

TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
FAMILY LAW DIVISION

*Instructions and Overview*  
*For Your*  
**LONG DISTANCE PARENTING PLAN\***

(These instructions are intended to be used while completing a Long Distance Parenting Plan)

*\*Legal matters can be very complex. If you have questions or concerns about the use of these forms, instructions, or your legal rights, it is strongly recommended that you talk to an attorney. All instructions and forms distributed by the Twelfth Judicial Circuit are provided merely to serve as a guide only. The Twelfth Judicial Circuit does not guarantee that either the instructions or the forms will achieve the result desired by the parties or ensure that an individual judge will follow the procedures exactly or accept each and every form drafted. Any person using these forms and/or instructions does so at their own risk, and the Twelfth Judicial Circuit shall not be responsible for any losses incurred by any person in reliance on the instructions and/or forms.*

**For better results complete the assessment in the 12th Judicial Circuit's "Instructions and Overview of your Parenting Plan" prior to using the Long Distance Parenting Plan.**

**Step One: Choosing the right Long Distance Parenting Plan (LDPP)**

1. Does either parent need clear written guidelines?
2. Does either parent have difficulty communicating with each other?
3. Would a detailed plan be more appropriate for your family's needs?

If you answered "no" to all of the above then:

The Basic LDPP can be used, it allows for the most flexibility and customization.

If you answered "yes" to any of the above then:

Choose LDPP (50 to 150 miles apart) or LDPP (more than 150 miles apart), depending upon your distance from the other parent.

**Step Two: Getting Started**

1. Before you fill in any part of the Long Distance Parenting Plan, you should make a copy of the blank form. Save this copy for when you are ready to fill out a final version to file with the Court.

2. At the top of the first page fill in the county where the plan is being filed or where the original action took place the County of original jurisdiction, Sarasota, Manatee, or Desoto.

3. On the top left side of the page, fill in the names of the Petitioner and the Respondent on the lines provided. If you have an existing court case, use the labels and names as they appear on the original documents filed with the court. If you do not have an existing court case, then it does not matter who is the petitioner or respondent until the case is filed.

4. On the top right side of the page, enter your case number and division, if you have one. If the Parenting Plan you are submitting is agreed upon by both parents, write "Both" otherwise, fill in the name of the parent who is proposing the Parenting Plan where it says "Proposed by:".

**Step Three: Identification of the Parties.**

1. List who is the Local Parent and who is the Away Parent.

2. List all related cases. (A case is related when: It involves any of the same parties, children or issues and it is pending at the time the petitioner files any of the above cases; or It affects the court's jurisdiction to proceed; or An order was entered in that case that may conflict with an order on the same issues in the new case; or An order in the new case may conflict with an order in the earlier litigation.)

3. List the minor children involved in this parenting plan, including their date of birth, current address, and future address, if known, or if address unknown then location (ex. Albuquerque, New Mexico).

4. List any minor children that are not addressed by this plan, including their date of birth, who they live with (ex. Aunt, Grandfather, etc.) and address.

**Step Four: Choose your Options**

## **A. Contact Section**

**Weekly Contact:** Basic LDPP: Explain when your child(ren) will be in the care of each parent. Create a schedule for weekdays and for weekends. Also indicate whether this schedule will continue during the summer, or if you will have a different schedule for the child(ren) during the summer months.

LDPP (50 to 150 miles): If listing a location other than the parents' homes then be specific. For example, McDonalds at exit 243 on I-75.

### **Holiday Contact:**

Basic LDPP and LDPP (50 to 150 miles): Explain how the child(ren) will be spending time during holidays. Fill in the blanks by writing the appropriate parent's name to show where the child(ren) will be for the holidays. You may add other special occasions you celebrate below the printed list.

LDPP (over 150 miles): Choose one of the two Thanksgiving options and choose one of the three Winter Break options. Remember to write in beginning and ending dates and times if the selected option has blanks.

**Summer Contact:** Choose one of the options. Remember if your agreeing to a schedule other than one of the first three options, remember to clearly articulate the terms of your agreement.

## **B. Communication Section**

**Virtual Communication:** Select all options that apply. Remember to write in specific days and times that communication will take place or number of times per week, etc.

**Communication:** List the means of communication. (Ex. Unrestricted, phone, email, etc.)

## **C. Exchange and Travel Section**

Carefully read all of the options in each of the sections and check ALL that apply. Fill in the appropriate blanks and describe the details of the plan for exchanging the child(ren), if option allows for it.

## **D. Information Sharing Section**

Provide each parties' complete information. Review the information provided here about sharing information between parents, school and involvement in other activities, check all that apply.

## **E. Child Support Section**

If there is an existing child support order, it is intended that support will be affected? Remember this document does not provide a court order to change the child support obligations.

## **F. Other Terms Section**

Describe any other provisions you would like to include in your Parenting Plan.

## **G. Dispute Resolution**

Decide whether you will agree to resolve any disputes that may arise in the future through mediation or other means.

## **Step Five: File with the Court**

If the plan is proposed by only one parent, that parent alone should sign. If the plan is agreed to by both parents, both parents should sign. If you are filing the parenting plan with the Court, attach it to the appropriate legal document, such as the petition or judgment.

## *The Do's and Don'ts of Long Distance Parenting*

### **Both Parents:**

#### **DO:**

- Maintain healthy communication with your children.
- Make it a priority to communicate regularly with the other parent.
- Religiously follow the long distance parenting plan to make the process routine, easy and positive for your children.
- Strive to keep your word to the children.
- Contact the other parent immediately if there is an emergency involving the children while they are with you.

#### **DON'T:**

- Be uncooperative. The children will suffer consequences if their parents do not cooperate.

### **The Local Parent:**

**(The parent with whom the child primarily resides)**

#### **DO:**

- Share information about school, teachers, activities, friends and relatives with the Away Parent.
- Be flexible and supportive of the children's relationship with the Away Parent.
- Encourage excitement for the anticipated communication and/or travel with the Away Parent.

#### **DON'T:**

- Edit, coach, monitor, or otherwise interfere with the children's communication with the Away Parent.
- Take it personally if the children do not wish to call you regularly when they are with the other parent.

### **The Away Parent:**

**(The parent with whom the child travels to spend time with)**

#### **DO:**

- Make an extra assertive effort to initiate contact with the children and educate yourself of their daily activities.
- Provide an itinerary to the other parent to prepare the children for the trip and to advise the other parent of the activities you are planning.
- Strive to keep your word to the children.

#### **DON'T:**

- Take it personally if the children do not wish to stay on the phone too long or do not call right back.
- Don't unreasonably limit the children's contact with the local parent during their stay.

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