plan to assist in moving forward with the new arrangements. Not all actions will be relevant or appropriate for your family. Please use this checklist as a guide only.

Legal Advice

1. Preferably, prior to separation, you should obtain legal advice from a lawyer experienced in Family Law as to your obligations and responsibilities. You should particularly obtain advice as to what are the best and appropriate future care arrangements for your children.

Communication Issues

2. Establish a communications book (could be internet exchanges) between parents if there are difficulties in direct oral communication in regards to the children – details like health and schooling and extracurricular activities would be matters recorded so that the other parent, at the conclusion of time spent away from the children, would be up to date with care arrangements and issues of concern with the wellbeing of the children.
3. Maintain a private diary of child significant matters and make sure it is a contemporaneous record of the recorded event.
4. Advise the other parent of any injuries suffered by the child/ren whilst in your care, including minor injuries.
5. If a call from a parent seeking to speak with a child is missed, have the child return the call as soon as practicable.
6. Obtain a roster re the children's extra curricular and school activities including training and games. Provide a copy to the other parent.
7. Obtain a calendar and colour code the days when the children are in each parent's care. Put it in a place accessible to the children, for example on the fridge.

8. Return clothing provided by the other parent to the other parent, clean if possible, at the earliest opportunity.
9. Take note of all items the child/ren bring with them to your residence and ensure they take the items with them when they leave.
10. Advise the other parent of the details of all doctor's appointments, referrals and outcomes of all appointments. Prior notice should be given if practicable.
11. Be polite and courteous during all communication including text message, email, fax, communication book and telephone.
12. Acknowledge receipt of any and all communication with the other parent and extended family in relation to the children.
13. Ensure that each parent has a copy of the child/ren's Birth Certificate.
14. Advise the other parent as soon as possible if you are going to run late for changeover. Make every endeavour to keep to the timetable for collection and return of the child/ren to the other parent but remember sometimes you need to be flexible and understanding when plans have to be altered.

Counselling

15. If there is difficulty in agreeing upon child care arrangements, contact a Family Relationships Centre or private counsellor to arrange a mediation in relation to parenting matters, with the other parent.
16. You should consider whether you or your children require personal counselling. Various organisations including Centacare run child tailored programs.

Financial

17. Contact Centrelink and ensure that this department has the correct details to use to calculate and make payments, including the child care rebate, family tax benefit and parenting payment, to each parent.
18. If you are unable to agree on the amount of child support to be paid, use the calculator on the Child Support Agency Website to determine how much child support one parent should pay to the other. You can make the payments privately or you can apply for the Child Support Agency to collect them. For more precise calculation and collection, lodge an Application with the Child Support Agency.

Education

19. Contact your child/ren's school principal and advise the school of the change in family arrangements and your new contact details, if relevant.

20. Keep in contact with the child/ren's teachers.

Health

21. Provide details of all prescribed medication being taken by the child/ren, to the other parent.

22. Ensure that you have the appropriate child restraints in your car.

Domestic Violence

23. Contact the DV Connect Domestic Violence Helpline on 1800 811 811 for women or 1800 600 636 for men to obtain general advice.

24. If you or your children are in immediate danger, you should contact the Police.

Remember – it is your child/ren's right to have a meaningful relationship with both of their parents. It is not a parent's right to spend time with their child. The payment of child maintenance is not a prerequisite to spending time with your child.

WARNING

These articles reflected the state of the law at the time of publication. But the law is a living creation which is constantly changing and adapting. These articles should be treated as an information resource only and not as a substitute for specific legal advice in respect to your particular problems and circumstances.