



The Importance of Parenting Agreements

Like child support agreements, parenting-time agreements can be a game changer for parents.

In both cases, the benefits are wide ranging. A January 2023 report on "[Supporting Healthy Co-parenting](#)" from Ascend at the Aspen Institute summarizes some of the most important positive outcomes of parenting agreements:

Legal parenting-time agreements are associated with increased parent-child contact, improved co-parenting relationships, improved child behavior, increased child support compliance and payments, and increased perception of fairness of the child support process.

Research suggests that child support works better when parents have a positive co-parenting relationship. Similarly, according to a [report](#) from the federal Office of Child Support Services, "child support enforcement can also reduce parental conflict because it increases the likelihood and amount of child support paid."

Child Support and Parenting Agreements

Given these connections between parenting agreements and positive child support outcomes, it might seem natural that OCSS and other child support programs could help parents establish these agreements.

Yet these two key parts of the equation for raising a child separately have no formal connection in New York or most other states. As a result, only about a third of parents with a child support order also have a legal parenting agreement, according to a [report](#) from the recently renamed federal Office of Child Support Services.

Encouraging Parents to Work Together

Yet we can and do encourage parents to work together to develop these agreements—whether on their own or through one of New York City's many free or low-cost [mediation providers](#). As the Aspen Institute report points out: "Mediation is effective in most cases, with parents reaching parenting-time agreements 65 to 70 percent of the time."

That's why we recently added a [section on parenting agreements](#) to our webpage with resources for parents.-

Contact OCSS

Email us at dcse.cseweb@dfa.state.ny.us

In addition to linking to a form that they can use to develop their own parenting agreement, the page explains some of the most important benefits of coming to an agreed upon plan for co-parenting children. These agreements:

- Lay the groundwork for both parents to be consistently involved in their child's life.
- Let the child know when they can expect to see each parent, leading them to feel more stable and secure.
- Allow parents to more readily plan out their own schedule, simply by knowing their child's.

We hope partners will encourage the parents they work with to review this page and use our parenting agreements, perhaps with the help of a mediator.

When you do, you might also remind them that the mediator can potentially help them reach an agreement about uncollectable child support debt that might be creating barriers to paying current child support.

Reminder: Policy Conference on Child Support and Structural Racism in October

As we mentioned in our May issue, the next OCSS policy conference will be happening on October 26, 2023 and will look at how systemic racism and child support intersect.

Called "Confronting Structural Racism in the Child Support Program: Listening, Understanding, and Taking Action," the conference is being developed with input from experts who have studied the racialized effects of systems and programs such as child support, child welfare, economics, and the law.

Taking this first step is an essential part of the process of addressing this complex issue.

We have a great assortment of speakers and panelists lined up. Look for more details soon!



In the Know

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