



THE LAW OFFICE OF
Brigid A. Duffield P.C.

Back to School - Already?!

The kids are heading back to grade school, high school and college and most parents are trying to settle into the hectic fall routine of work, homework, and extracurricular activities. This happens at the same time parents are trying to manage the costs of school registration and perhaps college tuition. For divorced parents and for families who have separated during the summer, trying to get life running smoothly may be difficult.

The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C. offers the following suggestions to Parents to successfully get through the start of a new school year.

1. *Set Up a Common Calendar...internet based when possible.* For families in transition, they often comment that their communication is "non-existent" ... Our recommendation less bad communication is more good communication! Less communication may reduce conflict and produce better results, especially when school information may not be readily available to both parents...or if one parent reads it and one doesn't. Sharing a common calendar, on a neutral internet site, establishes communication and transmits information without the physical action of sending a phone number, text or email and the physical body scrunch when it is received. If set up with detail, the calendar is a tool that communications to the parents, when they want to access it so they can know where their children will be, when and with

whom. The schedule of time between households, including the start and end times of things such as parent teacher conferences, band concerts, extracurricular activities - all can be put on the common calendar. For children who are computer savvy, with parents' permission, they can add things to the calendar as well. All it requires is one parent to set it up and share a password and information is available to each parent...and many of these calendars are free!

Here are a few that are worth taking a look into:

Google Calendar - Free

Our Family Wizard - \$99 per year, per parent

Optimal by ParentingTime.net - \$149/year, per account

JointParents.com - \$9.95/month, per parent

FamilyCrossings.com - \$39/year, per account

CustodyToolbox.com - \$50 per software download

Talking Parents - Free

Cozi Calendar - \$9.95/month

2. *Talk to your Children about the New Routine* Going back to school can be a big transition for your child, especially if it is a new school with new friends. To make the transition as smooth as possible, talk to your child about their changing routine. Parents who are able to anticipate where and when children may struggle, and talk with them about how he or she can succeed, can give their children the confidence to manage new situations. When the specifics of pick up times, meals, after school activities, have been communicated to the other parent, both parents can support their child and increase the child's ability to successfully get through the new situations. Sharing information with your child in simple ways help. Children are children....don't expect that they (or your partners) will process or act in the way an adult would.

3. *Send the School, Teachers, Coaches an Email* Providing your children's teachers with both parents' current contact information and address is a good start. This can be done by email. Let teachers know both parents want to be involved and informed. Request that the school any important documents, one for each parent at their address.

4. *Allow your Child to Express Themselves-- if not to you, then to a safe third party* The effects of divorce and separation on children make it tough to start a new school for a transitioning family. Give your child a safe haven where he or she can safely express their emotions. Be open to the possibility that the child may need to talk to someone other than you, like the school counselor or a mental health professional; even another friend's parent or an extended family member, such as the

child's aunt or uncle. When needed, set time aside for your child to meet with a counselor, social worker, or other trusted adult in a neutral environment. This will help your children know that other people, usually positive adult role models, are there to help support them. It often does take a village, in both negative and positive circumstances, to raise a child.

5. *Stay Proactive* An essential part of keeping it together for the children through this transition is picking the battles that need to be fought and putting aside the ones that don't. Be proactive in getting the information that you need. Some parents complain that the other parent is not providing information and yet if they were to make a call to the school, the teacher, the doctor, the information is often easy to get. Don't be dependent on anyone, especially a former partner, to meet your needs, especially if the needs are easily met if you are proactive. By being proactive, supportive and enthusiastic about school, your child recognizes the importance and value of their education.



Conflict cannot survive without your participation.

Wayne Dwyer

Best wishes for a safe and conflict-free school year!

Brigid A. Duffield

Attorney/Mediator/Author

(630) 221-9300

Brigid@BrigidDuffield.com

Admin@BrigidDuffield.com

