



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Child-Focused Parenting Time Guide

Prepared by the Minnesota State Court Administrator's
Advisory Committee on Child-Focused Parenting Time

This Guide is located on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch website](#).

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Acknowledgements

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Overview

In November 1995, following a legislative request, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued an Order establishing the Advisory Task Force¹ on Visitation and Child Support Enforcement. The order directed the Task Force to examine a variety of topics related to child support and visitation.

The Task Force met from December 1995 through December 1996. In January 1997, the Task Force submitted its [report and recommendations](#) to the Supreme Court. Included was a recommendation for the Court to “promulgate ‘reasonable visitation guidelines’ to be used in cases where parents with court-ordered ‘reasonable visitation’ are unable to agree about what is ‘reasonable’ and in all other cases as ordered by the court.”

In fall 1997, the Supreme Court convened a committee to draft a visitation guide. In January 1999, the Minnesota Conference of Chief Judges approved and published “A Parental Guide to Making Child-Focused Visitation Decisions.” It included children’s developmental milestones and visitation suggestions for each age and stage of development. In January 2001, following a statutory change in Minnesota family law terminology, the Guide was amended to replace “visitation” with “parenting time.”

Since the Guide’s publication, new information relating to child development and parenting time has surfaced, as well as statutory revisions relating to custody and parenting time. Given the new information and statutory revisions, in October 2015, an ad hoc group of parents, attorneys, child development experts, legislators, and dispute resolution professionals began meeting with the goal of drafting a revised Guide. Over the course of the next year, the ad hoc group drafted guiding principles for their work, an outline for a revised Guide, and rough drafts of various chapters.

Upon the request of the ad hoc workgroup, in November 2016 the State Court Administrator convened the Advisory Committee on Child-Focused Parenting Time for the purpose of drafting a revised Guide. The Committee included the members of the ad hoc group and added judges (see [Appendix A](#) for a list of members). The Committee began meeting in March 2017. In August 2018, the Committee distributed the first draft of the Guide for public. After analyzing the public comments and making revisions, the Committee finalized the Guide and submitted it to the State Court Administrator for publication. This Guide replaces the 2001 version.

¹ Members from all stakeholder groups (i.e. parents, attorneys, judges, child support enforcement, psychologists, etc.). A full list is in the [Advisory Task Force Report](#).

Legal Notice

The Minnesota Judicial Branch, Minnesota Supreme Court, the State Court Administrator's Office, and the authors of this Guide are not offering legal or other professional services through this Guide. They do not warrant that the information in this Guide is complete or accurate and do not assume and disclaim any liability to any person for any loss or damage caused by errors, inaccuracies, or omissions that may appear in this Guide.

This Guide does not replace federal or state law. This Guide does not provide legal opinions or legal advice and is not intended to serve as a substitute for the advice of licensed, legal professionals. This Guide is not intended to address custody or parental rights.

Laws and interpretations of laws change frequently, and the material contained in this Guide carries with it important legal consequences. Those using this Guide are solely responsible for determining the applicability of any information contained in this document to their situation and are strongly encouraged to seek professional legal and other expert assistance in resolving their parenting time issues.

Introduction

Assumptions

Children generally fare best when they have the emotional support and ongoing involvement of both parents. Most parents have the capacity to develop and sustain safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with their children. Developing and maintaining such relationships requires that children spend significant time with each parent, whenever possible.

There are many ways parents can respond to a child's needs with sensitivity and provide the child love and guidance, and these may differ between parents and among cultures. Positive involvement of both parents furthers the child's emotional and social development, academic achievement, and overall adjustment. Positive involvement also fosters healthy, lifelong parent-child relationships.

Purpose

This Guide is an educational tool to help parents and professionals understand concepts that are important for the wellbeing of children. The Guide is intended to encourage cooperation, not conflict, between parents. Users of this Guide are encouraged to read all sections as each section provides useful information that should be considered in developing a Child-Focused Parenting Time Schedule.

This Guide is designed to help parents create parenting time schedules that:

- focus on the child or children.

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- support a child’s developmental needs from infancy through adolescence.
- are consistent and predictable, yet flexible enough to accommodate the child’s changing needs.
- support safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between each child and both parents.
- consider when special circumstances exist.

This Guide may also be helpful to parents who want to revisit and revise their existing parenting time schedule. Parents may agree to change their parenting time schedule without going to court. However, parents must obtain a court order if they want a parenting time schedule, or changes to a parenting time schedule, to be legally enforceable. Forms to assist parents with child custody or parenting time are on the [Judicial Branch website](#).

Audience

This Guide is primarily for parents who agree to work together to create new parenting time schedules or to revisit existing parenting time schedules. It may also be used by others who are working with parents to create or revisit parenting time schedules, including:

- parents
- other persons seeking parenting time (family and non-family members)
- judicial officers
- attorneys
- guardians ad litem
- mental health professionals
- parenting educators
- neutral professionals, including:
 - mediators
 - evaluators (e.g., Early Neutral Evaluation, parenting time, custody)
 - parenting consultants
 - parenting time expeditors
 - special masters

Scope and Considerations

Parents, judges, and others creating parenting time schedules are not required to follow the suggestions in this Guide. This Guide does not:

- identify “required” or “best” parenting time schedules.
- prevent parents, judges, attorneys, evaluators, and others from creating a parenting time schedule that differs from the information provided in this Guide if they believe it is in the child’s best interests.
- replace or change any parenting time schedule agreed upon by the parents.
- replace or change any parenting time schedule set forth in a court order.

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- apply to all families or to all children in all circumstances.

Differences Between a “Parenting Plan” and a “Parenting Time Schedule”

A parenting time schedule and a parenting plan are not the same thing. In Minnesota, the rights and responsibilities of each parent are determined in either an order designating custody or a parenting plan, but not both. Orders designating custody and parenting plans are governed by different statutes and have different legal requirements. However, every custody order and every parenting plan must contain a parenting time schedule. This Guide is intended to provide information to help parents and others set child-focused parenting time schedules that can be included in either a custody order or a parenting plan.

Resources for Developing and Revisiting Your Parenting Time Schedule

Parents may agree to use a neutral third party to help them discuss and develop their parenting time schedule or to make changes to an existing parenting time schedule. Parents may use professionals or non-professionals to assist them. One resource for additional information about neutral third parties is the [Judicial Branch Alternative Dispute Resolution \(ADR\) web page](#). Parents may also want to visit the [Judicial Branch Early Neutral Evaluation \(ENE\) page](#). Sample schedules are available from a variety of resources.

Child-Focused Considerations

It is important for parents to support each other’s safe and healthy relationship with the child. Forming, maintaining, and supporting a positive parent-child relationship with each parent is a life-long process, rooted in the early years and extending beyond childhood. Children adjust more easily to change, stress, and loss if their parents work together respectfully to develop healthy ways of communicating, resolving problems, and reducing conflict.

Changes in a child’s family due to separation, divorce, and/or parenting time disputes are stressful and disruptive for children. It is important for parents to be aware of stress their child is experiencing and develop ways to reduce it.

Parents can support their child’s adjustment to changes in the family by establishing developmentally sensitive schedules that preserve and support important relationships and minimize the level of conflict to which the child is exposed.

A parenting time schedule that is good for a child may not be ideal for a parent. To meet the best interests of their child, parents may need to make changes in their own schedules and lives. The parenting time schedule may be different than what a parent wants.

There are three styles of parenting that are often seen when parents live apart: cooperative, conflicted or disengaged. When parents are cooperative, they are able to effectively co-parent.

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Effective co-parenting usually involves low conflict, regular and frequent communication and the ability to make decisions together. Parents who co-parent in this way are able to support their child's development and family relationships and make decisions together based on their child's needs.

Some parents struggle to make co-parenting work. In families where there are high levels of conflict between the parents, parents may need a cooling off period. If the level of conflict interferes with the parents' ability to communicate and interact in the way that effective co-parenting requires, parents may choose a parallel parenting approach. Parallel parenting can shield a child from the harmful effects of the parents' conflict by allowing parents to care for the child with minimal interaction and limited communication until they learn co-parenting skills through parenting classes or counseling. Because a parallel parenting style requires clear and specific expectations regarding how parenting responsibilities will be managed, parents typically need help from legal or mental health professionals to handle these arrangements.

Most Children Benefit When...

1. Parents support their child's relationship with the other parent by:
 - helping the child have regular contact with the other parent when they are not together, such as by phone calls, video calls, texts, e-mail, cards, and letters;
 - speaking positively about the other parent;
 - responding positively when the child talks about their time with the other parent;
 - helping the child feel good about their time with the other parent;
 - showing each other respect when attending the child's activities at the same time;
 - supporting contact with grandparents, stepparents, and other extended family members so the child doesn't lose these relationships;
 - being flexible with parenting time so the child can take part in the other parent's special family celebrations and events;
 - allowing the child to display pictures of the other parent and other family members.
 - respecting differences in parenting styles and practices;
 - ensuring both parents have the opportunity to provide care that supports the child's development; and
 - signing a child up for activities that affect the other parent's parenting time only after agreement of the other parent.
2. Parents support consistency in their child's life by:
 - following the parenting time schedule;
 - explaining the parenting time schedule to the child in age-appropriate words;
 - creating a parenting time schedule that supports the amount of sleep the child needs at each age;
 - following similar times for bedtime and naptime in each home; and

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- sharing information about the child, such as illness, medication, behavior, and discipline.
3. Parents support their child's activities and friendships by:
 - keeping each other informed about the child's friends, activities, and events;
 - allowing the child to attend their activities and events;
 - attending the child's activities and events when appropriate;
 - arranging or providing transportation for the child; and
 - making sure the child has what they need to participate, such as athletic equipment or musical instruments.
 4. Parents communicate positively with each other by:
 - using respectful communication with the other parent;
 - agreeing on communication methods with the other parent;
 - letting the other parent know about the child's activities and appointments as soon as possible;
 - giving as much advance notice as possible to the other parent about special occasions or requested changes to the schedule; and
 - providing the other parent with travel plans and how the child and the parent can be reached.
 5. Parents support conflict-free parenting time transitions by:
 - treating the other parent respectfully;
 - encouraging and helping the child transition to the care of the other parent;
 - being on time and informing the other parent if there are unavoidable delays;
 - having the child ready to go on time with the other parent;
 - letting the child carry "important" items with them between the parents' homes; such as clothes, toys, stuffed animals, and security blankets;
 - informing the other parent if another person will be taking the parent's place for the transition; and
 - being aware of the impact of having other people involved in the transition.

Most Children are Harmed When...

1. Parents do not support their child's relationship with the other parent by:
 - making the child choose between the parents or "take sides";
 - failing to show respect for the other parent.
 - questioning the child about the other parent's activities or relationships;

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- making negative remarks about the other parent or the other parent’s family, or allowing others to do so, when the child can hear them;
 - allowing the child to decide whether to go with the other parent for the scheduled parenting time;
 - discussing what led to the parents’ separation with the child or with others when the child can over-hear;
 - inappropriately using or requesting supervised parenting time;
 - failing to allow an infant or a child of any age to develop a relationship with the other parent;
 - inappropriately preventing or restricting the child’s contact with the other parent;
 - posting inappropriate photos, videos, and comments about the other parent or the other parent’s family on social media;
 - sharing information or documents with the child about the parents’ legal, financial, or other disagreements, including child support or what is going on in court; and
 - asking the child to keep secrets from the other parent.
2. Parents do not support consistency in their child’s life by:
- dropping in and out of the child’s life;
 - failing to show up on time or at all for scheduled parenting time;
 - failing to follow through on agreements about changes to the parenting time schedule;
 - failing to follow through on other commitments or agreements regarding the child; and
 - interfering with parenting time because child support has not been paid.
3. Parents do not communicate positively with each other by:
- using their child as a messenger, spy, or mediator;
 - using disrespectful language; and
 - failing to communicate with the other parent in a timely way.
4. Parents do not support conflict-free transitions for their child at the parenting time exchanges by:
- engaging in arguments;
 - showing a hostile attitude;
 - making negative remarks or gestures to the other parent;
 - engaging the child in extended good byes; and
 - bribing or guiltting the child not to go with the other parent.

Bonding and Attachment

Children's development is influenced by their experience of their relationship with each parent. This relationship is often referred to in terms of "bonding" or "attachment." "Bonding" is not the same as "attachment." Parents "bond" with children; children "attach" to parents. For parents, "bonding" is a feeling of emotional connection to their child, which often occurs after a short period of time. A child's "attachment" to each parent is based on the child's experience of the care and interaction received from that parent and forms over a longer period of time.

Attachment is a crucial part of the infant and young child's emotional, social, and physical development. Repeated patterns of sensitive, responsive, and consistent interactions and care are the foundation for healthy attachment and support healthy brain development. When infants and young children receive sensitive and responsive care, they develop a sense of trust in relationships. Healthy attachments help children develop the skills needed to manage stress and foster resilience.

As they get older, children who experience healthy attachments in infancy are able to feel close to others and care about others' feelings. They are also likely to have better social skills and higher self-esteem than children who do not experience healthy attachments. It is important that parents of infants and young children establish schedules that support the child's attachments and relationship needs with each parent.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a consideration when the parenting time schedule is created for an infant. Breastfeeding provides physical and emotional benefits to the child. Parenting time schedules can be revised as the child's feeding needs change. When exclusively breastfed, a child will benefit from frequent parenting time with the other parent. Where both parents have been engaged in an ongoing caregiving routine with a child who is fed breast milk, the same caregiving arrangement can be continued into the future in the parenting time schedule to maintain stability for the child.

Schedules Based on Developmental Needs

As noted earlier, children generally fare best when they have the emotional support and ongoing involvement of both parents. Establishing a parenting time schedule is one way to ensure and foster that involvement. The child's needs are key factors for parents to consider when establishing a parenting time schedule. These needs change as the child grows older and moves from one developmental stage to the next. The developmental needs of an infant, for example, are different from those of a toddler or a teenager. The next section provides more detail about the ages and stages of child development. Parents may want to specify in the parenting time schedule when the parenting time schedule may be modified based on children's ages. Overnights with a child of any age may be included in the parenting time schedule for each parent depending on child and parent factors.

Multiple Children in a Family at Different Ages

When there is more than one child in a family, it is usually beneficial for parents to create one parenting time schedule for all of the children. This is a supportive way to maintain sibling relationships. However, when there are significant age differences between siblings, children may benefit from different parenting time schedules due to their different developmental needs. In some cases, parents may wish to have older children and younger children on different schedules at first, and gradually transition the younger child into the older child's schedule. In other cases, younger children who have close relationships with older siblings may be able to follow a schedule that is designed around the older child's developmental needs, as the sibling relationship provides additional comfort and support for the younger child. When considering how to structure a parenting time schedule for children of different ages, it is important to consider each child's temperament, the child's relationship with each parent, and the child's relationship with the older siblings. Parents may also wish to have alone time with children of different ages and may want to create a schedule that includes alone times for each parent with each child.

Ages and Stages of Development

This section includes information about:

- the child's developmental considerations at various ages and stages of development.
- what parents should consider when creating a parenting time schedule.
- what parents can do to help support their child's healthy emotional growth at each stage of development.

Within each age and stage of development children are working to learn developmental tasks. Major changes in the child's life or environment can impact the child's ability to master new developmental tasks. Each child is unique and all children do not progress at the same rate. For example, some six-year-old children progress quickly and do what might be typical of an eight-year-old child, while other six-year-old children progress more slowly and do what might be typical of a five-year-old child.

The following is not a complete list of developmental considerations but includes those that are likely to be important in creating a parenting time schedule.

Birth to 9 Months

Infant's Developmental Considerations

- Making their needs known through crying or other signals.
- Establishing a sense of trust in the people who care for them.
- Learning to differentiate between important caregivers.
- Between 6 to 8 months, beginning to develop attachments to their caregivers.
- Becoming comfortable with other people who interact with them.
- At about 6 months, becoming uneasy around people the infant does not know.
- Becoming comfortable with their surroundings.
- Beginning to comfort themselves and establish patterns of sleeping and feeding.
- Infants do not have an ability to remember things they cannot see, including a parent who is not present.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Infants need their caregivers, surroundings, and routines to be predictable and responsive to their needs.
- Infants are totally dependent on their caregivers to meet their needs.
- Infants become attached to parents and others through consistent and loving responses to their needs, such as holding, playing, feeding, soothing, and talking gently and lovingly.
- Infants are sensitive to changes within each home and between homes.
- Infants do best when there is minimal disruption to their routine.
- Infants need their surroundings to be places of minimal stress.
- Infants exposed to anger, violence, and patterns of harsh tones of voice directed at them or others become stressed.
- Infants have an emotional memory for things that are frightening to them such as anger, violence, and harsh sounding voices.
- It is important to the infant's developing relationship with each parent to have frequent contact with both.
- Infants may show signs of stress while adjusting to a new caregiver.

What Parents Can Do To Support the Infant

- Create a parenting time schedule that is consistent and predictable.
- Ensure frequent contact with both parents.
- Establish and maintain consistent routines within and between households to help the infant develop a sense of security.
- Minimize disruptions to the infant's routine within and between households.
- Prevent the infant from being exposed to violence, anger, and harsh tones of voice.

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- Allow familiar and comforting objects, such as a blanket, a stuffed animal, and a pacifier, to move between homes with the infant.
- Offer comfort and soothing and loving responses when the infant is stressed.
- Provide the other parent information about the infant's feeding, napping, sleeping, toileting, bathing, illness, medication, and anything unusual that has occurred.

9 Months to 18 Months

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Continuing development of attachment relationships to caregivers.
- Continuing to develop trust in others.
- Developing motor skills (crawling, standing, walking, drinking from a cup, using a spoon).
- Exploring their surroundings through touch and taste.
- Continuing to develop internal patterns of waking, eating, and sleeping.
- Continuing to develop the ability to comfort themselves.
- Developing language from sounds to words.
- Developing ability to remember things they cannot see, including a parent who is not present.
- Showing signs of separation anxiety when separating from either parent or other important caregiver.
- Becoming upset during transitions from one parent to the other.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Children need their caregivers, surroundings, and routines to be predictable and responsive to their needs.
- Children become attached to parents and others through consistent and loving responses to their needs, such as holding, playing, feeding, soothing, and talking gently and lovingly.
- Children are sensitive to changes within each home and between homes.
- Children do best when there is minimal disruption to their routine.
- Children need their surroundings to be places of minimal stress. Children exposed to anger, violence, and patterns of harsh tones of voice directed at them or others become stressed.
- Children have an emotional memory for things that are frightening to them such as anger, violence, and harsh sounding voices.
- It is important for the young child's relationship with each parent to have frequent contact with both.
- Separation anxiety is normal while transitioning from caregivers and it does not necessarily mean there is a problem in either household.

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- Long separations from either parent may stress the child’s attachment relationship with that parent.
- Children may show signs of stress while adjusting to new caregiver.

What Parents Can Do To Support the Child

- Create a parenting time schedule that is consistent and predictable.
- Ensure frequent contact with both parents.
- Establish and maintain consistent routines within and between households to help the child develop a sense of security.
- Prevent the child from being exposed to violence, anger, and harsh tones of voice.
- Allow familiar and comforting objects, such as a blanket, a stuffed animal, and a pacifier, to move between homes with the child.
- Offer comfort and soothing and loving responses when the child is stressed.
- Provide the other parent information about the child’s feeding, napping, sleeping, toileting, bathing, illness, medication, and anything unusual that has occurred.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using baby gates, child locks, electrical outlet covers, and properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

18 Months to 24 Months

Child’s Developmental Considerations

- Developing motor skills (running, jumping, climbing).
- Developing language from words to two-word to three-word sentences.
- Engaging in imaginative and pretend play.
- Continuing to explore their surroundings through touch and taste.
- Continuing to develop the ability to comfort themselves and self-control.
- Continuing to develop internal patterns of waking, eating, and sleeping.
- Increasing ability to remember things they cannot see, including a parent who is not present.
- Decreasing signs of separation anxiety when separating from either parent or other important caregiver, but the child may still show other signs of being upset during transitions.
- Beginning to develop confidence in self.
- Increasing desire to do more for self, such as wanting to use a spoon or dress themselves.
- Understanding simple one-step instructions.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Child's relationship with parents and others is supported through consistent, predictable, loving responses and prompt attention to their needs.
- Children need their caregivers, surroundings, and routines to be predictable and responsive to their needs.
- Children are sensitive to changes within each home and between homes.
- Children do best when there is minimal disruption to their routine.
- Children need their surroundings to be places of minimal stress. Children exposed to anger, violence, and patterns of harsh words and voices directed at them or others become stressed.
- It is important to the young child's developing relationship with each parent to have frequent contact with both.
- Long separations from either parent may stress the child's attachment relationship with that parent.
- Moving between parents' homes may become difficult for some children at this age, and they may become upset. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the child doesn't want to be with the other parent.
- Children may show signs of stress while adjusting to new caregiver.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Create a parenting time schedule that is consistent and predictable.
- Ensure frequent contact with both parents.
- Establish and maintain consistent routines within and between households.
- Minimize disruptions to the child's routines within and between households.
- Prevent the child from being exposed to violence, anger, and harsh words and voices.
- Allow familiar and comforting objects, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, to move between homes with the child.
- Offer comfort and soothing and loving responses when the child is stressed.
- Provide the other parent information about the child's feeding, napping, sleeping, toileting, bathing, illness, medication, and anything unusual that has occurred.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using baby gates, child locks, electrical outlet covers, and properly securing guns and other dangerous items.
- Make transitions easier for their child, such as by redirecting the child's attention to something enjoyable or not having long good byes.

2 Years to 3 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Developing fine motor skills (drawing, coloring, using scissors).

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- Increasing gross motor skills and coordination (throwing and kicking a ball).
- Developing language to four- to six-word sentences.
- Exploring the world through play.
- Developing self-control, such as calming themselves when upset.
- Continuing to develop a sense of independence, which may include saying “no” or not cooperating.
- Increasing desire to do more for self, such as wanting to use a fork or wanting to pick out what to wear.
- Understanding simple two-step directions.
- Engaging in imaginative and pretend play.
- Expressing feelings in a physical way such through tantrums.
- Wanting to control their world or environment, which may be seen as resistance to all change including transitions between parents.
- Beginning potty training.
- Continuing to use parents and other important caregivers to help manage their emotions and stress, and to help them increase their comfort with new experiences.
- Learning rules, limits, and boundaries set by caregivers.
- Tolerating longer separations from each parent.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Children need patient, consistent, loving, and supportive care by creating an environment with clear structure and consistent, predictable routines.
- Children benefit from reminders that the other parent has not disappeared, will return, and continues to love them.
- When stressed, children may return to using behaviors from an earlier age or be unable to learn new skills. For example, a child who recently learned to walk begins crawling again, or a child who is toilet trained begins having accidents.
- Major changes in the child’s life or environment can impact the child’s readiness for and success at learning potty training.
- Moving between parents’ homes may be difficult for some children at this age, and they may become upset. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn’t a good parent or that the child doesn’t want to be with the other parent.
- Frequency of parenting time continues to be important.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage and give permission to the child to love both parents.
- Ensure that the transitions between the two parents’ homes are free of parental hostility, arguing, and tension.
- Help the child manage their emotions and stress.

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- Avoid power struggles with the child.
- Provide opportunities for exploration and independence.
- Continue to provide supervision, encouragement, and direct caregiver involvement.
- Develop predictable and similar routines in each parent's home, such as times for naps, dinner and bedtime.
- Allow familiar and comforting objects, such as blanket or stuffed animal, to go between homes with the child.
- Make transitions easier for the child, such as by redirecting the child's attention to something enjoyable or not having long goodbyes.
- Allow the child to have a picture of the other parent.
- Determine the child's readiness for potty training.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using child locks, electrical outlet covers, and properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

3 Years to 6 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Using play to explore feelings, ideas, and interests.
- Learning to manage feelings.
- Expressing feelings in a physical way such as hitting, biting, and throwing things.
- Being fearful about new experiences, such as the start of school.
- Having difficulty managing fears, such as monsters under the bed.
- Being curious, observant, and asking questions, such as "why."
- Imitating their parents and other important people in their lives.
- Beginning to develop relationships with other children.
- Developing a sense of right and wrong and the difference between telling the truth and telling a lie.
- Beginning to understand other people's feelings.
- Beginning to learn reading, writing, and math.
- Tending to be literal in their thinking, such as a child saying "I was home alone," when the child was alone in a room while the parent was in another part of the home.
- Beginning to understand time concepts, and using words like "hour," "day," or "week" without knowing what they mean.
- Saying what they believe each parent wants to hear.
- Stating preferences without understanding the meaning or impact. For example, a child may say they want more time with one parent without understanding that will result in less time with the other parent.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Children need patient, consistent, loving and supportive care by creating an environment with clear structure and consistent, predictable routines.
- Some children will do better with longer blocks of parenting time and fewer transitions, while other children will do better with shorter blocks of time and more frequent transitions.
- When stressed, child may return to using behaviors from an earlier age or be unable to learn new skills. For example, a child who is toilet trained begins having accidents.
- Children at older end of this age group may say what they believe each parent wants to hear and may be saying something different to each parent.
- Moving between parents' homes may be difficult for some children at this age, and they may become upset. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the child doesn't want to be with the other parent.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage and give permission to the child to love both parents.
- Ensure that transitions between parents are free of parental hostility, arguing, and tension.
- Support the child developing relationships with other children.
- Encourage and support the child to manage their fears and anxieties.
- Help the child to use words to identify and express feelings.
- Let the child talk about what they do in the other parent's home without pressuring the child to share information.
- Do not ask children to keep secrets between homes.
- Avoid arguing with the other parent about what the child is saying to each parent.
- Avoid questioning the child about what the child is saying to each parent and what the other parent is saying to the child. Instead, communicate directly with the other parent.
- Do not use the child to send messages to the other parent.
- Allow familiar and comforting objects, such as blanket or stuffed animal, to go between homes with the child.
- Make transitions easier for the child, such as by redirecting the child's attention to something enjoyable or not having long goodbyes.
- Allow the child to have a picture of the other parent.
- Use a calendar to help the child know when they will be in each parent's care, such as marking the days of each parent's time in a different color.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

6 Years to 10 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Learning and school become the central focus of their day.
- Increasing importance of relationships with other children.
- Expanding their experiences outside of the family, such as playing sports or going to camp.
- Developing a sense of what they enjoy and what they are good at.
- Understanding and following rules.
- Increasing ability to manage different rules and parenting styles in each parent's home.
- Expressing preferences and advocating for themselves.
- Beginning to develop a sense of personal responsibility, such as organizing their backpack.
- Using play and games to explore feelings, ideas, and interests
- Continuing to learn to manage feelings, fears, and anxieties.
- Expanding their understanding of other people's feelings.
- Imitating their parents and other important people in their lives.
- Saying what they believe each parent wants to hear.
- Tending to be concrete in their thinking, such as a six-year-old child saying "I was home alone," when the child was alone in a room while the parent was in another part of the home.
- Understanding of time concepts such as "hour," "day," or "week" becomes more reliable.
- Stating preferences without understanding the meaning or impact. For example, a child may say they want more time with one parent without understanding that will result in less time with the other parent.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Children need patient, consistent, loving and supportive care by creating an environment with clear structure and consistent, predictable routines.
- Some children will do better with longer blocks of parenting time and fewer transitions, while other children will do better with shorter blocks of time and more frequent transitions.
- When stressed, child may return to using behaviors from an earlier age or be unable to learn new skills. For example, a child who has previously sucked their thumb may start to suck their thumb again.
- Children may say what they believe each parent wants to hear and may be saying something different to each parent.

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- Some children may express a preference to spend longer periods of time with each parent and to have fewer transitions between their parents' homes, while others may express a preference for greater flexibility and more frequent transitions.
- Moving between parents' homes may be difficult for some children and they may become upset. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the child doesn't want to be with the other parent.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage and give permission to the child to love both parents.
- Ensure that transitions between parents are free of parental hostility, arguing and tension.
- Support the child to keep in contact with the other parent when not in that parent's home.
- Support the child's interests and activities.
- Support the child developing relationships with other children.
- Encourage and support the child to manage their fears and anxieties.
- Help children manage their feelings about missing events in either parent's home.
- Help the child to use words to identify and express feelings.
- Keep informed about child's schoolwork and projects and assist as needed.
- Let the child talk about what they do in the other parent's home without pressuring the child to share information.
- Do not ask children to keep secrets between homes.
- Understand a child may say different things to each parent.
- Avoid arguing with the other parent about what the child is saying to each parent.
- Avoid questioning the child about what the child is saying to each parent and what the other parent is saying to the child. Instead, communicate directly with the other parent.
- Do not use the child to send messages to the other parent.
- Allow the child to have a picture of the other parent.
- Help the child organize what they need to take to each parent's home, such as clothes, homework, sports equipment, musical instruments, etc.
- Use a calendar to help the child know when they will be in each parent's care, such as marking the days of each parent's time in a different color, and to keep track of events and activities.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the child being able to complete their homework, attend activities, and spend time with friends.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

10 Years to 13 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Increasing desire for independence and beginning to shift primary focus from family to friends, sports, and other interests.
- Increasing importance of social activities and acceptance by other children.
- Increasing ability to think logically, express opinions and preferences, and argue their viewpoint.
- Increasing capacity to understand time and to make future plans, including a parenting time schedule they have not yet experienced.
- Experiencing hormonal changes and mood shifts associated with puberty.
- Continuing to learn to manage feelings, fears, and anxieties.
- Continuing to expand their understanding of other people's feelings.
- Starting to use abstract thinking, such as being concerned about the "fairness" of the schedule for either parent.
- Stating preferences without understanding the impact. For example, a child may request a specific parenting time schedule without understanding the impact on their access to friends and activities.
- Continuing to develop a sense of what they enjoy and what they are good at.
- Understanding different parenting styles and following different rules in each parent's home.
- Beginning to challenge rules.
- Developing a sense of personal responsibility, such as completing and handing in their homework.
- Beginning to experiment with risky behaviors such as using alcohol and drugs, and breaking rules.
- Adjusting to the demands of middle school, which may be stressful.

Parenting Time Considerations

- The child may feel the need to choose sides, especially if there is a lot of conflict between parents.
- The child may want to have a say in creating the parenting time schedule, such as how often the child goes between homes.
- The child may request a temporary adjustment in the parenting time schedule because of activities and events. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent is undermining the parent-child relationship, but indicates the child's wish to have more input in the decisions that are made about them.
- Recognize that parents may differ in their expectations about the balance between family time and time the child spends with friends and in activities.
- Understand the demands of middle school/junior high may be stressful to the child.

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- The child may begin to spend more time at home alone, such as before or after school.
- Children continue to need patient, consistent, loving and supportive care.
- Children have an increasing ability to be flexible with routines.
- Some children may do better with or express a preference for longer blocks of parenting time and fewer transitions.
- Children may say what they believe each parent wants to hear and may be saying something different to each parent.
- Moving between parents' homes may be difficult for some children and they may become resistant. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the child doesn't want to be with the other parent.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage and give permission to the child to love both parents.
- Help the child understand that the parents may have different expectations about family time and the time the child spends with friends and in activities.
- Be sensitive to and help the child develop ways to manage the demands of middle/junior high school, such as peer pressure, homework, and activities.
- Help the child understand the changes that come with puberty.
- Discourage the child from "choosing sides" between the parents.
- Be flexible so the child can spend time with friends as well as family.
- Understand that a teen's request to adjust the parenting time schedule can be due to many factors and does not necessarily mean the other parent is influencing the teen's opinion.
- Listen to the child's wishes about the parenting time schedule, while letting the child know the parents will decide.
- Understand children still need supervision but want more time away from parents to be with friends.
- Be alert to signs the teen may be engaging in risky behavior and discuss concerns with the other parent.
- Support the child's participation in activities and social relationships by:
 - keeping each other informed about the child's activities and events.
 - making sure the child has the necessary sports equipment, musical instruments, etc.
 - attending events.
 - providing transportation.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the child being able to complete their homework, attend activities, and spend time with friends.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

13 Years to 15 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Increasing sense of independence with more focus on friends, activities, and other interests, while continuing to need family support and guidance.
- Experiencing changing emotions and mood shifts associated with hormonal changes resulting from puberty.
- Increasing ability to think logically, express opinions and preferences, and argue their viewpoint.
- Developing their own values and morals.
- Continuing to challenge rules.
- Continuing to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Continuing to expand ability to understand others' perspectives, but are still self-focused.
- Increasing influence of friends on beliefs and behaviors in both helpful and harmful ways.
- Developing an interest in romantic relationships.
- Experimenting with risky behavior such as using alcohol and drugs, sexual activity, and breaking rules.
- Understanding different parenting styles and following different rules in each parent's home.
- Increasing sense of personal responsibility, such as coming home from a friend's house when they are supposed to.
- Completing school projects without parents' assistance
- Adjusting to the demands of middle school/high school may be stressful to the child.

Parenting Time Considerations

- The teen may want to have a say in creating the parenting time schedule, such as how often the teen goes between homes.
- The teen may request flexibility in the parenting time schedule because of activities and events.
- Listen to the child's wishes about the parenting time schedule, while letting the teen know the parents will decide.
- If a teen resists following the parenting time schedule, both parents need to let the teen know they expect the teen to follow the schedule.
- The teen may feel the need to choose sides, especially if there is a lot of conflict between parents.
- Teens may say what they believe each parent wants to hear and may be saying something different to each parent.

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- The teen may request flexibility in the parenting time schedule because of activities and events. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent is undermining the parent-child relationship, but indicates the teen's wish to have more input in the decisions that are made about them.
- Recognize that parents may differ in their expectations about the balance between family time and time the teen spends with friends and in activities.
- Understand the need for increased flexibility in developing and revisiting the parenting time schedule based on the teen's school, activities, social relationships and jobs.
- Understand the demands of middle school/high school may be stressful to the teen.
 - Be alert to signs the teen may be engaging in risky behavior.
- Teens continue to need patient, consistent, loving and supportive care.
- Some teens may do better with or express a preference for longer blocks of parenting time and fewer transitions.
- Moving between parents' homes may be difficult for some teens and they may become resistant. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the teen doesn't want to be with the other parent.
- Understand that the teen sees the time as "their" time not the parent's parenting time.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage the child to love both parents.
- Listen to the teen's wishes about the parenting time schedule, while letting the teen know the parents will decide.
- If a teen resists following the parenting time schedule, both parents need to let the teen know they expect the teen to follow the schedule.
- Confirm any temporary changes in the parenting time schedule directly with the other parent, not through the teen.
- Help the teen understand that the parenting time schedule defines when each parent is responsible for the teen.
- Understand that a teen's request to adjust the parenting time schedule can be due to many factors and does not necessarily mean the other parent is influencing the teen's opinion.
- Help the teen understand that the parents may have different expectations about family time and the time the teen spends with friends and in activities.
- Be sensitive to and help the teen develop ways to manage the demands of high school, such as peer pressure, homework, and activities.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the teen's academic achievement and participation in important activities including sports, the arts, clubs, and the child's unique interests.
- Discourage the teen from "choosing sides" between the parents.

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- Be flexible so the teen can spend time with friends as well as family.
- Be alert to signs the teen may be engaging in risky behavior and discuss concerns with the other parent.
- Help the teen understand the changes that come with puberty.
- Support the teen's participation in activities and social relationships by:
 - keeping each other informed about the teen's friends, activities, and events.
 - making sure the teen has the necessary sports equipment, musical instruments, etc.
 - attending events.
 - providing transportation.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the teen being able to complete their homework, attend activities, and spend time with friends.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

15 Years to 18 Years

Child's Developmental Considerations

- Increasing sense of independence with more focus on friends, activities, and other interests, while continuing to need family support and guidance.
- Experiencing changing emotions and mood shifts associated with hormonal changes resulting from puberty.
- Continuing to develop their own values and morals.
- Expanding ability to understand others' perspectives and feelings.
- Continuing to develop an interest in romantic relationships.
- Increasing influence of friends on beliefs and behaviors in both helpful and harmful ways.
- Continuing to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Increasing ability to think logically, express opinions and preferences, and argue their viewpoint.
- Continuing to challenge rules.
- Increasing sense of personal responsibility, such as getting to jobs on time.
- Understanding different parenting styles and following different rules in each parent's home.
- Adjusting to the demands of high school and planning for life after high school may be stressful to the teen.
- May be learning to drive a car.
- May be experimenting with risky behaviors such as using alcohol and drugs, sexual activity, and breaking rules.

Parenting Time Considerations

- Parents should understand that the brain is not fully developed until a person is in their 20s.
- Teens may sound mature and logical, but that may not be reflected in their behavior or decision-making.
- The teen will want to have a say in developing or revisiting the parenting time schedule, such as how often the teen goes between homes.
- Consider increased flexibility in developing and revisiting the parenting time schedule based on the teen's school, activities, social relationships and jobs.
- Teens may spend less time with each parent because of their work, activities, and social life.
- Listen to the teen's wishes about the parenting time schedule, while letting the teen know the parents will decide.
- If a teen resists following the parenting time schedule, both parents need to let the teen know they expect the teen to follow the schedule.
- The teen may feel the need to choose sides, especially if there is a lot of conflict between parents.
- The teen may request flexibility in the parenting time schedule because of activities and events. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent is undermining the parent-child relationship, but indicates the teen's wish to have more input in the decisions that are made about them.
- Recognize that parents may differ in their expectations about the balance between family time and time the teen spends with friends, at work, and in activities.
- Understand the demands of high school and planning for life after high school may be stressful to the teen.
- Teens continue to need patient, consistent, loving and supportive care.
- Some teens may do better with or express a preference for longer blocks of parenting time and fewer transitions.
- Some teens may say what they believe each parent wants to hear and may be saying something different to each parent.
- Moving between parents' homes may be difficult for some teens and they may become resistant. This does not necessarily mean that the other parent isn't a good parent or that the teen doesn't want to be with the other parent.
- Understand that the teen sees the time as "their" time, not the parent's parenting time.

What Parents Can Do to Support the Child

- Encourage and give permission to the child to love both parents.
- Communicate regarding the teen's schedules and whereabouts.

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- Although there is no age at which a teen gets to decide a parenting time schedule, seek the input of older teens when creating or revisiting a schedule, while letting the teen know the parents will decide.
- If a teen resists following the parenting time schedule, both parents need to let the teen know they expect the teen to follow the schedule.
- Confirm directly with the other parent any temporary changes in the parenting time schedule that the teen says the other parent has agreed to.
- Help the teen understand that the parenting time schedule defines when each parent is responsible for the teen.
- Understand that a teen's request to adjust the parenting time schedule can be due to many factors and does not necessarily mean the other parent is influencing the teen's opinion.
- Help the teen understand that the parents may have different expectations about family time and the time the teen spends with friends and in activities.
- Be sensitive to and help the teen develop ways to manage the demands of high school, such as peer pressure, homework, activities, and planning for life after high school.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the teen's academic achievement and participation in important activities including sports, the arts, clubs, and the teen's unique interests.
- Discourage the teen from "choosing sides" between the parents.
- Be alert to signs the teen may be engaging in risky behavior and discuss concerns with the other parent.
- Support the teen's participation in activities, social relationships, and work by:
 - keeping each other informed about the teen's friends, activities, and events
 - making sure the teen has the necessary sports equipment, musical instruments, etc.
 - attending events
 - providing or arranging transportation.
- Create a parenting time schedule that supports the teen being able to complete their homework, attend activities, spend time with friends, and work.
- Create a safe physical environment in each home such as using properly securing guns and other dangerous items.

Additional Considerations When Creating a Parenting Time Schedule

In addition to the child development considerations, parents should also consider:

- each child's school calendar, location, and start and end times of the school day.
- each child's before and after school care arrangements.
- each child's childcare calendar, location, and start and end times.

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- each child’s activities and commitments, such as time with friends, sports teams, and part-time work.
- each parent’s work schedule and other commitments.
- how the parenting time schedule impacts the child’s ability to maintain relationships with siblings, other children in each home, relatives, and friends.
- travel time between parents’ homes, parents’ work places, child’s school, child care, and child’s activities.
- how the child will get to and from school, child care, and activities.
- how the parenting time schedule, including travel time, affects a child’s ability to complete homework, have meals, and get enough sleep.

Alternative Summer Parenting Time Schedule

It is important for parents to decide whether to include a different parenting time schedule for the summer. Some families have different parenting time schedules for the summer and the school year because:

- the child’s schedule and activities may change.
- a parent may have more or less time to care for the child.
- a child who has less time with one parent during the school year may benefit from more time with that parent during the summer.
- the pick-up and drop off times and locations may change during the summer.
- child care arrangements may change.
- parents live a significant distance from each other.

Ensuring Complete Parenting Time Coverage

A common source of conflict is when parents do not specify in the parenting time schedule which parent is responsible for the child during school or day care hours and what to do if the child becomes ill or there is a school closure. Including language to address this may be helpful to avoid confusion. It is important there is no gap in the parenting time schedule for when parents are responsible for the child. For example, if Parent A’s parenting time ends at 8:00 am on Monday when the child is dropped off at school, that’s when Parent B’s parenting time starts. Parent B is then responsible for making arrangements to pick up and care for the child if the child gets sick at school, unless the parents have otherwise agreed in advance.

Holidays, School Breaks, and Vacations

Holidays, school breaks, summers, vacations, and special events are important parts of the child’s life and will impact the regular parenting time schedule. A family’s traditions and religious and cultural observances are also important considerations. Parents may want to

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balance past traditions and practices with the creation of new ones, recognizing there are now two households.

When creating their parenting time schedules, many parents find it helpful to first create their regular parenting time schedule for the day-to-day care of the child and then add parenting time for holidays, school breaks, and vacations. See [Appendix B – Parenting Time Schedule Instructions and Templates](#).

It is important for parents to include holiday, school break, and vacation parenting time schedules. Holiday parenting time and school break parenting time take priority over regular parenting time and vacation parenting time, and vacation parenting time takes priority over regular parenting time.

Parents should also consider:

- whether holiday, school break, and vacation parenting time schedules affect child care arrangements. For example, if the regular child care provider will not be available over a holiday or school break, what alternative arrangements will be made?
- whether the school district allows taking the child out of school for a vacation.
- what adjustments, if any, will be made to the regular parenting time schedule if a holiday, school break, or vacation results in one parent having three weekends in a row.
- the specific days and times the transitions will take place for holidays, school breaks, and vacations. For example, the parents could agree that “Spring Break begins at 5:00 pm on the last day of school before break and ends at 6:00 pm on the day before school resumes.” If there is a schedule for phone calls or video chats, whether that schedule will be the same during holiday, school break, and vacation parenting time.

Holiday Parenting Time

It is important for parents to identify the specific legal and religious holidays and cultural observances they want to include in their parenting time schedule. The holiday schedule may also include the child’s and parents’ birthdays, and Mother’s and Father’s Day.

It is important for parents to decide:

- whether they will alternate holidays within a calendar year. For example, the parents could agree that “Parent A has Memorial Day, Parent B has July 4th, and Parent A has Labor Day.”
- whether they will rotate holidays based on odd numbered years and even numbered years. For example, the parents could agree that “Parent A has July 4th in even-numbered years (2020, 2022, etc.) and Parent B has July 4th in odd-numbered years (2021, 2023, etc.).”

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- whether the holiday is scheduled on the actual day or different day, such as scheduling Thanksgiving on Friday.
- whether the holiday will include additional days. For example, whether the Memorial Day holiday will be Monday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm or the weekend from Friday at 5:00 pm through Monday at 6:00 pm.
- whether one parent will have the same holiday every year. For example, the parents may agree “Parent A has Labor Day every year.”

School Break Parenting Time

Many parents include the school breaks in their holiday schedule. School breaks and release days may be different from school to school and district to district. Each school determines its calendar. The calendar is published on the school’s website before each school year starts.

It is important for parents to decide:

- whether they will follow the regular parenting time schedule during school breaks.
- whether to combine a holiday that falls within a school break and, if so, how. For example, parents may agree “the parent who has Spring Break will also have the Easter holiday if it falls during Spring Break.”
- the start and end days and times for their school break parenting time. For example, if a child is out of school Monday through Friday, parents will need to decide whether to include one or both weekends on either side of those days.
- whether they will alternate the whole school break from year to year or divide the breaks between them each year.

Vacation Parenting Time

Vacation parenting time is an extended period of time that may or may not involve travel. It is important for parents to decide:

- how much vacation parenting time each parent will have each year.
- how much vacation parenting time may be taken at one time. For example, parents may agree that they each have two weeks of vacation each year and that they may take one two-week vacation or two one-week vacations.
- whether the vacation parenting time will change as the child gets older.
- how a “week” of vacation parenting time will be defined. For example, the parents may agree that a “week of vacation parenting time” is seven continuous days that includes one’s own parenting time weekend or they may agree that a “week of vacation parenting time” is seven continuous days that includes the other parent’s weekend.
- how much advance notice must be given to the other parent before the start of vacation parenting time. For example, parents may agree to give each other 30 days’ advance notice or notice no later than May 1.

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- which parent has first choice if both parents give notice of the same dates for vacation parenting time. For example, Parent A has first choice in odd-numbered years and Parent B has first choice in even-numbered years.

Transitions (Exchanges)

A “transition” (also referred to as an “exchange”) occurs when a child moves from one parent’s care to the other parent’s care. Establishing supportive and conflict-free transitions benefits children. The behavior of each parent at transitions, including what they say and how they act, may affect the child. In some situations, such as when parents have had high conflict, transitions may be less stressful for children and parents if they do not involve direct contact between the parents. See the section on [Child-Focused Considerations](#) for information on how parents may support conflict-free parenting time transitions.

Some parents are able to communicate successfully about the child during transitions, while others may find it helpful to communicate about the child before or after the transition by phone, text, email, or notebook.

When establishing parenting time transitions, parents should consider that transitions may be hard for some children. In addition, transitions:

- may occur directly between parents or a parent and another person with whom the child is comfortable.
- from one parent to the other may not be appropriate in situations with concerns about a parent’s safety.
- may occur directly from one parent to the other at either parent’s home. When transitions occur at a parent’s home, parents should consider whether it will create a smoother transition for the child if the child is picked up by the parent starting their parenting time or dropped off by the parent ending their parenting time.
- may include a parent walking the child to the door
- may include the child walking to the door by themselves while the parent waits until the child enters the other parent’s home.
- may occur at the child’s day care or school, a public location, or another location midway between the parents’ homes or work places for safety or convenience.
- typically involve the exchange of children’s belongings, including clothing, toys, comfort items, sports equipment, musical instruments, and electronic devices.

Parents may want to minimize the number of transitions per week for older children or have more frequent transitions for younger children.

Building Relationships: Establishing or Reestablishing Contact

Even though a child may have had limited or no contact with a parent, it is possible for that parent to build or re-build a relationship with the child. Building or re-building a child's relationship with a parent may be important for the child's mental health and development. Lack of contact or limited contact with a parent may have occurred for a variety of reasons. Both parents will need to support the child building a relationship with that parent.

Parents may want to consider the services of a mental health professional to assist them and the child to establish contact. Parents may also want to consider starting with brief periods of contact and increasing the amount of contact, both in frequency and duration, as the relationship grows.

Parents should consider a number of factors when establishing or re-establishing contact, including:

- the parent's readiness to meet the child's needs.
- the child's readiness for meeting and spending time with the parent.
- whether any special issues exist that require supervised parenting time.
- using the services of a mental health professional to assist them and the child in establishing or re-establishing contact.
- starting with brief periods of contact and increasing the amount of contact, both in frequency and duration, as the relationship grows.

Long Distance Parenting Time

When parents live in different cities, states, or countries, distance and travel times between parents' homes will affect the parenting time schedule.

Parents should consider:

- the age of the child and whether the child is able to travel alone.
- whether a parent or other adult will accompany the child.
- whether a parent will travel to the child for parenting time.
- how to support the child's adjustment to time zone changes.
- whether there will be a different parenting time schedule during school breaks and summer.
- how the costs of travel affect the frequency and duration of parenting time.
- using technology to maintain frequent contact between periods of in-person parenting time.
- how to cooperate to obtain and hold a passport for the child.
- additional information available through the US Department of State website regarding children and international travel.

Physical and Mental Health Issues and Disabilities

Parent-Related Issues

A parent's physical or mental health issues or disabilities may or may not affect a parent's ability to care for the child. If these issues affect the child's safety or developmental needs, parents should consider whether:

- the parenting time schedule needs to be limited in frequency or duration or both.
- special arrangements for transitions or transportation are necessary.
- parenting time needs to be supervised.
- parenting time needs to be conditioned on certain requirements such as taking medications as prescribed.
- the impact on parenting time will be short term or long term.

If a parent addresses the issues that led to a special parenting time schedule, the parents may want to revisit the parenting time schedule.

Child-Related Issues

When children have special needs due to diagnosed or professionally identified physical or mental health issues or disabilities, parents should consider the following when setting the parenting time schedule:

- each parent's understanding of the child's special needs.
- each parent's willingness to ensure the child receives needed services.
- how to ensure both parents receive information from providers.
- the location of providers from whom the child receives treatment.
- how to ensure the child is transported to and from the child's appointments.
- how to ensure the child receives any recommended in-home services.
- how to ensure the child receives prescribed medications and recommended treatments such as physical therapy exercises.
- cooperating with the school on recommended ways to support the child's learning, such as how to help the child with homework.
- how to allocate government benefits, such as Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and respite care, between households.
- how to create a parenting time schedule for a child who needs a higher level of structure, routine, and predictability, such as a child who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Alcohol and Drug Use Issues

Alcohol and drug use issues can affect parenting and parenting time. Alcohol and drug use can affect the parent's ability to meet the child's physical and emotional needs, adequately supervise the child, dependability, and/or keep the child safe.

When setting the parenting time schedule, parents should consider whether:

- police or a child protection agency has been involved related to alcohol or drug use.
- friends or family have reported concerns about alcohol or drug use when the children are present.
- the child has reported concerning behavior related to alcohol or drug use.
- the parent has come to transitions or events under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If alcohol or drug use affects the child's safety or the parent's ability to meet the developmental needs, parents should consider:

- requiring sobriety during and for a specific number of hours before parenting time.
- requiring testing or monitoring for sobriety before, during, or after parenting time.
- requiring a chemical use assessment, requiring that relevant individuals are contacted for input, and following all recommendations.
- requiring the parents to successfully complete a treatment program and follow after-care recommendations.
- limiting parenting time frequency or duration or both.
- making special arrangements for transitions or transportation.
- requiring supervised parenting time.

If a parent addresses the issues that led to a special parenting time schedule, the parents may want to revisit the parenting time schedule.

Domestic Violence and Abusive Behavior

Children are harmed when they witness, experience, or are aware of violence or abusive behavior within their family. Domestic violence or abusive behavior may be physical, sexual, or psychological. It may involve threatened or actual destruction of property or harm to animals, including pets and farm animals. It may not involve physical violence, but may involve extreme control, including financial control, monitoring, stalking, or harassment. Children are also harmed by physical or emotional neglect.

Abusive behavior may vary in frequency, severity, history, and duration. Domestic violence and abusive behavior may occur before or after parents separate.

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Domestic violence and abusive behavior may be committed by one parent against the other, by both parents against each other, or by one or both parents against the child or siblings. Domestic violence and abusive behavior may also be done by other family members and parents' significant others.

The history, nature, context, and extent of abuse within the family may require special parenting time arrangements.

Options for Parenting Time when Domestic Violence or Abusive Behavior Has Occurred

Children need safe parenting time arrangements. When domestic violence or abusive behavior has occurred, one or more of the following conditions may need to be in place to ensure that parenting time is safe for all family members:

- transitions in public locations.
- transitions at law enforcement sites.
- transitions with no contact between parents, such as at school, day care, or at a supervised parenting time center.
- supervised parenting time, such as by a relative or family friend.
- professionally supervised parenting time.
- parenting time that occurs only during therapy sessions.
- no parenting time until certain conditions have been met, such as treatment for the abusive behavior.
- monitored or supervised telephone or video-chats with the child.

If the issues that led to a special parenting time schedule are addressed, the parents may wish to revisit the parenting time schedule.

Options for Parent-to-Parent Communication when Domestic Violence or Abusive Behavior within the Family has Occurred:

- a shared online calendar.
- electronic communications such as emails or texts.
- an agreed upon third party.

Additional information about domestic violence and abusive behaviors and its impact on parents and children is available from resources around the state. Access these resources from the [Minnesota Judicial Branch Website](#).

Revisiting and Changing Parenting Time Schedules

Parents may agree to revisit the parenting time schedule when there are changes in the lives of the child or parents that affect the parenting time schedule. Revisiting the schedule may involve

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increasing or decreasing the frequency or length of time with either parent. Some children may benefit from changes to the parenting time schedule that are gradual.

Parents may agree to change their parenting time schedule without going to court. However, parents must obtain a court order if they want a parenting time schedule, or changes to a parenting time schedule, to be legally enforceable. Forms to assist parents are on the [Judicial Branch website](#).

Child-Related Factors

Parents may want to revisit the existing parenting time schedule for a variety of reasons related to the child's social, emotional, and developmental needs, such as when:

- the parenting time schedule that met the needs of an infant does not meet the child's needs as they grow older.
- they learn their child has physical, cognitive, emotional, educational, or behavioral needs that may require different parenting time arrangements.
- there are changes to child care, before and after school care and activities, or start- and end-times for school.
- there are new reasons why siblings need to have different parenting time schedules. For example, a 16-year old child now has a job and needs a parenting time schedule different from younger siblings.

Parent-Related Factors

Parents may want to revisit the existing parenting time schedule and arrangements for a variety of reasons, such as when:

- there are changes in either parent's life, including a change in a parent's residence, household members, or employment.
- there is a new mental health, chemical abuse, or family abuse issue that impacts the child's or a parent's safety or well-being.
- prior restrictions on parenting time are no longer necessary.

Appendix A: Advisory Committee on Child-Focused Parenting Time

Co-Chairs

Mindy F. Mitnick, Ed.M., M.A., Licensed Psychologist
Uptown Mental Health Center
Edina, MN

Hon. Sally L. Tarnowski, Chief Judge
Sixth Judicial District
St. Louis County, MN

Committee Members

Valerie A. D. Arnold, Attorney
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Susan D. Carpenter, ADR Professional
Life's Doors Mediation
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Gary A. Debele, Attorney
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Minneapolis, MN

Gail Finley, Guardian Ad Litem
Fifth District GAL Program
Mankato, MN

Hon. Sharon Hall, District Court Judge (ret.)
Tenth Judicial District
Anoka County, MN

Anne M. Honsa, Attorney
Honsa, Rodd, Landry
Minneapolis, MN

Senator Carolyn Laine
Minnesota Senate
District 41

Karen I. Linder, Attorney
Linder, Dittberner & Winter, Ltd.
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Hon. Timothy J. Looby, District Court Judge
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Michelle Millenacker, Psy.D., Licensed Psychologist
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Susan R. Phipps-Yonas, Ph. D, Licensed Psychologist
Phoenix, AZ

Hon. Patrick D. Robben, District Court Judge
Fourth Judicial District
Hennepin County, MN

Jason Schellak, Attorney
Autism Advocacy and Law Center, LLC
Minneapolis, MN

Judy Sherwood, Licensed Marriage & Family
Therapist
Judy Sherwood, LLC
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Thomas Tuft, Attorney
Tuft, Lach, Jerabek & O'Connell, PLLC
Maplewood, MN

Brian T. Ulrich, Parent/Child Advocate
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Staff

Angel Lussier, State Family ECM/ENE Program
Manager
State Court Administrator's Office
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Judith C. Nord, Staff Attorney
State Court Administrator's Office
St. Paul, MN

Appendix B: Parenting Time Schedule Instructions and Templates

Instructions

The following pages are “templates” or “forms” that will assist parents in developing their parenting time schedule. **Click each link to jump to the relevant template.**

1. [Regular Parenting Time Schedule](#)

This Regular Parenting Time template uses two formats: a “narrative” format and a “visual” format. Some parents find the narrative format easier to use, and some parents find the visual format easier to use, and some parents use both formats. If using both formats, be certain that the narrative matches the visual.

In the narrative format, identify each parent’s regular parenting time, specifying the days and times of parenting time for each parent and whether the days and times will stay the same every week or differ in alternate weeks.

For example - Assume that the parents are Chris and Kelly, and they have decided on the following Regular Parenting Time Schedule:

Chris will have regular parenting time every week from 8:00 a.m. Monday to 8:00 a.m. Wednesday when Kelly will have parenting time. Kelly will have regular parenting time every week from 8:00 a.m. Wednesday to 8:00 a.m. Friday. Chris and Kelly will alternate parenting time on weekends from Friday at 8 a.m. to Monday at 8:00 a.m. when Chris will have parenting time.

In this example, the transition time for the weekend is 8:00 a.m. on Fridays when it is Chris’ weekend. If it is Kelly’s weekend, there will be no transition until Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. Note also, that this is a schedule that will continue every week – the two week schedule is used to demonstrate alternating weekends.

Narrative Format Example:

Chris has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week
From: Monday at 8:00 a.m. - Wednesday at 8:00 a.m.

Every week Every other week
From: Friday at 8:00 a.m. - Monday at 8:00 a.m.

Kelly has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week
From: Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. - Friday at 8:00 a.m.

Every week Every other week
From: Friday at 8:00 a.m. - Monday at 8:00 a.m.

Visual Format Example:

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Week 1	Chris	Chris	Chris	Chris until 8:00 a.m. then Kelly at 8:00 a.m.	Kelly	Kelly	Kelly
Week 2	Kelly	Kelly until 8:00 a.m. then Chris at 8:00 a.m.	Chris	Chris until 8:00 a.m. then Kelly at 8:00 a.m.	Kelly	Kelly until 8:00 a.m. then Pat at 8:00 a.m.	Chris
Week 3	Chris	Chris	Chris	Chris until 8:00 a.m. then Kelly at 8:00 a.m.	Kelly	Kelly	Kelly
Week 4	Kelly	Kelly until 8:00 a.m. then Chris at 8:00 a.m.	Chris	Chris until 8:00 a.m. then Kelly at 8:00 a.m.	Kelly	Kelly until 8:00 a.m. then Pat at 8:00 a.m.	Chris

2. Summer Parenting Time Schedule

Some parents will decide to change the regular schedule for the summer, such as when the child is not in school or one parent is not working in the summer. Under these circumstances, parents may want to create a separate summer parenting time schedule.

3. School Break Parenting Time

The dates for fall, winter, and spring break are set by each school district and may change from year to year. Identify the day and time the school break starts and the day and time the school break ends. For example:

- Fall Break begins on Thursday at 8 a.m. and ends on Sunday at 5 p.m. and will be with Parent Chris the first half of the break in odd years and the second half of the break in even years; OR
- Fall break begins after school at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday and ends at start of school on Monday at 8:00 a.m. and will be with Parent Chris in odd years and Parent Kelly in even years.

4. Vacation Parenting Time

Indicate how many consecutive days and overnights will be included. For example:

- Vacation parenting time will be 5 consecutive days, including 5 overnights, until our child is in 1st grade and then vacation parenting time will be 7 consecutive days, including 7 overnights; OR
- Vacation parenting time will be two periods of 7 consecutive days, including 7 overnights, until our child is in 7th grade and then the two periods of vacation parenting may be combined and taken as 14 consecutive days, including 14 overnights.

Parents should consider how much advance notice should be given to the other parent before taking vacation parenting time. For example:

- Parent Chris and Parent Kelly will decide their vacation times by May 31 of each year; OR
- Parents will give each other a minimum of thirty (30) days notice prior to scheduling the vacation parenting time.

Parents should also consider how to resolve any disputes if they both want to take vacation parenting time at the same time. For example: If both parents wish to take their vacation over the same period of time, then Parent Chris shall prevail in all even years and Parent Kelly shall prevail in all odd years.

5. Holiday Parenting Time

Identify the day and date (if known) and time the holiday parenting time starts and the day and date (if known) and time the holiday parenting time ends. For example:

- Memorial Day starts on Friday at 5:00 p.m. and ends on Monday at 5:00 p.m.; OR
- Memorial Day starts at 9:00 a.m. on Monday (Memorial Day) and ends at 6:00 p.m. on Monday (Memorial Day).

Parents may want to include the weekend immediately before or after the holiday as part of the holiday parenting time. Parents may also include any religious or cultural holidays they wish to observe.

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The holidays or special events listed are only examples of what parents may wish to include in their Holiday Parenting Time Schedule. Parents should feel free to include only those holidays and special events they celebrate and to exclude any they do not celebrate.

Holidays and Observances	
Holiday	Day
New Year's Day	January 1. If New Year's Day falls on a Saturday, the legal holiday is Friday. If it falls on a Sunday, the legal holiday is Monday.
Martin Luther King Day	Third Monday in January
President's Day	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Fourth of July	July 4. If it falls on a Saturday, the legal holiday is Friday. If it falls on a Sunday, the legal holiday is Monday.
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Indigenous Peoples/Columbus Day	Second Monday in October. This is a federal legal holiday but not a Minnesota legal holiday.
Veterans Day	November 11. If it falls on a Saturday, the legal holiday is Friday. If it falls on a Sunday, the legal holiday is Monday.
Thanksgiving	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas	December 25. If it falls on a Saturday, the legal holiday is Friday. If it falls on a Sunday, the legal holiday is Monday.
New Year's Eve	December 31. The evening of the last day of the year.

Special Event	Day
Mother's Day	Second Sunday in May
Father's Day	Third Sunday in June
Parents' birthdays	
Children's birthdays	

Culture	Holiday
African American	Kwanzaa
Buddhist	Vesak, Buddhist New Year, Nirvana Day
Chinese	Lunar New Year, MidAutumn Festival
Christian	Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter
Hmong	Hmong New Year, Independence Day
Hindu	Diwali, Navratri, Krishna Janmashtami
Jewish	Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Passover
Mexican	Cinco de Mayo (May 5) and Mexican Independence Day (September 16) Day of the Dead, Dia de los Reyes Magos

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Culture	Holiday
Islam	Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha
Native American	American Indian Heritage Day
Other	

6. Transitions (Exchanges)

Parents may want to specify how, when, and where the child will transition from one parent's care to the other parent's care. For example:

- When Parent Chris' parenting time begins, Parent Chris will pick up the child at Parent Kelly's home; OR
- When Parent Chris' parenting time begins, Parent Chris will pick up the child from school or if there is no school from Parent Kelly's home.

7. Contact with Child in the Other Parent's Care

Parents may want to specify how often, at what time, and by what method the other parent can contact the child when the child is not in that parent's care. For example:

- Parent Chris can have telephone contact with the child between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays; OR
- Parent Kelly shall have video calling time with the child between 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. every day Parent Chris has parenting time.

Parents may wish to work directly with each other to arrange contact with the child while in the other parent's care. If the child is older, parents may agree that each parent may make contact arrangements directly with the child.

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Parenting Time Schedule

1. Date

Date Parenting Time Schedule agreed upon by parents: _____

2. Names of Parents

This Parenting Time Schedule applies to the following parents. Identifying Chris and Kelly in this Parenting Time Schedule does not determine who will be named Chris and Kelly in any final child support court order or stipulation/agreement.

Reference	Parent's Full Legal Name
Chris	
Kelly	

3. Name(s) of Child(ren)

This parenting time schedule applies to the following child(ren):

Child's Full Legal Name	Date of Birth (month/day/year)

4. Priorities Under this Parenting Time Schedule

Unless the parents agree otherwise, the following priorities apply:

- Holiday parenting time has priority over regular parenting time and vacation parenting time.
- Vacation parenting time has priority over regular parenting time.

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5. Regular Parenting Time Schedule²

Using either the “narrative format” or the “visual format,” or both. Identify each parent’s regular parenting time, specifying the day and times of parenting time for each parent and whether the days and times will stay the same every week or differ in alternate weeks.

Unless the parents agree otherwise, the following is the regular parenting time schedule for the child(ren):

Narrative Format

Chris has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM
day and time day and time

and

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM
day and time day and time

Kelly has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM
day and time day and time

and

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM
day and time day and time

Visual Format

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Week 1							
Week 2							

² One can add sections for different ages such as from age 12 to 24 months, from age 24 to 36 months, etc.

6. Summer Parenting Time Schedule (if different from Regular Parenting Time Schedule)³

Some parents will decide to change the regular parenting time schedule for the summer, such as when the child is not in school or one parent is not working in the summer. Under these circumstances parents may want to create a separate summer parenting time schedule. Using either the “narrative format” or the “visual format,” or both, identify each parent’s summer parenting time, specifying the day and times of parenting time for each parent and whether the days and times will stay the same every week or differ in alternate weeks.

Unless the parents agree otherwise, the following is the summer parenting time schedule for the child(ren):

Chris has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

and

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

Kelly has regular parenting time on the following days and times:

Every week Every other week

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

and

From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

OR

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Week 1							
Week 2							

³ You may add sections for different ages such as from ages 12 to 24 months, from ages 24 to 36 months, etc.

7. School Break Parenting Time

The dates for Fall, Winter, and Spring Break are set by each school district and may change from year to year. Identify the day and time the school break starts, and the day and time the school break ends.

Fall Break: From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

- With Chris the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Kelly the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Kelly the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Chris the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Chris: odd years even years
 With Kelly: odd years even years

- With Chris every year
 With Kelly every year

Winter Break: From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

- With Chris the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Kelly the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Kelly the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Chris the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Chris: odd years even years
 With Kelly: odd years even years

- With Chris every year
 With Kelly every year

Spring Break: From _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM

- With Chris the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Kelly the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Kelly the first half of the break: odd years even years
 With Chris the second half of the break: odd years even years

- With Chris: odd years even years
 With Kelly: odd years even years

- With Chris every year
 With Kelly every year

8. Vacation Parenting Time

Indicate how many consecutive days and overnights of vacation parenting time will be included, how much advance notice must be given to the other parent before taking vacation parenting time, and how to resolve disputes if both parents want to take vacation parenting time at the same time.

Number of Days and Overnights

Each calendar year Chris and Kelly will each have vacation parenting time that will be _____ consecutive days, including _____ overnights, starting when the child is _____ years old and continuing through the year the child is _____ years old, and then after that the vacation parenting time will change to _____ consecutive days, including _____ overnights.

Notice of Vacation Parenting Time

Chris and Kelly will each decide their annual vacation parenting times and notify the other parent no later than _____ (date) of each year.

OR

Chris and Kelly will give each other a minimum of _____ days notice prior to scheduling their vacation parenting time.

Resolving Disputes

If both parents wish to take their vacation over the same period of time, then Parent _____ will prevail in all even numbered years and Parent _____ will prevail in all odd numbered years.

OR

Other option: _____

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9. Holiday Parenting Time

Identify the day and date (if known) and time each holiday parenting time starts and ends. The holidays, cultural observances, or special events listed are only examples of what parents may wish to include in their Holiday Parenting Time Schedule. Parents should include only those holidays and special events they celebrate and exclude any they do not celebrate.

Event	Odd Years	Even Years	Every Year
Birthdays			
Child's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Child's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Child's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Child's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Parent A's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Parent B's Birthday (Date: _____) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Holidays			
New Year's Eve from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
New Year's Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris

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Event	Odd Years	Even Years	Every Year
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
President's Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Memorial Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Parent A's Day (e.g, Father's Day/Mother's Day) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Parent B's Day (e.g, Father's Day/Mother's Day) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
4th of July from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Labor Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Indigenous Peoples/Columbus Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Veterans' Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Halloween from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Thanksgiving from _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly

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Event	Odd Years	Even Years	Every Year
to _____ at _____ AM/PM			
Christmas Eve from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Christmas Day from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
Religious and Cultural Holidays and Observances			
_____ (Holiday or Observance) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
_____ (Holiday or Observance) from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly
from _____ at _____ AM/PM to _____ at _____ AM/PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly

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10. Transitions (Exchanges)

Parents may want to specify how, when, and where the child will transition from one parent's care to the other parent's care.

Unless the parents agree otherwise, transitions will occur as follows:

Chris will pick up the child(ren) as follows: _____

Chris will drop off the child(ren) as follows: _____

Kelly will pick up the child(ren) as follows: _____

Kelly will drop off the child(ren) as follows: _____

11. Contact with Child in the Other Parent's Care

Parents may want to specify how often, at what time, and by what means the other parent can contact the child when the child is not in that parent's care.

Unless the parents agree otherwise, contact with the child when in the other parent's care will occur as follows:

Chris
 Specific days, times, and method _____

Other _____

Kelly
 Specific days, times, and method _____

Other _____

Parenting Time Schedule Options

No one parenting time schedule meets the needs of every child and family. The following examples are meant only to be a starting point for discussion. Parents, judges, and others creating parenting time schedules are not required to use or be limited to the examples below.

Before you begin your discussion, be sure to read this Guide and continue to use it as you develop your parenting time schedule.

When a child has a healthy relationship with each parent, a variety of options might be possible. Included below are a few suggested scheduling options.

- A. Parents follow a two-week rotation with Chris having parenting time 4:00 p.m. Monday to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday and Kelly having parenting time from 4:00 p.m. Wednesday to 4:00 p.m. Friday. The weekends alternate from Friday at 4:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday (often referred to as a 2-2-5-5 or 5-2-2-5 schedule).

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS

- B. Parents follow a two-week rotation with Chris having parenting time every Monday and Tuesday and Parent Kelly on Wednesday and Thursday with the weekends alternating from Friday through Sunday evening.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY/ CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY
KELLY/ CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY

- C. Parents follow a two-week rotation: Week One the child is with Parent Chris from Monday to Wednesday, with Parent Kelly from Wednesday to Friday, and with Parent Chris from Friday to Monday. Week Two the child is with Parent Kelly from Monday to Wednesday with Parent Chris from Wednesday to Friday, and with Parent Kelly from Friday to Monday (often referred to as a 2-2-3 schedule).

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY

D. Parents alternate weeks, for instance from after school Friday to after school Friday.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS

E. Parent Chris has parenting time on alternate weekends, from Friday evening to Monday morning, and one weekday overnight every week.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY

F. Parent Chris has parenting time on alternate weekends, from Friday evening to Sunday evening and one weekday overnight every week.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY

- G. Parents follow a two-week rotation, with Parent Chris having parenting time on alternate weekends from Friday evening to Sunday evening. Following Parent Chris' weekend, Parent Chris will have parenting time from Wednesday evening to Friday evening. Following Parent Kelly's weekend Parent Chris will have parenting time from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY
KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS
CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY	KELLY	KELLY/CHRIS	CHRIS	CHRIS/KELLY	KELLY

Infants and Young Children

Schedules that meet the needs of infants and very young children are different from those that meet the needs of older children. When developing a schedule for infants and very young children, it is important to plan for how the schedule will change as the child develops during this time period. Overnights with a child in this age range may be included in the parenting time schedule for each parent depending on child and parent factors.

When parents live apart early in an infant or young child's life, it is important for the child's developing relationship with each parent to have shorter separations from each parent, for example, one or two days. This is a critical period of development for children making them more vulnerable to schedules that do not take their developmental needs into account. Because of the unique needs of this age group and the varying circumstances of the parents during this time, there are no parenting time schedule examples included in this section. Parents are encouraged to look at the [Child Development section](#).