

Standard definitions for custody & parenting terms from the *Parenting and Support Act* – May 26, 2017

The following are plain language definitions for the parenting terms used in the *Parenting and Support Act* (PSA). These definitions will be used in family justice materials, including on the NS Family Law website, and information sessions like group information and the Parent Information Program (PIP).

Custody

Custody is a general term describing who has the responsibility for a child's care, who makes the decisions about the child's upbringing and development, and where the children will live. When a person has custody, this means they will make these decisions.

In law, parents share equal decision-making, unless otherwise agreed to or ordered by the court. The court may grant custody to more than one person. If custody is granted to more than one person, this means those with custody would make joint decisions about issues like the child's education, medical and dental care, and religious upbringing. Day-to-day decisions, like what the child will wear or eat for breakfast, are usually made by the parent caring for the child at that time. Parents are expected to maintain as much consistency as possible in the child's upbringing and daily care.

Parenting time

Parenting time is the time a child spends with a parent or guardian, under a court order or agreement. Each parent's or guardian's time with the children is called 'parenting time', even when the child lives most of the time with one parent. It is helpful to have a parenting schedule in place.

Contact time

Contact time is the time a child spends with someone other than a parent or guardian, under a court order or agreement. This may include a grandparent or other family member.

Interaction

Interaction means direct or indirect association with a child, outside of parenting time or contact time. Interaction includes communications with a child other than 'in person' time – like, for example:

- phone calls, emails, or letters
- sending gifts or cards
- attending the child's school activities or extracurricular activities
- receiving copies of report cards or school photos
- Skyping with the child

Relocation

A change in the place of residence of a parent, a child, or a parent and child is called a 'relocation' when the move could reasonably be expected to substantially impact the child's relationship with a parent, guardian, or person with contact time.

When a parent wants to move with a child or is moving away from the child, they must give the maximum written notice possible to the other parent, guardian, or person with an order for contact time.

Decisions about relocation will always be based on what is in the best interests of the child.