

CO-PARENTING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

As we enter the holiday season, we acknowledge that this time of year can look very different for different types of families.

For families navigating split homes, holidays may bring a mix of excitement, stress and emotional complexity. Children may transition between households; traditions may shift, and caregivers may face the challenge of balancing schedules, expectations, and emotions.

As professionals and teammates, we can best support families (and one another) by:

- Recognizing diverse family structures and avoiding assumptions about who a child spends the holidays with.
- Being flexible when scheduling meetings, services, or events during this season.
- Creating inclusive conversations that honor each family's unique traditions and dynamics.
- Offering empathy and understanding when changes in behavior or mood arise around this time.

Adding another layer, families celebrate a wide range of cultural, religious, and personal traditions. These traditions may differ between households, or even between families we serve and the staff who support them.

Understanding and honoring these differences helps us create an inclusive, empathetic environment where all children and families feel seen and valued.

For children in split homes, the holidays can involve moving between households, adjusting to different routines and balancing multiple sets of traditions. These traditions can bring excitement, but they can also

bring stress, sadness, or feelings of guilt.



Equity is
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Supporting families in this context means remaining flexible, avoiding assumptions, and fostering open, respectful communication. It also means creating space for children to share their experiences, celebrate what is meaningful to them, and feel valued in every household they inhabit. For staff, this is an opportunity to reflect on personal assumptions about holidays, to consider how interactions can provide comfort and stability, and to model understanding and inclusion for children and families alike.

Holidays can be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate love, belonging, and flexibility in all forms. Thank you for the care and compassion you bring to your work every day—it makes a meaningful difference for the families and the individuals we serve.

<https://www.thecenterforfamilylaw.com/tips-for-co-parenting-during-the-holidays>

(7 minute read)

This article offers practical advice for divorced or separated parents on how to co-parent smoothly during the holidays by prioritizing children's well-being, maintaining clear communication, planning schedules, collaboratively, and staying flexible with traditions to reduce conflict. It emphasizes keeping the focus on creating positive, low-stress experiences for the children.

<https://www.chp.edu/our-services/child-advocacy-center/resources> (explore at own pace)

The UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Advocacy Center's resources page provides guides and links to support families through legal, medical, and emotional challenges, including what to expect during visits, legal aid options, and tips for helping children cope with divorce or separation. It aims to connect families with practical tools and supportive services.

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https://sfsattorneys.com/16-child-custody-factors-pennsylvania/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (15 minute read, explore website at your own pace as there are other helpful articles on this site)

In Pennsylvania, family courts evaluate a set of 16 statutory factors that determine what custody arrangement is “in the best interests of the child,” including each parent’s willingness to encourage contact with the other parent, history of abuse, parental responsibilities, stability of education and family life, the child’s preferences, and any other relevant circumstances.

https://heyannette.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Holiday-Guide-for-Coparents.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

(PDF flyer with example gift tracking sheet, 5 minute read)

The guide offers practical tips for divorced or separated parents to collaboratively plan holiday events, gifts, and parenting time in a way that centers their children’s needs—including shared calendars, early communication, and coordinating meals and gifts-to reduce stress and promote consistency.

<https://www.paparentandfamilyalliance.org/post/blended-family-holiday-survival-guide-1> (7 minute read)

The guide offers five key strategies for blended families during the holidays—communicate fully, refrain from negative talk about other parents, recognize that extended family matters, manage sibling resentment proactively, and keep children’s needs and traditions foremost.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCKsplFwBbo> (10:33 video)

The video discusses the emotional challenges parents face when separated from their children during the holidays, emphasizing that shared custody or protective orders can make this especially difficult. It encourages parents to take a long-term perspective, viewing custody as an ongoing process rather than a single event, and offers guidance for managing holiday emotions and custody planning.

