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Holiday Schedules Should Not Be Overlooked in New Mexico Parenting Plans

Parents involved in a child custody dispute or divorce in New Mexico will face a variety of tough decisions when determining how they will co-parent their children after they are separated. The final version of those decisions regarding custody and timesharing become a binding court order when the parties, or the court itself, enters a parenting plan.

A parenting plan will include all the day to day details of how the parents will care for and share time with their children. An integral part of that parenting plan is a schedule for holiday timesharing.

Sometimes in the flurry of negotiation or a heated hearing in front of the judge to determine child custody and/or child support, holiday timesharing can be overlooked. Failing to determine how the parents will share the holidays can lead to major disagreements later, which in turn can be very hard on the children and the parties.

Holiday timesharing plans vary widely. There are some fairly common arrangements. Often parents will alternate years. For example the father has the children for Christmas Day in even years and the mother has them for Christmas Day in odd years. Where possible, the parents will frequently also divide Christmas Eve. Essentially, the Christmas day schedule will be reversed.

With this common plan, one parent will have the children on Christmas Eve, the other parent will have them on Christmas Day. This insures that both parents see the kids during Christmas. Unfortunately, this arrangement is not always possible in cases where the parents live far apart.

Though it is typically the most emotionally charged, there is a lot more to the holiday schedule than Christmas. The same issues arise for all major holidays, spring break, summer break, and so on. The schedule should address all major holidays, especially those when the children will have time off from school. Like Christmas, a common arrangement is to alternate all holidays from year to year.

It is very important that the parenting plan include provisions for long weekends associated with many holidays such as Labor Day, Veteran's Day and July 4th. Some schedules may even include make-up time when a holiday with one parent falls during the other parent's regular period of responsibilities.

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Again, holiday schedules will be different for every family, but the important thing is to make sure that they are as complete as possible to avoid the far too common fight over timesharing a week before Christmas when it is near impossible to get a court hearing.

The more detail in the parenting plan, the better. Detail will hopefully avoid conflict and thereby avoid court. And court during the holidays is really something to be avoided for everyone's sake.

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