

ST. CLAIR COUNTY FRIEND OF COURT PARENTING GUIDELINE

Michigan Law establishes that minor children have a right to a relationship with both parents. It is the responsibility of the Friend of Court to recommend a parenting time schedule reflecting what it considers to be in the best interest of the minor child(ren). The Court shall grant parenting time in a frequency, duration and type reasonably calculated to promote a strong relationship with both parents.

This is a guideline and is not an order of the Court. We hope these guidelines will assist you in being able to co-parent your child(ren) in an effective manner that allows you to act without the need for Court intervention. The expectation is that parents work together and establish their own parenting time schedules. It is strongly recommended that parents develop their own arrangements that will consider the unique circumstances of their family. If parents are unable to agree on the terms of parenting time, the Court will enter a specific parenting time order that parents must follow unless they agree otherwise.

A parenting time schedule should be based on many factors, including, the past parent-child(ren) relationship; the age and developmental needs of the child(ren); the location of each parent's residence and consideration of any special circumstances. Please keep the best interests of your child(ren) in mind when scheduling parenting time.

Always work together toward the emotional well-being, health, happiness and safety of your child(ren). Communication, cooperation and mutual respect are essential for parents to make a parenting time schedule work and to avoid conflict and frustration.

Changing parenting time may be appropriate as the child(ren) get older, have changing needs or begin school. Parents should discuss changes that are in the best interest of the child(ren) and if they reach an agreement may complete a consent order to modify parenting time. If they are not able to reach an agreement, they may request mediation services through FOC to assist with the process. Either parent may also file a motion to change parenting time and the Court will decide as to whether a change in parenting time is in the best interest of the child(ren).

In general, if there are multiple children of varying ages on the case, all of the children would follow the schedule for the oldest child on the case, unless the parents agree or the Court orders otherwise.

This guideline contains a number of sample schedules that parents may consider when determining the parenting time schedule that will work best for their child(ren). These are *only examples* and should be modified to fit the family dynamics. Parents are encouraged to agree to a schedule that works best for their family. If they are unable to agree on a schedule, the parents must follow the order entered by the Court.

**EXAMPLE SCHEDULES WHERE ONE PARENT
EXERCISES PARENTING TIME**

Some parents may wish to follow a parenting time schedule where one parent exercises a schedule and the other parent serves as the primary custodian. There are several examples of this type of schedule. In addition, you may come up with your own schedule that works for your family:

PARENT A: PRIMARY CUSTODIAL PARENT
PARENT B: PARENT EXERCISING PARENTING TIME

Children under 1 year old:

Example 1: *Parent B* shall have parenting time three (3) visits per week of shorter duration. For example, Monday and Wednesday from 5:30pm-7:30pm and Saturday from 12:00pm – 6:00pm. Holiday parenting time would take place on the named holiday from 3:00pm-7:00pm.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Parent B visit 5:30p–7:30p		Parent B visit 5:30p–7:30p			Parent B visit 12:00p–6:00p	

Example 2: *Parent B* shall have parenting time three (3) visits per week including one overnight. For example, Tuesday and Thursday from 5:30pm – 7:30pm and Saturday from 12:00pm – Sunday 12:00pm. Holiday parenting time would take place on the named holiday from 3:00pm-7:00pm.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Parent B visit 5:30p–7:30p		Parent B visit 5:30p–7:30p		Parent B 12:00p–	Parent B until 12:00p

Children between 1-2 years old:

Example 1: *Parent B* shall have parenting time three (3) visits per week with longer duration. For example, Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00pm – 8:00pm and Saturday from 9:00am – 6:00pm. Holiday parenting time would take place on named holiday from 9:00am – 6:00pm.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Parent B visit 5:00p–8:00p		Parent B visit 5:00p–8:00p		Parent B visit 9a–6:00p	

Example 2: *Parent B* shall have parenting time three (3) visits per week including one overnight. For example, Tuesday and/or Thursday 5:00pm-8:00pm and every Saturday 9:00am to Sunday 6:00pm. Holiday parenting time would take place on named holidays from 9:00am-6:00pm. Summer parenting time would be one (1) extended weekend June – August from Thursday 9:00am - Sunday 6:00pm on the third weekend.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Parent B visit 5:00p-8:00p		Parent B visit 5:00p-8:00p		Parent B visit 9:00a	Parent B until 6:00p

Children ages 3 and up:

Example 1: *Parent B* shall have alternating weekends from Friday 6:00pm to Sunday 6:00pm and one (1) midweek visit on Wednesdays 5:30pm - 7:30pm.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Parent A	Parent A	Parent B visit 5:30p-7:30p	Parent A	Parent B 6:00p	Parent B	Parent A 6:00p
Week 2	Parent A	Parent A	Parent B visit 5:30p-7:30p	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A

Example 2: *Parent B* shall have a bi-weekly schedule. On week one a mid-week visit on Tuesday at 5:00pm – 8:00pm and overnight Thursday 6:00pm to Friday 6:00pm. On week two *Parent B* shall have Friday 6:00pm to Monday 8:00am.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Parent A	Parent B visit 5:00p-8:00p	Parent A	Parent B 6:00pm	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B
Week 2	Parent A 8:00am	Parent A	Parent A	Parent B 6:00pm	Parent A 6:00pm	Parent A	Parent A

Mother's Weekends (Parent A) 2022: 1/7, 1/21, 2/4, 2/18, 3/4, 3/18, 4/1, 4/15, 4/29, 5/13, 5/27, 6/10, 6/24, 7/8, 7/22, 8/5, 8/19, 9/2, 9/16, 9/30, 10/14, 10/28, 11/11, 11/25, 12/9, 12/23.

Father's Weekends (Parent B) 2022: 1/14, 1/28, 2/11, 2/25, 3/11, 3/25, 4/8, 4/22, 5/6, 5/20, 6/3, 6/17, 7/1, 7/15, 7/29, 8/12, 8/26, 9/9, 9/23, 10/7, 10/21, 11/4, 11/18, 12/2, 12/16, 12/30.

Mother's Weekends (Parent A) 2023: 1/6, 1/20, 2/3, 2/17, 3/3, 3/17, 3/31, 4/14, 4/28, 5/12, 5/26, 6/9, 6/23, 7/7, 7/21, 8/4, 8/18, 9/1, 9/15, 9/29, 10/13, 10/27, 11/10, 11/24, 12/8, 12/22.

Father's Weekends (Parent B) 2023: 1/13, 1/27, 2/10, 2/24, 3/10, 3/24, 4/7, 4/21, 5/5, 5/19, 6/2, 6/16, 6/30, 7/14, 7/28, 8/11, 8/25, 9/8, 9/22, 10/6, 10/20, 11/3, 11/17, 12/1, 12/15, 12/29.

EXAMPLES WITH EQUAL SCHEDULES

Some parents may wish to follow a relatively equal parenting time schedule. There are several examples of this type of schedule. In addition, you may come up with your own schedule that works for your family.

Example 1: 2/2/3 Schedule - Week 1 – *Parent A* has Monday 8:00am to Wednesday 8:00am, *Parent B* Wednesday 8:00am to Friday 8:00am, *Parent A* Friday 8:00am to Monday 8:00am. Week 2 – *Parent B* has Mon-Wed, *Parent A* has Wed-Fri and *Parent B* has Friday 8:00am to Monday 8:00am.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Parent A 8:00a	Parent A	Parent B 8:00a	Parent B	Parent A 8:00a	Parent A	Parent A
Week 2	Parent B 8:00a	Parent B	Parent A 8:00a	Parent A	Parent B 8:00a	Parent B	Parent B

Example 2: 2/5/2 Schedule – *Parent A* has Monday to Wednesday; *Parent B* has Wednesday to Friday and parents alternate Friday to Monday.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Parent A 8:00am	Parent A	Parent B 8:00a	Parent B	Parent A 8:00a	Parent A	Parent A
Week 2	Parent A	Parent A	Parent B 8:00a	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B

Example 3: 7/7 Schedule – Parents alternate weeks with exchanges occurring Friday 6:00pm or Sunday 6:00pm. Parents may consider a midweek visit for the other parent or regular phone/facetime contact during the other parent’s week, especially if the children are younger.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A	Parent A	Parent B
Week 2	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B	Parent B	Parent A

Holidays

Holiday and summer parenting time takes precedence over regularly scheduled parenting time. When the holiday or summer parenting time concludes, the regular parenting time schedule will resume as if it had not been interrupted. If the child is not of school age, the school vacation schedule of the district where the child resides will be followed.

Mother (Parent A) will have these specified holidays in all even-numbered years and Father (Parent B) will have these holidays in all odd-numbered years:

- **Memorial Day Weekend** from Friday at 6:00pm until Memorial Day at 6:00pm
- **Labor Day Weekend** from Friday at 6:00pm until Labor Day at 6:00pm

Mother (Parent A) will have the following holidays in all odd-numbered years and Father (Parent B) will have these holidays in all even-numbered years:

- **Fourth of July** from July 3rd at 6:00pm until July 5th at 6:00pm
- **Thanksgiving weekend** from 6:00pm the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving until 6:00pm the Sunday evening following Thanksgiving.

Mother's Day and Father's Day: The children will be with Mother (Parent A) for the entire Mother's Day weekend and then be with Father (Parent B) for the entire Father's Day weekend from Friday at 6:00pm until Sunday at 6:00pm.

Christmas/New Year's Holiday Break: In all odd-numbered years, Father's (Parent B) Christmas parenting time will be from 6:00pm on the last day of school where the children attend until 9:00pm on December 24th. Mother's (Parent A) Christmas parenting time will be from 9:00pm on December 24th until 6:00pm the day before school resumes. Thereafter, the normal parenting time schedule will resume.

In all even-numbered years, Mother's (Parent A) Christmas parenting time will be from 6:00pm on the last day of school where the children attend until 9:00pm on December 24th. Father's (Parent B) Christmas parenting time will be from 9:00pm on December 24th until 6:00pm the day before school resumes. Thereafter, the normal parenting time schedule will resume.

Easter/Spring Break: Father (Parent B) will have the entire Easter/spring break in all even-numbered years. Mother (Parent A) will have the entire Easter/spring break in all odd-numbered years. Spring break parenting time begins at 6:00pm the day school recesses for spring break and concludes at 6:00pm the evening before school resumes after the break.

In the event the Easter Sunday weekend is not included in the school spring break week, Father (Parent B) has the entire Easter weekend from Good Friday at 9:00am until Easter Sunday at 6:00pm in the even-numbered years and Mother (Parent A) has the entire Good Friday through Easter Sunday weekend in the odd-numbered years.

Summer Parenting Time

Example 1 - Parents shall alternate summer weeks on an equal basis of week on/ week off schedule beginning Sunday 6:00pm the Sunday following school recess. Mother (Parent A) shall have the first week in odd years and Father (Parent B) in even years. The other parent may have a midweek visit Wednesday 5:30-9:30pm, so long as the parent exercising their week of parenting time is not out-of-town with the children

Example 2 – Each parent will have three (3) non-consecutive one-week periods of parenting time from Sunday 6:00pm to Sunday 6:00pm. Parents shall exchange requested weeks by May 1st. If there is a conflict then in even years, Father (Parent B) gets first choice of weeks and in odd years Mother (Parent A) gets first choice.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Transportation:

- If a parent has sole physical custody of the children (i.e. one parent serves as the main custodial parent), the other parent is responsible for transportation for purposes of exercising their parenting time unless parents agree or the Court orders otherwise.
- If parents share joint physical custody (i.e. equal or near equal time), transportation is to be provided by the parent whose parenting time is beginning under the terms of the order. The other parent then picks up the child when his/her parenting time begins. The parent exercising midweek parenting time is responsible for all transportation during midweek parenting time.
- Transportation may be provided by a third party who is a properly licensed driver, with whom the child is familiar and comfortable. All legally required restraints must be present and used. Each parent should have their own car seat.

Parenting Time Exchanges:

- A one-half (1/2) hour unavoidable delay period will be allowed for parenting time exchanges. The intention of this unavoidable delay is intended for **EMERGENCIES ONLY**. A parent who anticipates being late shall contact the other parent as soon as possible.
- Be on time for parenting time exchanges. Nothing disappoints a child more than to be waiting for a parent who does not appear.
- Neither parent shall use the parenting time exchange as an opportunity to discuss adult issues, including parenting time or child support issues, or to behave disrespectfully or aggressively toward the other parent.
- Each parent shall be responsible for providing adequate clothing for the child sufficient for the weather and events in which the child engages. When occasional need or cost issues favor having only one item, such as snow boots, winter coats, backpacks and sports equipment, these items shall be transported back and forth with the child. This includes items, such as a special blanket or toy, which are important to the child.
- A parent shall provide all necessary medication and doctor's written instructions to the parent exercising parenting time. Parents shall administer all medications according to the doctor's written instructions. If a child requires emergency medical attention during parenting time, the parent shall notify the other parent immediately and obtain treatment for the child.

Phone Contact:

- Parents with unsupervised parenting time shall have reasonable contact with their children by telephone, Facetime/Skype or other electronic methods unless the Court order indicates otherwise.
- Telephone contact should not become invasive to the point that it interferes with the child's regular activities. Each parent must use common sense in this regard and act accordingly.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

- Before enrolling a child in extracurricular activities parents shall discuss and ensure that the activities do not materially interfere with the ability of a child to exercise parenting time. If it may interfere, the parent should consult with the other parent before signing the child up for the activity.
Neither parent should enroll a child in excessive activities that serve to interfere with the other parent's ability to spend time with the child.
- Both parents shall ensure that while a child is in their care, the child attends all agreed upon activities including practices, games, performances, lessons, tutoring sessions and other like activities. If the activity creates a conflict, parents may agree to make-up parenting time.
- Parents shall keep one another informed of all activities so the other parent has the opportunity to attend or participate in the activity, even if the activity does not occur during their regularly scheduled parenting time. A child shall be permitted to acknowledge, speak with and otherwise associate with both parents when attending sporting, artistic or other events.
- Either parent may attend school functions which are open to the public.
- A parent may not appear at the school to visit or see the child outside of regularly scheduled parenting time unless requested by school personnel or with consent of the other parent.

Co-Parenting Guidelines:

- Out-of-State vacations which do not conflict with the parenting time schedule are allowed. A general itinerary and emergency telephone number should be provided to the other parent if an out-of-town vacation is planned with the children.
- Neither parent shall speak in a derogatory fashion about the other parent in the presence of the children and there shall be no negative interaction between the parents/significant others on social media.
- Neither parent is allowed to discuss with the children any FOC/court matters
- Parents should not use the child as a source of information. Communication should take place between the parents, without third party involvement unless there is a no contact order or PPO in place. In the case of a PPO, communication should take place through an agreed upon third party adult.
- Parents should be flexible in allowing children to attend special occasions such as weddings, funerals and birthday parties for friends and relatives of the other parent which occur during their parenting time. However, the parent seeking the accommodation must be prepared to provide make-up parenting time in exchange for the accommodation.
- FOC recognizes that each parent has his or her own individual parenting style. Avoid passing judgment on the other parent for what he or she does with his or her parenting time so long as it is not a safety issue.
- Do maintain open communication with the other parent about your children. "We cannot talk to each other" is NOT a valid reason for not trying to work with the other parent,
- Do let your children know that it is okay to love the other parent

- Do use consistent policies about homework, TV and social activities between the two households
- Don't tell a child that he or she has the right to choose where they want to live. They do not. They remain under the jurisdiction of the Court until their 18th birthday.

Denial of Parenting Time:

- If you believe the other parent is denying you parenting time ordered by the Court, you may seek FOC assistance by filing a written parenting time complaint.
- FOC assistance is available if you have a parenting time order with specific days and times for parenting time, if you attempted to exchange the child on the date and time indicated and you filed a complaint within 56 days of missed parenting time.
- All parenting time complaints are considered non-emergency and must be submitted in writing.
- Make-up parenting time will be allowed only when parenting time is missed due to the non-availability of the children. Make-up parenting time is not applied when parenting time is missed due to the non-availability of the parent scheduled for parenting time.
- The parents are to work out and agree on make-up parenting when notification is given that the children are not available.
- If parents are unable to work out make-up time, the Friend of Court may apply a make-up parenting time policy, start an action before the referee or judge, schedule a hearing for modification of existing parenting time provisions, schedule mediation or schedule a joint meeting. Each case is unique and the Friend of Court will make a recommendation based upon those facts.
- The make-up parenting time policy is generally "like for like" time missed. For example: weekends for weekends, holidays for holidays and summers for summers.
- Parenting time and child support are separate issues. Parenting time should continue whether support is being paid or not and support must be paid whether or not parenting time is occurring.
- If one parent has a PPO involving the other parent, the PPO does not stop parenting time unless the PPO specifically states that parenting time is impacted. Parenting time exchanges should occur as scheduled in a manner which ensure that the PPO is not violated, including using a third party to assist with exchanges.
- The only way Court-ordered parenting time can be stopped is if another Court order is issued to stop the parenting time.
- Police, CPS and other agencies do not have the authority to tell a parent to ignore or violate a court order for parenting time.
- If a parent is seeking to change parenting time based on safety concerns, they may file a motion to modify parenting time or request mediation.
- Do not involve police in a parenting time dispute unless the child or parent are in immediate danger. Calling the police for parenting time disputes can be very traumatic for the child. Most law enforcement agencies will not become involved in such disputes and will only refer the parents to FOC.

The following are *NOT VALID REASONS* for denying parenting time:

- A child has a minor illness

- A child had to go somewhere else
- A child was not home
- The custodial parent did not want the child to go
- The parent is behind in child support
- The weather was bad
- A child refused to go

Denial of parenting time *MAY be considered valid* if:

- The parent arrives to pick up the child for parenting time and has been drinking excessively or is under the influence of drugs.
- The parent arrives to pick up the child more than one half-hour late from the ordered time without notifying the other parent of the late arrival.

If a parent wishes to enforce an existing parenting time order that they believe is being violated by the other parent, a parenting time complaint should be filed.

If a parent wishes to change or modify an existing order, a motion to modify parenting time should be filed. A parent may also request mediation or parents may complete a consent order with their agreement to modify parenting time placed in writing and signed by both parents.

Complaints can be submitted via the Friend of the Court website @ www.stclaircounty.org/offices/foc or in writing to the Friend of the Court office. All complaints must include the specific dates denied, reason given for denial, whether you went to the exchange point to pick up the child(ren) and if you were on time. You must specify the requested information or your complaint may be returned to you.

FOC staff cannot provide you with legal advice. In legal matters, it is always best to consult with and be represented by an attorney.

For more information, parents are encouraged to refer to the Friend of the Court website when concerns arise regarding parenting time, custody, moving out of state, moving more than 100 miles, child support and/or medical. The Friend of the Court handbook is readily available for reference and/or information. The website also offers all Friend of the Court forms, motions and instruction sheets. www.stclaircounty.org/offices/foc

The FOC is not authorized to investigate abuse and neglect issues. Allegations of neglect or abuse should be immediately reported to DHHS or to your local law enforcement.

ANY ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT SHOULD BE REPORTED TO PROTECTIVE SERVICES AT (855) 444-3911.