

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. 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 best results, complete the assessment in the 12th Judicial Circuit's "Instructions and Assessments for 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. Complete:

- A. Sections: 1.-14., and
- B. Section: 15. Time Sharing Plan • BASIC (it allows for the most flexibility and customization).

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

Complete:

- A. Sections: 1.-14., and
- B. Section: 15. Time Sharing Plan • Default Time Sharing Plan for Parents (50-150 miles apart)

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. This is the county of original jurisdiction, Sarasota, Manatee, or DeSoto.
3. 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 "Parenting Plan of:".

Step Three: Identification of the Parties.

1. List who is the Local Parent and who is the Away Parent; as well as, their contact information.
2. 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).
3. 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 their address.

Step Four: Choose your Options

A. Contact Section

Weekly Contact: Basic LDPP: Determine 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, police substation at exit 243 on I-75.

Holiday Contact:

Basic LDPP and LDPP (50 to 150 miles): Determine 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.

Summer Contact: Choose one of the options. If you are agreeing to a schedule other than one of the first three options, remember to clearly explain 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 in detail your plan for exchanging the child(ren), if the option allows for it.

D. Information Sharing Section

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

E. Other Terms Section

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

F. 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 the parent alone should sign. If the plan is agreed to by both parents, both parents must sign the parenting plan and have their signatures witnessed by a **notary public** or **deputy clerk**. After completing this form, you should file the original with the clerk of court in the county where the petition was filed and keep a copy for your records. **NOTE:** If an agreed parenting plan is not filed by the parties, the Court shall establish a plan.

Even if you and your child(ren)'s other parent are unable to come to an agreement on a parenting plan, please complete the assessment to determine which parenting plan may be right for your family. Purchase the appropriate parenting plan from the Clerk of Court, or download the plan from the 12th Judicial Circuit's website at www.jud12.flcourts.org. Prepare as a draft in the event your case is referred to mediation.

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 share time)

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.