

WISCONSIN DIVORCE & CUSTODY STARTER TOOLKIT

Start Here if you're filing. Use the tools if you already have an order.

Practical checklists, scripts, and documentation tools for two-household parenting.

Created by CustodyToolkit.com

Designed by a Wisconsin family law attorney for self-represented parents.

Informational only. Not legal advice.

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START HERE (60 seconds): Do you already have a court order?

Before you can enforce rules, track reimbursements, or rely on a parenting schedule, you usually need a court order (or a signed agreement that becomes part of the court order). This page makes sure you start in the right place.

1) I DO NOT have a court order yet (I need to file).

NEXT STEP (choose one):

- Option A — Start-Here Quiz (2 minutes): Use this if you're not sure whether you need divorce, legal separation, or paternity/custody. It will route you to the correct Wisconsin filing path.
- Option B — Filing Packet (\$197): Use this if you're ready to file now and want step-by-step instructions that tell you exactly what to type into Wisconsin's required forms so your filing is accepted the first time.

2) I DO have a court order (divorce judgment, paternity order, or custody/placement order).

Great—this toolkit will help you keep transitions smoother, reduce conflict, and build documentation if issues arise.

Stop and get legal help (or safety support) if any of the following apply:

- Domestic violence, threats, stalking, strangulation, or fear for your safety
- Child abuse concerns or an active CPS/CHIPS issue
- A parent refusing placement entirely, serious safety risks, or repeated major violations
- Substance abuse that creates safety concerns during placement
- High-conflict custody litigation (frequent court motions, constant disputes, retaliation)
- Complex property issues (business ownership, multiple properties, valuation fights, heavy retirement/stock issues)

If you feel unsafe right now: Call 911.

For safety planning and support, contact your local domestic violence agency or Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence resources.

If your situation is legally complex:

This toolkit can help you organize information, but you should consider consulting an attorney before filing or before taking enforcement steps.

Note:

- Wisconsin courts rely heavily on written records and clear documentation when parents disagree. If you need enforcement or changes later, start building clean, neutral records now.
- This free toolkit does not include court forms and is not a substitute for filing. It helps you build structure and documentation after you have an order (or while you are waiting for temporary orders).



WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR CO-PARENTING JOURNEY?

Co-parenting problems tend to show up in stages. Some families need basic structure. Others need consistent follow-through and a simple way to track patterns. And some need documentation because the same issues keep repeating. Use the stages below to find your starting point and go straight to the tools that fit your situation.

FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

☐ Stage 0 — No court order yet (you need to file).

- Start-Here Quiz (2 minutes) → routes you to the correct filing path, or
- Go straight to the Filing Packet → if you are ready to file and want step-by-step instructions for Wisconsin's required forms.

☐ Stage 1: Building Structure

You're here if:

- You're newly separated or you have an order but you're still building routines to follow it consistently
- Daily routines—exchanges, packing, expenses aren't consistent
- Communication happens through scattered texts with no system
- You want to prevent predictable problems before they develop

Start with these tools:

- ✓ Packing Checklist
- ✓ Communication Guide
- ✓ Expense Tracker Setup
- ✓ Communication Templates

Your goal: Establish clear routines that reduce conflict and create predictable expectations for both households.

☐ Stage 2: You have a plan, but it's not working consistently.

You're here if:

- You have systems, but they aren't always followed
- Small issues are happening regularly (late pickups, missing items, delayed payments)
- You're not sure if these issues require action
- You want a simple way to keep track of patterns
- The same issue keeps repeating *even after* you've made clear, written requests

Add these tools:

- ✓ Issue Log
- ✓ Communication Apps Comparison
- ✓ *Is Your Documentation Court Ready?*

Your goal: Document what's happening without escalating conflict. A consistent record helps you see patterns and shows the court a factual timeline if problems continue.



□ Stage 3: The plan is being violated or issues are escalating.

You're here if:

- The same problems repeat even after you've sent documented requests
- Deadlines, reimbursement rules, or schedule requirements are ignored
- Communication templates and reminders haven't changed the behavior
- You need to understand enforcement or modification options under Wisconsin law
- If safety is involved (threats, stalking, intimidation, or physical abuse), start with the Safety / Not a Fit section first

Focus on these sections:

- ✓ When Reimbursements Aren't Paid (p. 8)
- ✓ When Your Co-Parent Won't Send Required Items (p. 9)
- ✓ When Communication Has Collapsed (p. 11)
- ✓ Wisconsin Co-Parenting Support Options (p. 15)

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

- Start at the stage that fits today. You do not need to read this cover-to-cover.
- Set up one system: (1) one written communication channel, and (2) one place to track issues (Issue Log or expense tracker).
- If problems repeat, your goal is a short, factual record: what happened, when, and what you requested in writing.

WHAT THIS TOOLKIT CAN (AND CAN'T) DO

✓ This toolkit helps you:

- Create structure through checklists, templates, and routines
- Keep written records judges rely on
- Reduce daily conflict through predictable systems
- Understand how Wisconsin courts evaluate co-parenting issues
- Identify when informal solutions are no longer working

✗ This toolkit cannot:

- Force cooperation from an uncooperative co-parent
- Change the terms of a court order
- Provide legal advice specific to your case
- Resolve high-conflict behavior without additional steps

THE BOTTOM LINE

Strong co-parenting starts with structure. For many families, these checklists, templates, and communication systems are enough to stabilize routines and reduce conflict. But if you're tracking the same problems month after month—late reimbursements, missed exchanges, missing items, unreturned messages—that often signals a need for clearer structure in the current order or a compliance problem that needs firmer boundaries.

When documented patterns continue despite reasonable, written efforts to resolve them, Wisconsin law has enforcement and modification options. Whether those options are *worth it* depends on the facts, the amount at issue, the safety concerns (if any), and what you can prove. The goal is not "more court." The goal is clearer structure when informal tools are no longer working.



CO-PARENTING COMMUNICATION GUIDE

Why Clear Expectations Matter

Co-parenting runs smoother when both parents know exactly what to expect. Without clarity, small issues—missing school items, late reimbursements, last-minute schedule changes—turn into arguments. Many Wisconsin court orders require parents to follow a placement schedule, share certain variable expenses, and communicate in a way that supports the child. The system works best with written routines.

No court order yet?

- Start with the Start-Here Quiz to identify the right Wisconsin filing path. Until a judge signs an order, you can't enforce placement schedules or reimbursement rules.

Tools That Make Co-Parenting Easier

- Packing checklist for transitions
- Expense tracking spreadsheet
- Message templates for calm, written communication
- Drop-off and pick-up log
- Recommended co-parenting apps
- Suggested ground rules for exchanges and shared expenses

These tools keep communication short, factual, and well-documented.

What Wisconsin Orders Require You to Do

- **Sharing Variable Expenses**
Court orders specify how parents split costs beyond basic child support. If the order says 70/30 or 50/50, that split applies to school supplies, clothing, sports, and activities. Your specific order controls—use this as a checklist of common provisions.
- **Do this first (2 minutes)**
Pull up your court order and highlight the section on shared expenses. Your order controls: it may list which categories are shared, the percentage split, deadlines, and required documentation.
- **Required Items Must Travel with the Child**
Each parent must send necessary clothing, homework items, and medications during placement.
- **Advance Notice for Schedule Changes**
Major decisions should be discussed ahead of time unless there's a true emergency.

Best Practices

- Keep important communication *in writing*
- Share receipts when requesting reimbursement
- Record pick-ups, drop-offs, and schedule changes
- Use co-parenting apps like OurFamilyWizard, TalkingParents, or AppClose when communication gets tense—these keep messages time-stamped and documented.

Documentation protects both parents. When things are written down, there are fewer arguments—and if a disagreement returns to court, you'll be prepared.



PACKING CHECKLIST

Start with a Two-Home Baseline.

Most conflict comes from treating routine items like shared property. In most families, each home should keep its own daily essentials (diapers, wipes, sippy cups, basic toiletries, basic clothes).

Packing is for school, health, and unique items that can't be duplicated. If your order says something different, follow your order. If you do not have an order yet, you cannot enforce "send-it" rules—start with the Start-Here Quiz.

Clothing

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Pajamas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pants / shorts | <input type="checkbox"/> Socks & underwear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports uniform | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleats / dance shoes / equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Hair products / hair ties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Winter gear (coat, hat, gloves, boots, snow pants) | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal extras (swimsuit, sunscreen) |

School Items

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack | <input type="checkbox"/> Chromebook / tablet + charger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homework folders / school papers | <input type="checkbox"/> Lunchbox / water bottle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library books | <input type="checkbox"/> Permission slips / forms due |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class snacks / special items | <input type="checkbox"/> School fundraising or take-home projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Items stored in the car | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra shoes / coat / gear |

Medications & Health

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription meds | <input type="checkbox"/> Inhalers / EpiPen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OTC meds / Vitamins | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort items (weighted blanket, toys) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Night routine items (books) | <input type="checkbox"/> Allergy meds |

Toiletries

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shampoo / conditioner | <input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush / toothpaste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deodorant | <input type="checkbox"/> Hairbrush / comb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skincare / lotion | |

Younger Children

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special formula or allergy-safe items. | <input type="checkbox"/> One comfort item (stuffed animal/blanket) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One labeled change of clothes (in the bag) | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare bag + required daycare supplies (label clearly) |

Note: Some orders require certain items to travel (for example, medications or school-issued devices). Many orders do not require routine consumables to be exchanged. When in doubt, treat daily essentials as each-home responsibilities and use written requests only for truly necessary items.



CO-PARENT EXPENSE TRACKER GUIDE

READ THIS FIRST (IMPORTANT): This tracker is for shared expenses your court order requires (often called “variable expenses”). Many day-to-day items are not meant to be reimbursed. In most families, each household provides its own basics (i.e. toiletries, cups, wipes, and groceries).

No court order yet? Skip reimbursement tracking for now. Start with the Start-Here Quiz so you can get an enforceable plan in place before you spend energy debating expenses.

What to Record for Every Expense

- Date of purchase
- Description (winter coat, soccer registration, doctor copay)
- Total amount paid
- Who paid (Parent A or Parent B)
- Each parent’s share (50/50, 70/30, or per your order)
- Receipt copy (photo attached or uploaded)
- Reimbursement status (Pending / Paid / Not Required)

Ground Rules for Success

- Check your order first for: what is shared, the split %, deadlines, and proof required
- Submit requests promptly (many orders set a deadline—use yours)
- Include proof every time: receipt + what it was for + date paid
- Set a regular review date (example: the 1st of each month) to avoid build-up
- Use traceable payment methods for reimbursement (electronic transfer, check)
- Keep messages short and factual: date + item + amount + what your order says

Expenses Commonly Split in Wisconsin

- Medical and dental copays
- Prescriptions and over-the-counter medication
- Required school-related costs — supplies, field trips, and testing fees.
- Daycare or after-school care

How to Access Your Expense Tracker

1. Make a copy of the template
2. Add your child’s name and year

Simple request message:

- On [date], I paid \$[amount] for [expense]. Our order says we split this [__% / __%]. Your share is \$[amount]. Receipt attached. Please reimburse by [date required by order / reasonable date].



EXPENSE TRACKER EXAMPLES:

Example A — No Court Order Yet (Receipts Log — not enforceable reimbursement)

Use this to keep records for budgeting or future agreement discussions. Do not use it to demand reimbursement unless you have a judge-signed order that requires it.

Date Paid	Item	Amount	Paid By	Proof	Note
1/10/25	Winter coat	\$72.00	Parent A	Jan10_coat.jpg	No order yet. Routine items are usually each household's responsibility.
1/15/25	Backpack + folders	\$38.50	Parent B	Jan15_school.jpg	Track for budgeting / negotiations, not court enforcement.

Example B — Court Order Exists (Variable Expenses — track only what the order covers)

Use this only for expenses your order defines as “shared/variable” (often uninsured medical, childcare, school/activity fees). The order controls categories, split %, deadlines, and proof requirements.

Date Paid	Category	Description	Total	Paid By	Split (A/B)	Result (Owed / Status / Proof)
1/22/25	Activity fee	Soccer registration	\$95.00	Parent B	70/30	A owes B \$66.50 • Req sent 1/23/25 • Pending • Proof: SoccerFee_request.png
2/03/25	Uninsured medical	Urgent care copay	\$40.00	Parent A	50/50	B owes A \$20.00 • Req sent 2/04/25 • Paid 2/12 • Proof: Feb03_copay.pdf



WHEN REIMBURSEMENTS AREN'T PAID

You've submitted receipts. You've sent reminders. You've followed every rule in your order. And still nothing. Late or missing reimbursements are one of the most common post-judgment issues in Wisconsin family court. They create tension, disrupt cooperation, and chip away at trust. Fortunately, they can be enforced just like any other financial obligation—you just have to choose the right path.

Your Options

I. Small Claims Court

Some reimbursement disputes can be filed in small claims court if the amount owed is clear and undisputed. I do not provide small claims representation, but this explanation helps you understand when that venue may apply. You'll need to show:

- Proof that you paid the expense, and
- The section of your order requiring reimbursement.

Small claims can result in a money judgment—but the judge cannot interpret or modify your family court order. If your co-parent argues about what's owed ("I never agreed to half of that"), the small claims court will likely dismiss the case and refer you back to family court. Even if you win, you'll have to collect the judgment yourself through garnishment or lien.

II. Contempt Motion (Family Court Enforcement)

If your order clearly sets reimbursement terms (what is shared, the percentage split, deadlines, and required proof), family court enforcement may be an option. Under Wis. Stat. § 767.77, the court can order compliance and may impose remedies if it finds a **willful** violation. Outcomes vary by judge and facts, so your documentation and the clarity of your order matter.

III. Modification

If your current order is vague—no deadlines, no percentage split, no enforcement language—it's time to fix it.

You can file to add clarity and structure under Wis. Stat. § 767.451 (Modification of judgment). This creates enforceable timelines and eliminates the gray area that lets nonpayment slide.

Note: Reimbursement orders can be enforced, but enforcement is not always quick or cost-effective—especially for smaller amounts. Courts typically expect clear documentation, proof the expense was required under the order, proof of payment, and proof you requested reimbursement in writing. Even with good records, judges' decisions vary drastically.

Not Sure Which Path Fits Your Case?

→ 1-Hour Strategy Session — \$197

We review your order, your receipts, and your co-parent's payment history. Then we outline the fastest and most effective enforcement route.



WHEN YOUR CO-PARENT WON'T SEND REQUIRED ITEMS

You stay organized. You send everything your child needs.

But your co-parent keeps “forgetting” medication, winter gear, backpacks, homework, or required school supplies.

Wisconsin law requires parents to send necessary items during placement. When important items repeatedly fail to travel between homes, that’s a pattern the court can address. After multiple documented instances, the issue may reflect non-compliance rather than simple oversight. Clear, written documentation helps the court understand what happened and what steps you took to resolve the problem.

Next Step Options

→ Enforcement Strategy Session — \$197

- Review what your order requires
- Identify what documentation actually helps (and what doesn’t)
- Map the most practical next step: a written request, a pattern log, or a court filing if appropriate

No legal advice; informational coaching and planning based on your documents.



COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

Use these when communication gets tense. Short messages prevent arguments and create a clean written record.

Requesting Reimbursement

- Attached is the receipt for [expense] from [date].
- Total was \$[amount]. Per our order, your portion is \$[amount].
- Payment may be sent by [Zelle/Venmo/PayPal]. Thank you."

Late Reimbursement

- Following up on the reimbursement request from [date].
- The agreed payment deadline of [date] has passed.
- Your portion is \$[amount] and can be sent to [payment method].
- Let me know if you need the receipt resent.

Change in Exchange Time

- I need to adjust the exchange time for [date/time].
- Proposed alternative: [date/time].
- If that does not work, please suggest another option by [date].

School or Medical Update

- [Child] had [appointment/event] on [date].
- Summary: [brief, factual description].
- Records/receipts attached.

Expense Pre-Approval (for larger costs)

- [Child] needs [item/service], estimated at \$[amount].
- Your portion would be \$[amount].
- Please confirm approval by [date] so I can proceed.

Disputing an Expense

- I'm reviewing the [expense] from [date].
- Based on our order, [brief reason it may not be shared].
- If you have additional information or a different interpretation of the order, please send it in writing.

Tip: When Messages Get Tense

- I'd like to keep our communication focused on schedules, expenses, and updates. Let's keep logistics in writing so we both have a clear record.



WHEN COMMUNICATION HAS COMPLETELY COLLAPSED

If every message turns into an argument, this isn't a communication problem — it's a boundary problem. These templates help reasonable parents.

If your co-parent:

- Ignores messages
- Sends abusive texts
- Refuses to communicate
- Uses messages to harass or manipulate

When communication consistently breaks down, the issue often requires structured, court-ordered communication guidelines.

Wisconsin Judges Can Order:

- Required use of OurFamilyWizard or TalkingParents
- Response deadlines
- Communication limited to child-related matters
- Penalties for harassment or refusal to respond



ISSUE LOG

Purpose:

Use this log to track unresolved issues that affect placement, expenses, communication, or compliance with your court order. Keep entries brief and factual—judges and mediators prefer a clear timeline over detailed narrative.

How to Use the Log

- Record each issue objectively and calmly.
- Use one line per issue.
- Keep entries short and factual. Judges and mediators prefer clarity over detail.
- Avoid commentary or opinions; the log should read like a neutral record, not a complaint.

Recommended Columns

- **Date** — when the issue arose or was reported
- **Issue** — short description (e.g., “Missed exchange,” “Expense not reimbursed”)
- **What Was Requested** — specific action or information sought
- **Due Date / Response Date** — when the response was expected or received
- **Response / Outcome** — note if resolved, pending, or denied
- **Evidence Attached** — receipt, screenshot, or message reference

Date	Issue	What You Requested	Due Date / Response	Outcome	Evidence
3/1/25	Missing inhaler	Requested inhaler be sent for 3/3 exchange	Expected 3/3; reply 3/2: “Can’t find it”	Unresolved—purchased backup	Text thread saved
2/14/25	Expense reimbursement	Requested 50% of \$85 dental copay	Due 2/28; no response	Unpaid	Screenshot “Feb14_dentist.jpg”
2/20/25	Schedule change	Asked to swap 3/8 for 3/15	Reply 2/22 approving	Resolved	OFW ID #4721



IS YOUR DOCUMENTATION COURT READY?

Your issue log might be your strongest evidence—or completely useless—depending on how you write it.

Judges look for:

- ✓ Specific dates and facts
 - ✓ Pattern of violations
 - ✓ Evidence of financial impact
 - ✓ Proof you tried to resolve the issue
- Strong logs make your request easier to prove and harder to ignore.

→ **Document Review — \$97**

Send us your log + order. Within 3 business days you get:

- Which entries are legally persuasive
- What to correct to make your case stronger
- Whether your issues rise to contempt level
- Next steps to file yourself



CO-PARENTING COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Parents communicate in different ways. Some manage well by text or email, while others benefit from tools that create a reliable written record. Choose the option that fits your situation and promotes calm, consistent communication.

OurFamilyWizard

- Full message history
- Expense and reimbursement tracking
- Shared calendar and tone meter
- Cost: \$149.99 - \$299.88/ billed annually.

TalkingParents

- Secure message history
- Time-stamped records
- Cost: Free - \$27/month

Shared Email Account

- Works best when both parents cooperate
- Use clear subject lines for easy tracking, for example:
Reimbursement Request – Soccer Fees – 1/12/25

Note: Pricing changes—check current rates.



WISCONSIN CO-PARENTING SUPPORT — COMPARE YOUR OPTIONS

Once you've identified the stage you're in, the next step is choosing the level of support that matches your situation. Some parents only need the checklists and communication tools in this toolkit. Others need help reviewing their documentation, drafting a parenting plan, or deciding whether enforcement or modification is appropriate.

This page gives you clear, Wisconsin-specific options so you can take the next step without guessing. Each option has a defined purpose, a flat fee, and a predictable outcome. You stay in control of the process—no retainers, no ongoing billing, and no pressure to take on more than you need.

Use this section to match your current challenges with the right level of support. Whether you're refining routines, addressing ongoing issues, or preparing for court action, these options are structured to give you clarity, reduce uncertainty, and help you move forward with confidence.

Service	Best For	What You Get	Investment
Free 15-Minute Case Assessment	You're unsure where to start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-minute call with an attorney • Quick diagnosis of next step • No commitment, no retainer. 	Free
Document Review — \$97 (basic)	You already have notes, messages, or drafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of your issue log or draft forms (Basic) 	\$97
Comprehensive — \$197		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written feedback on what's legally persuasive (Comprehensive) • Clear list of next steps (Comprehensive) 	\$197
Strategy Session — \$197	You're facing missed exchanges, unpaid expenses, or confusion about your order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-hour strategy call • Enforcement, modification, or filing game plan • Follow-up checklist & template links 	\$197
Filing Packet — \$197	You're starting from scratch (divorce or paternity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisconsin-specific, ready-to-file forms • Step-by-step instructions • Sample completed forms 	\$197
Contempt or Modification Packet — \$347	You need to enforce or change an existing order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion and affidavit templates • Filing and service instructions • Includes sample affidavits and model language Wisconsin judges prefer. 	\$347
Custom Parenting Plan Drafting — \$497	You need a new or updated plan tailored to your family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney-drafted parenting plan based on your goals • 20-minute revision call • Editable Word + final PDF versions 	\$497

All services are flat-fee and designed for Wisconsin family court. You maintain control—no retainers, no hidden costs.



WHEN FREE TOOLS AREN'T ENOUGH

If the same issues continue after you have (1) made clear written requests and (2) kept a neutral record of dates, facts, and proof, you may be dealing with a legal structure or compliance issue—not a communication issue. This page shows the most common next step based on what you need: forms to file, enforcement, or modification.

I. You Need Legal Forms If:

- You're separating and nothing is in writing
- You need to establish custody, a placement schedule, or a child support obligation
- Your informal arrangement is falling apart

→ **Wisconsin Filing Packet — \$197**

II. You Need Enforcement If:

- Your co-parent ignores the schedule
- Reimbursements go unpaid
- Required actions aren't taken (refinance, property division)

→ **Contempt Packet — \$347**

III. You Need Modification If:

- Kids' needs changed
- Your order is too vague
- Schedules no longer fit life

→ **Custom Parenting Plan — \$497**

→ **Modification Motion Packet — \$347**

IV. Not sure what you need?

→ **Free 15-Minute Case Assessment**

You talk. We listen. You get a clear next step. Informational consult only. *Availability may vary.*

Take the Next Step — Without Paying a Retainer

