

FACTSHEET No 11:

The Weekly Parenting Phone Call



Regular, constructive communication between co-parents is crucial and one of the best ways to ensure it takes place is through a weekly parenting phone call following a fixed and agreed agenda.

This factsheet provides some general pointers on how to approach and structure the weekly call and what things should be included within the agenda.

Housekeeping

- Agree a set time for the call when you can both give it your full attention . make sure children are in bed.
- Take turns to make the call so you are both actively involved.
- Keep to the agreed agenda (ensure you both have a copy of it) - no other topics should be discussed and personal conversation avoided.
- Avoid telephone contact in between calls unless it really can't wait till the next scheduled call. Where possible email or write rather than call.

In terms of what to cover, the following are the main areas that should be included on the agenda for each call.

The Good Stuff

- Starting here sets a positive tone for the remainder of the call and increases the chances of smooth conversation. It also increases confidence in the other parent.
- It gives both parents things to talk to the child about when they next see them.
- **Examples of the good stuff:** good performance at school or in other outside activities, new development milestones such as learning to ride a bike, losing a tooth.

Medical Update

Include any current illnesses (if relevant), approaching appointments and physical development (positives and any concerns).

School Related Issues

- Overview of notes received from school . to ensure you both have the information.
- General performance and behaviour of your child at school.
- Specific feedback from your child's teacher.
- Homework (what, delivery dates etc).
- School events (dates, times, who will attend).

Care taking

Discuss care routines, especially for bedtime and any changes to these.

Out of School Activities

- Clubs, sports, parties and hobbies.
- Activities undertaken at the other parents house.
- Arrangements for parties or events that your child wishes to attend. Discuss possible clubs your child may join and share details of what they have done at any they already attend.

Behaviour and Discipline

- Whilst it is normal to deal with discipline issues differently, sharing with each other how you handle things helps to build support and trust.
- Discuss behavioural issues and how they are being dealt with so that you can create consistency which will give your child greater stability.

Special Events

- Upcoming birthdays, holidays and special events - keep to the agreed parenting plan as much as possible when it comes to arrangements for these.
- Remember all changes to a plan should be considered as a request and not an automatic right.
- Ensure as much notice as possible is given for any requests to change the plan to allow time to work out the details.
- Remember that if you are flexible when asked this will encourage flexibility for your co-parent if ever you request a change.

New Business

- Anything not already covered (new news, advance warning of anything).
- Clarify time and date of your next call and who is going to make the call to help set boundaries.

Sharing of information in this way enables you both to be fully aware of how your child is handling the change in their circumstances and for each of you to talk to the child about the things that are going on in their lives so they feel integrated whether at home or away.