

BEST PRACTICES FOR PARENTING TIME

1) Parenting Time Priority: Specific holiday, school break, and summer parenting time take priority over the regular schedule. Make-up parenting time (whether court-ordered or mutually agreed upon) takes priority over all other parenting time.

2) Electronic Contact: Reasonable electronic contact (phone, text, email or video call) between parents and children is permitted during the other parent's parenting time. "Reasonable" contact is a brief contact that does not interfere with plans the other parent has with the child during their time. For instance, calls during meal times, right before bed at night or school in the morning can be disruptive for the other parent and cause the parent and child to be late for activities. Parents should discuss the best time for these calls so they are consistent, beneficial and not disruptive to the child's schedule. Parents should also encourage and facilitate contact between the child and the other parent during their parenting time.

3) Belongings: Children's personal items such as toys, clothes, and medicine belong to the children. They should easily go back and forth with the children to and from the parents' homes. Weather and activity appropriate clothing should be provided to and from parenting time. All efforts should be made to return clothing and personal items clean and undamaged. Parents are allowed to set their own house rules for the children's use of belongings they bring with them during their parenting time. For example, parents may prohibit use of cellphones or other electronics during their parenting time, and may ground the child from use of those items for breaking rules, regardless of who paid for the electronic or who pays the phone bill. At the end of their parenting time, parents must still return the item(s) with the child(ren).

4) Special Occasions: Parents should be flexible in allowing children to attend special occasions such as weddings, funerals, and birthday parties for friends and relatives 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.

5) Timeliness: Parents are expected to be on time for exchanges. Children are disappointed if parents do not arrive as expected, and it is not fun for kids to sit for long periods of time waiting to be picked up. However, it is understandable that unforeseen circumstances (such as traffic accidents, bad weather, and work emergencies) can unexpectedly delay a parent's arrival. If you are going to be late or need a special accommodation on an exchange day, you must be courteous and notify the other parent as soon as you are aware of the delay or change. In these cases, the other parent should allow some flexibility. Unless your order states otherwise, it is generally not considered a violation of a parenting time order if the other parent arrives within 30 minutes of the specified time due to an unexpected circumstance. If a parent is over 30 minutes late and has not timely communicated their whereabouts, then the parent who is waiting is free to go about their business with the child. Every effort should be made however, to facilitate some portion of the parenting time, especially if it involves an overnight or there are extended periods between parenting times. Parents who are routinely late for exchanges are cautioned however, that their parenting time order could be modified to prevent future inconvenience to the child and the other parent.

6) Conduct at Exchanges: Parenting time exchanges are a time for children to be happily greeted by the other parent. They are not the time to discuss bills, child support, co-parenting disputes or personal issues. Information necessary for proper care and success of the child(ren) such as medicines, sleep/ feeding schedules, school activities, and homework should be shared freely. Appointments and other information that you would normally write down or place on a calendar should be shared with the other parent in writing.