

<b>PARENTING TIME POLICY</b>	<b>OTTAWA COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT Policy/Procedures</b>	No. 3.001 June 2008
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Frequent, consistent access to both parents is essential to ensure the successful adjustment of children to their parents' divorce. Ideally, parents develop their own parenting time schedules which take into consideration the unique circumstances of their family and which may be changed from time to time. In such cases, the Court often orders "reasonable visitation as the Parties shall mutually agree upon," or similar language. The following schedules are designed for those situations when parents cannot reach an agreement. Additionally, except where otherwise stated, these schedules are based upon the assumption that the parents were married or lived together with the child(ren) for an extended period of time and that there is a normal degree of familiarity between the non-custodial parent and the child(ren). When this is not the case, a parenting time schedule will have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **I. Parenting Time Schedule for Children Under Age Four**

Special considerations must be taken when developing parenting time schedules for children up to age four. One must consider the nature of the bond between the non-custodial parent and the children as well as the degree of cooperation that exists between the two parents concerning parenting time issues. One should consider these factors in determining which of the following situations a specific child falls into:

- *Transitional Situations:* those situations in which the child and/or parents are not prepared to handle typical shared parenting time schedules. Parents move toward typical or exceptional situations as they build upon their teamwork and gain familiarity between parent and child.
- *Typical Situations:* typical readiness of most parents and children.
- *Exceptional Situations:* situations in which the parent-child relationship is so strong that parenting time can exceed the typical guidelines. For instance where there was an intact family/marriage with the non-custodial parent in the role of caregiver.

#### Children Age 0 to 6 Months

- *Transitional Situations:* 1 to 3 contacts of 1 to 4 hours each per week.
- *Typical Situations:* 1 or 2 contacts of 1 to 4 hours plus one 8-hour contact, though not overnight per week .
- *Exceptional Situations:* up to daily contact, including overnights.

#### Children Age 7 to 18 Months

- *Transitional Situations:* 1 to 3 contacts of 1 to 4 hours each per week.
- *Typical Situations:* 1 or 2 contacts up to 8 hours, not overnight.
- *Exceptional Situations:* up to daily contact plus overnight.

### Children Age 19 to 36 Months

- Transitional Situations: 1 to 3 contacts of 1 to 8 hours each week.
- Typical Situations: 1 or 2 contacts of 3 hours plus one biweekly overnight per week.
- Exceptional Situations: up to daily contact plus overnights.

### Children Age 37 to 48 Months

- alternating weekends from 9:00 a.m. Saturday to 6:00 p.m. Sunday
- one weekday evening during the week prior to weekend parenting time for at least two hours
- two weekday evenings for at least two hours during the week following weekend parenting time
- three separate weeks during the calendar year, 6:00 p.m. Friday until the following Friday at 6:00 p.m. During each of these periods, the physical custodian shall have the child(ren) for a minimum of two hours one evening per week, unless the non-custodial parent is out of town on vacation
- Holidays as provided in section IV below

## **II. Parenting Time Schedule for Children Age Four to School Age**

For children who are four years old but have not yet completed kindergarten, the parenting time schedule shall be as follows:

- Alternating weekends from 6:00 p.m. Friday to 6:00 p.m. Sunday.
- One evening each week for a minimum of two hours.
- Three weeks during the summer, either consecutive or nonconsecutive as the parents agree.
- Holidays as provided in section IV below.

## **III. Parenting Time Schedule for School Age Children**

For children who have completed kindergarten, the parenting time schedule shall be as follows:

- Alternating weekends from 6:00 p.m. Friday to 6:00 p.m. Sunday.
- One evening each week for a minimum of two hours.
- Holidays as provided in IV below.
- Extended parenting time as provided in V below.

## **IV. Holiday Parenting Time Schedule**

Holiday parenting time takes precedence over the regular parenting time schedule. The following holidays should be exercised with the times given below:

Mother in Odd Numbered Years/Father in Even Numbered Years

- Easter Weekend Friday at 6:00 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m.
- Independence Day July 03 at 6:00 p.m. until July 05 at 9:00 a.m.
- Thanksgiving Day Weekend Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. until Sunday at 6:00 p.m.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Split Christmas Break
- Spring Break (Parenting time shall commence at 6:00 p.m. the day school recesses and end at 6:00 p.m. the day before school resumes.)

#### Mother in Even Numbered Years/Father in Odd Numbered Years

- Memorial Day Weekend Friday at 6:00 p.m. until Monday at 6:00 p.m.
- Labor Day Weekend Friday at 6:00 p.m. until Monday at 6:00 p.m.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Split Christmas Break (1<sup>st</sup> split begins the day school recesses at 6:00 p.m. until Christmas Eve at 9:00 p.m.)
- Children's Birthdays 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. non-school day and 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on school day

#### Every Year

- Mother's Day Weekend to the mother from Friday at 6:00 p.m. until Sunday at 6:00 p.m.
- Father's Day Weekend to the father from Friday at 6:00 p.m. until Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

#### Christmas Break

- 1<sup>st</sup> split begins the day school recesses at 6:00 p.m. until Christmas Eve at 9:00 p.m.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> split begins Christmas Eve at 9:00 p.m. and concludes at 6:00 p.m. the day before school resumes
- The Christmas break splits are intended to grant the parties each one week with the children. If the above schedule is not an even split due to the way in which the holiday and school recess fall, the Christmas Break shall be evenly split providing each parent with one week with the children. The holiday parenting time (Christmas Eve and Christmas) shall remain unchanged.

### **V. Extended Parenting Time Schedule**

When the oldest child has completed kindergarten, that child shall have the following extended parenting times with the non-custodial parent:

- A minimum of three weeks each summer, in blocks of time of no less than 7 days, which shall qualify for support abatement if the support Order so provides.

If no agreement is reached by the parties in regards to what weeks the non-custodial parent shall exercise his/her parenting time, the following schedule shall take place:

First week: Begins the first weekend the non-custodial parent has with the child(ren), following the completion of the school year, on Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concludes the following Friday at 6:00 p.m.

Second week: Begins the first weekend of the non-custodial parent following the fourth of July on Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concludes the following Friday at 6:00 p.m.

Third week: Begins the first weekend of the non-custodial parent after August 01 on Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concludes the following Friday at 6:00 p.m.

## **VI. General Considerations**

The following principles shall apply in all parenting time situations:

- In cases involving more than one child, the most generous parenting time schedule shall be followed in those cases not involving children under the age of four. Parenting time schedules for children under the age of four shall always follow the guidelines set forth under section I above, even if those children have older siblings for whom more generous schedules are appropriate.
- The parenting time schedule shall be exercised in a prompt manner. In the event of unforeseen circumstances, a 15-minute delay in collecting or returning children is considered allowable, but notice of a delay is always to be given where this is possible. This is to be used on rare occasions and should not become the routine.
- The alternating weekend parenting time schedule is to be exercised throughout the entire calendar year, except for during a holiday weekend, spring break and Christmas break.
- During any period of extended parenting time, the holiday alternation continues as specified, but the exercise of holiday parenting time by a custodian which interrupts a non-custodian's extended parenting time shall not bar support abatement for the non-custodian.
- Each parent, in the planning of an out-of-town vacation with the child(ren), shall provide to the other a general itinerary and emergency telephone number(s).
- Summer school necessary for a child to pass to the next grade must be attended and the parents, in arranging the summer parenting time schedule, shall take steps to assure this.
- The custodial parent must also inform the other parent of necessary medication and possible illness. The custodial parent must provide prescriptions to the non-custodial parent during his/her parenting time.
- The custodial parent shall not interfere with the non-custodial parent's right to access to school and medical information in accordance with MCL 722.30 which states:

### **722.30 Access to records or information by noncustodial parent**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent shall not be denied access to records or information concerning his or her child because the parent is not the child's custodial parent, unless the parent is prohibited from having access to the records or information by a protective order. As used in this section, "records or information" includes, but is not limited to, medical, dental, and school records, day care provider's records, and notification of meetings regarding the child's education.

## **VII. Clothing**

- Custodial parent must supply adequate clothing for parenting time if the parties are not using the "shared economic responsibility" formula. Both parents must send and return clothing for parenting time.

## **VIII. Extra Curricular Activities**

- The parties shall cooperate with each other when enrolling the child(ren) in extracurricular activities to ensure that the activities do not interfere with the ability of the child(ren) to exercise parenting time. Neither the custodial parent nor the non-custodial parent should enroll the child(ren) in excessive activities that serve to interfere with the other's ability to spend time with the child(ren).
- The non-custodial parent exercising parenting time is not required to have the child attend social or recreational activities preplanned by the custodial parent. However, the non-custodial parent is encouraged to attend and allow the child to participate in reasonable recreational and extracurricular activities appropriate to the child's age and development.

## **IX. First Right of Refusal**

- If the custodial or non-custodial parent is put in a situation where they are forced to hire child-care for a period in excess of four hours for the supervision of the minor child(ren) of the parties, in the absence of an order denying or restricting parenting time, or requiring any parenting time of the other party to be supervised, the other parent shall first be contacted and offered that time with the minor child(ren). This provision shall be deemed to be in addition to any previously ordered parenting time, and not in lieu of same.