**Parenting Resources Template**

If you are involved in a custody dispute with an abusive partner, the court may look closely at your parenting in order to determine the best interests of your children. Domestic violence can have a serious impact on children, and people who are abusive often parent inappropriately and undermine their partner’s parenting. On top of this, it can be challenging to be the kind of parent you want to be when you do not feel like your best self as a result of the abuse you have experienced. For all these reasons and more, now may be a good time for you to reach out for parenting support and education, if you have not already done so.

*Parenting was a struggle for me, even when I left my husband.*

*I always felt like I was doing it wrong no matter what I tried. My children had such a hard time adjusting when we left, but now that they are in the Children’s Group I can talk with the advocate and her suggestions and support have really made a difference in our lives.*

- A domestic violence survivor

Fortunately, many community organizations offer free or low cost parenting assistance. This handout includes information about the factors the court considers when making parenting plan decisions; assistance available from domestic violence organizations; and general parenting resources.

We encourage you to explore your options and select the parenting program that works best for your family’s needs, your schedule, location, etc. Taking proactive steps to strengthen your parenting can demonstrate to the court that you will do what is necessary to meet the needs of your children.

You may wish to keep a record of any parenting classes you attend or any steps you take to strengthen your parenting. You can then share this documentation with a parenting evaluator or a judicial officer, if appropriate.

If you and your child’s other parent are not able to agree on a parenting plan, then a judicial officer (judge or commissioner) may make decisions for you. In cases of domestic violence, many parties do not reach an agreement. Frequently, judicial officers rely on parenting evaluators to investigate what is in the child’s best interest and to make recommendations to the court about residential time, decision making, etc. These recommendations should be based on state laws regarding custody.

According to our state’s laws insert an explanation of your state's laws regarding determining custody. You can use a graphic such as the one below to illustrate some of the information.

**Parenting Factors and Functions Explained:**

Describe the parenting factors and functions the court considers when making custody decisions.

**Parenting Skills Checklist**

[www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/doc/398](http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/doc/398)

This checklist could help you identify your parenting strengths and articulate how you parent. This list may also give you some ideas about how you can better support your child. This list was not developed by parenting evaluators or for the purpose of parenting evaluations.

If you feel you need to strengthen your parenting, improve your relationship with your child, or prepare for a parenting evaluation, the resources below can help.

|  |
| --- |
| Domestic Violence Parenting Resources |
| Organization | **Services** | **Service Area / Contact Info** |
| **Insert program names** | **Insert services offered** | Insert service area where program is offered and contact info |
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*The services above are free, but there may be eligibility requirements (such as being a program participant of the organization’s domestic violence services) or space limits. Contact the organizations listed for more information.*

Insert any additional info needed for survivors to understand the services being offered.

|  |
| --- |
| General Parenting Resources |
| Organization | **Services** | **Location / Contact Info** |
| **Insert program names** | **Insert services offered** | Insert service area where program is offered and contact info |
|  |  |  |
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Insert any additional info needed for survivors to understand the services being offered.

Inclusion in this handout is not an endorsement. We encourage you to evaluate if the services and the provider are the right fit for you and to verify that the information listed is still accurate. The content of this handout is current as of the time of publication, but may have since changed.

If you are not sure where to start, we recommend discussing your options with a domestic violence advocate.

This tool was adapted from the Domestic Violence and Mental Health

Collaboration Project’s Family Law Toolkit for Survivors.

The original version of this tool can be found at

<http://endgv.org/toolkits/family-law-toolkit-for-domestic-violence-survivors/>.

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