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# Guide to Developing Time Sharing Schedules September 2021 Edition

*(Formerly known as Court Clinic Time Sharing Guidelines)*

Developed by the Family Court Clinic  
Second Judicial District Court  
State of New Mexico

## Court Clinic Team

### Court Clinicians

Anthony Baca, LPCC  
Renee Cerami, LCSW  
Elizabeth Davidson-Arellano, LCSW  
Maureen Polikoff, LCSW  
Sara Scripp, LPCC  
Jasmine Storey, LPCC

### Administrative Assistants

Martha Dropinski  
Jennifer Salazar

### Director

Timothy Reed, LCSW

## Second Judicial District Family Court

### Judges

Honorable Amber Chavez Baker  
Honorable Gerard Lavelle  
Honorable Jane Levy  
Honorable Debra Ramirez, Presiding

### Hearing Officers

Veronica Hill  
Rachelle Klump  
Stephen Klump  
Crystal Lees  
Elizabeth Rourke  
Ashley Schneller  
Rosemary Traub

# Court Clinic Guide to Developing Time Sharing Schedules – 2021 Edition

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# Guide to Developing Time Sharing Schedules

## The Court Clinic 2021 Edition

This guide is intended for use by parents, mediators, mental health practitioners, attorneys and judicial officers when developing time sharing schedules. It includes sections that briefly discuss important factors to consider for every time sharing schedule, as well as sections that are specific to age groupings. Additional information and references can be found at the end. This guide is the work product of the Court Clinic team at the Second Judicial District Court of New Mexico and as such, any use of it must be credited. It incorporates the knowledge gained from many years of experience assisting families and the Court, as well as a review of the most recent and evolving research/studies. As dedicated professionals, the Court Clinic promotes integrity, respect, tolerance, fairness and cultural sensitivity within its service provision. The Clinic's goal is to provide parties with information to assist them in deciding what is in the best interest of their child(ren), taking into account multiple factors, without any bias as to the race, ethnicity, sex or gender of parents or children. The information contained in this guide is intended to generate fruitful discussion rather than increase conflict and litigation. The Court Clinic does not make any guarantees or warranties regarding outcomes from the information presented and parents are strongly encouraged to seek additional legal, parenting, child development, co-parenting, therapeutic and other types of advice from professionals.

### Core Principles of the Guide

- ❖ Time sharing schedules should be developed with a keen focus on the needs of the child.
  - Consider the individual characteristics and the temperament of the child;
  - Consider the child's coping ability in relation to the level of parental conflict.
- ❖ Time sharing schedules should support the goal of developing and strengthening parent/child relationships at all points along the continuum from a relationship that does not yet exist to an already strong and healthy relationship.
  - Understanding the nature of the child's current relationship with each parent is a starting point;
  - Existing parental safety factors are an impediment to a strong and healthy parent/child relationship;
    - Safety factors need to be acknowledged and accounted for when developing a schedule.
- ❖ Strong and healthy parent/child relationships are built on the foundation of:
  - Parental interest and involvement in both the mundane and important aspects of the child's life;
  - The parent's ability to acknowledge and meet the child's needs;
  - The parent's intentional use of the time spent together to demonstrate that the child is important to the parent;
  - Trust: the child develops trust when a parent is involved, reliable and responsive.
- ❖ As the parent/child relationship strengthens, the child will be able to spend more time with a parent.
- ❖ The child should be provided the opportunity to "figure out" whom each parent is, free from the perceptions of the other parent and others.
- ❖ Parental interference in the other parent's relationship with the child (in the absence of documented safety factors) poses a significant risk to the child's optimal growth and development in all areas.
- ❖ Parents should strive to reduce conflict with the other parent.
  - If this is not possible or safe, a parent should strive to lessen the negative effects of the parental conflict for the child.
  - Strong and healthy parent/child relationships can serve as a protective factor even when there is problematic parental conflict and poor co-parenting, except in cases of domestic violence.
- ❖ Time sharing schedules are always modifiable and can change over time because of changes in the lives of children and parents.
- ❖ A time sharing schedule is one component of a Parenting Plan, which also includes the outlining of holidays, vacations, exchanges, parental responsibilities, communication and dispute resolution.

## Complexity of Designing Time Sharing Schedules

This is not a rigidly prescriptive guide, but rather focuses on a number of parental and child factors that should be considered when developing a time sharing schedule that is in a child's best interests. A rigidly prescriptive guide to time sharing gives a false sense that one schedule will fit for every child/family. Additionally, any presumption that a certain schedule will work for all children or must be a starting place for all children will fail to take into account the presence of any significant parental safety factors that must be considered, including domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

Developing time sharing schedules for children is challenging. No two time sharing schedules will be identical. A simple formula misses the point that parent/child relationships inherently change over time and are dependent upon both parent and child factors. Children present with individual factors that influence the development of their attachments and relationships and influence their optimal development. Parents also present with individual factors and challenges that influence their parenting and co-parenting ability. It is important to consider how these factors interplay when developing a time sharing schedule that is in the best interest of a particular child or sibling group. This Guide offers suggested ranges for increasing timesharing for each age grouping, encouraging parents to focus on the child's needs when considering changes.

## Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Family Violence

The presence of any form of domestic violence or violence in the family, whether documented or not, is a factor to consider when developing a time sharing schedule. Parental conflict in general makes co-parenting more difficult, and when there has been, or is, domestic violence between the parents, that difficulty is exponentially greater. It is important to identify the form(s) of domestic violence engaged in by one or both parents (a full exploration of domestic violence is beyond the scope of this document). Another important factor to consider is whether the child has been witness to and/or the victim of a parent's violence. Family violence – whether between the parents or in a parent's other relationship(s) – is a critical factor to consider, and in more severe instances may be an overriding factor in determining time sharing.

## Parental Conflict and Co-Parenting

Positive co-parenting has many benefits for parents and children. When parents are able to effectively manage their conflict and have respect for the other's parental role, they are able to protect the child from most negative consequences of their conflict. Research provides various perspectives regarding the association between parental conflict, child well-being and specific time sharing schedules. The research indicates that strong and healthy parent/child relationships can provide a protective buffer for a child exposed to parental conflict, except in cases involving domestic violence. Effective co-parenting provides an additional protective layer for children when parents are able to protect the child from any difficult and/or unresolved feelings about the other parent. Many factors can impact co-parenting over time, including the introduction of new parental partners and/or additional children in either/both parent's life.

## Substance Abuse and the Development of Time Sharing Schedules

Substance abuse, which can be defined as the recurrent use of legal/illegal drugs and/or alcohol that leads to significant impairment and the inability or failure to meet major responsibilities (SAMHSA), is an important factor to consider when developing a time sharing schedule. Factors to consider include the degree of impairment; impact of impairment on parenting; the number of the substances consumed; the duration of use; and whether the child has been witness to/victim of the parental substance abuse. A parent's engagement and compliance with treatment are important factors to consider.

## Mental Health Conditions and the Development of Time Sharing Schedules

Mental health conditions that impair a parent's ability to meet parental responsibilities are important to consider. Impairment can negatively affect other areas of a parent's life beyond just parenting and co-parenting. Compliance with prescribed medication and/or treatments are important factors to consider.

## Mediation and the Development of Time Sharing Schedules

Mediation can provide an excellent opportunity for parents to develop and modify time sharing schedules and parenting plans. Parents who are capable of focusing on the needs of their child(ren), are able to work together, and have been able to move beyond the emotional impact of their separation/divorce are good candidates for mediation regardless of the age of their child(ren). During the mediation process, decision-making remains in the hands of the parents. Mediation provides a forum for discussion of all aspects of the lives of parents and children, with a focus always on the best interests of the child(ren). With effective cooperation and co-parenting, mediation is often the best and most time efficient method to develop and modify a time sharing schedule, especially for younger children. This Guide can be useful in preparing for mediation.

## Signs of Stress in Children

Children often experience stress adjusting to changes in time sharing. *A caveat regarding signs of stress:* even positive events can provoke signs that look like stress, but are not indications that the change is harmful to the child (*see pages 16-17 for potential signs of stress for each developmental stage*). It is important that parents do not immediately assume that the change was the wrong decision. Stress can be related to differences in parenting styles, differences in each home environment and the transitions between homes. These differences can provide an opportunity for the child to learn how to adapt to different expectations and environments, when the differences do not pose a risk to the child. If parents are unable to discuss what the signs of stress might mean for their child, they are encouraged to reach out to others for guidance and consultation.

## List of Factors to Consider for All Time Sharing Schedules

Child Factors – page 6

Individual Parental Factors – page 6

Parental Conflict Factors – page 7

Factors Necessary for Consideration of Overnights – RESTED – page 7

## Specific Factors for Consideration for Different Age Ranges

All of the above factors should be considered when developing a time sharing schedule regardless of the child's age. Additional information to consider that is specific to each age group is described below on pages 8-12. This information does not cover all issues because families present unique needs that may need to be addressed. Families with more than one child present both opportunities and challenges when developing time sharing schedules. Additional developmental specifics about each age group are presented on pages 20-21.

## Other Factors that May Be Important to Consider

The child's relationship with:

- ❖ Partners of parents;
- ❖ Other children of each parent (current or prior partner);
- ❖ The children of parental partners;
- ❖ Extended family members of each parent and/or parental partners.

## Child Factors to Consider for All Schedules

Relationship with Parent	Child's Individual Qualities	Child's (Special) Needs	Child's Progress Towards Developmental Milestones	Siblings
<p><i>For the Youngest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attachment relationship exists or does not exist (see Attachment, page 22)</li> </ul> <p><i>For all Other Children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Parent/child relationship exists or does not exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Temperament</li> <li>❖ Adaptability to change</li> <li>❖ Adjustment to prior time sharing schedules</li> <li>❖ Child's coping ability in relation to parental conflict</li> <li>❖ Wishes of the child as the child ages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Needs are documented</li> <li>❖ Parent is addressing needs at home</li> <li>❖ Parent is involved with provider(s)</li> <li>❖ Role of breastfeeding</li> <li>❖ Needs may impact time sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Challenges/delays are documented</li> <li>❖ Parent is addressing challenges at home</li> <li>❖ Parent is involved with provider(s)</li> <li>❖ Challenges/delays may impact time sharing (see Developmental Stages, pages 20-21)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Different ages in sibling group may necessitate different schedules</li> <li>❖ Older siblings can often ease the transition to a different schedule for a younger child</li> <li>❖ Splitting siblings will have consequences for the siblings</li> </ul>

## Individual Parental Factors to Consider for All Schedules

Parenting Ability	Parental Safety Factors	Parental Work Schedules	Factors Related to Culture, Ethnicity, Race, and Religion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Acknowledgement of child's needs</li> <li>❖ Ability to provide for all needs</li> <li>❖ Ability to provide child-sensitive and child-focused parenting</li> <li>❖ Ability to see child's needs in relation to "my time"</li> <li>❖ Ability to shift parenting as child develops (see Progressive Degrees of Separation, page 22)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Perpetration of domestic violence and other forms of violence in relationships</li> <li>❖ Substance abuse</li> <li>❖ Mental health issues</li> <li>❖ Perpetration of child abuse/neglect</li> <li>❖ Current criminal activity/cases</li> <li>❖ How is parent addressing safety factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Impact on parental availability</li> <li>❖ Flexible or rigid schedule</li> <li>❖ Parents in the military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Parents define importance as it relates to time sharing and holidays</li> </ul>

## Parental Conflict Factors to Consider for All Schedules

Children benefit when parents are able to work through their disagreements without increasing the level of conflict and *without* involving the child as an emotional ally and/or messenger. Children brought directly into the parental conflict fare worse than children protected from parental conflict. Effective co-parenting will help ensure that the child’s needs are acknowledged, discussed and met in both homes during each developmental period. Strong and healthy parent/child relationships can provide a protective buffer from the parental conflict for a child. Co-parenting relationships change over time, sometimes improving or worsening depending upon many factors, including new parental partners, additional children and the involvement of extended family.

Ability to work together	Exchanges	Parental Emotional Firewall	Gatekeeping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Level of cooperation &amp; ability to co-parent</li> <li>❖ Current domestic violence (DV)</li> <li>❖ History of DV</li> <li>❖ One or both are driving high conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ No issues – parents are able to be flexible</li> <li>❖ Exchanges require Law Enforcement, supervision or a third party</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Parent has addressed loss, anger and/or has shifted to business-like relationship</li> <li>❖ Parent does not involve child as emotional ally and/or messenger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ No issue – parent supports child’s relationship with other parent</li> <li>❖ Parent allows child to form own opinion of the other parent, especially when that opinion differs from one’s own</li> <li>❖ Preventing/blocking/sabotaging contact between the child and the other parent <b><i>in the absence of well-founded safety concerns about the other parent</i></b> is a serious risk factor for the child</li> </ul>

## Factors Necessary for Consideration of Overnights

Remember the acronym: **RESTED**

Each factor must be in place to consider initiating overnights or adding overnights

Relationship	Ease of Adjustment	Safety	Trust	Environment	Dependable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ For the youngest children: an attachment relationship is established <i>[Will the child awaken to a trusted caregiver or a stranger?]</i></li> <li>❖ For all other children: a parent/child relationship is established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The child is adjusting well to living in two homes</li> <li>❖ The child has adjusted well to any prior changes in the time sharing schedule</li> <li>❖ Adjustment to travel distance between homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There are no concerning parental safety factors that need to be addressed</li> <li style="text-align: center;"><b>Or</b></li> <li>❖ The parent adequately addressed the safety concerns that were present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Parent has been meaningfully involved in parenting responsibilities and the child trusts that the parent will meet the child’s needs</li> <li>❖ <i>An additional benefit to the child: The co-parenting relationship is one of trust and working together for the child</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The parent has the physical setup for overnights</li> <li>❖ The parent’s environment is free of safety hazards, domestic violence and unsafe individuals</li> <li>❖ Privacy may be a factor as child ages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The parent has demonstrated the ability to fulfill parental responsibilities: getting the child to appointments, school, activities, etc.</li> <li>❖ The parent is able to adapt own schedule with the child’s routine</li> </ul>

## Time Sharing for the Youngest Children - Birth to Age 3

A focus on understanding the child’s attachment relationships and progress towards developmental milestones is essential in this age range. Strong infant/parent attachments provide the child with a blueprint for all future relationships by promoting a sense of security, the beginnings of self-confidence, and the development of trust in others. The goal is to create a time sharing schedule that maximizes the young child's ability to stay connected (or get connected) to both parents without jeopardizing the child’s overall development of strong attachments. Introducing an overnight when an attachment relationship is not strong and the child is not yet comfortable with the parent, will cause distress for the child and likely set back the developing relationship. Development of an attachment relationship will take time, requires consistency by the parent, and may involve other individuals with whom the child is comfortable with to be transition persons initially to introduce the child to the parent – this may include relatives, day care providers, and in limited cases, the other parent.

The following considerations presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

<b>Child Birth to Age 3</b>	
<b>Minimally-Involved Parent</b>	<b>Existing Relationship</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was minimally involved</u></b>  <b><u>Attachment relationship needs to develop</u></b>  <i>(prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i></p> <p>Parent must be consistent in following through on time sharing. Consider 4-5 month step increments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Up to 2-4 hours per day for 3-5 days per week, days spaced apart</li> <li>2) Up to 4-8 hours per day, 3-5 days per week, days spaced apart</li> <li>3) Up to 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and up to 4-8 hours on 2 other days (up to 4 days total per week as schedules permit)</li> <li>4) 1 overnight once:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Attachment relationship is strong</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> <li>c) Keep 4-8 hours on other days</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Introducing an overnight too early or adding additional overnights before an attachment relationship is strong may set the relationship back</li> <li>6) Additional overnights               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) once relationship is strong</li> <li>b) Consider 4 month step increments to add overnights within a range of up to 3 per week taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>7) Keep time on other days to minimize gaps</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was very involved prior to separation</u></b>  <b><u>Strong and healthy attachment relationship exists</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overnight(s) can occur immediately               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If overnight factors are met (page 7) (delay until factors are met)</li> <li>b. Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range of up to 3 per week taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Daytime hours on other days as schedules permit so that gaps in contact are minimized</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Attachment relationship exists but needs to grow stronger through more parent involvement</u></b>  <i>(post-separation or parents never lived together)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and 4-8 hours on other days (up to 4 days total per week as schedules permit).</li> <li>2) Overnights once:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The attachment relationship has strengthened. Consistency is critical</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> <li>c) Consider 4 month step increments to add overnights within a range of up to 3 per week taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Daytime hours on other days as schedules permit so that gaps in contact are minimized</li> </ol>

## Time Sharing for Children Age 3 Years to 5 Years

A focus on understanding both attachment and developmental stages is essential for this age range. The goal is to create a time sharing schedule that supports the child’s existing and developing attachments, while addressing any needs, concerns or delays, which become more evident during this period. Time sharing schedules should provide consistency and predictability. Consistent follow through with time sharing by the parent is critical to the development and strengthening of the parent/child relationship. Children in this age range typically do better with less time between seeing each parent. When considering changes to time sharing take into account any other changes that may be occurring due to developmental transitions/changes – for example, a new daycare, starting school, achieving milestones, etc. Consider how child may handle multiple changes.

The following considerations presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

<b>Child 3-5 Years Old</b>	
<b>Minimally-Involved Parent</b> <i>(prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>	<b>Existing Relationship</b> <i>(prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was minimally involved</u></b> <b><u>Relationship needs to develop</u></b></p> <p>Consider 4-5 month step increments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Up to 4-8 hours per day, 3-5 days per week, days spaced apart</li> <li>2) Up to 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and up to 4-8 hours on 2 other days (up to 4 days total per week as schedules permit)</li> <li>3) 1 overnight under the following circumstances:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Child has developed a relationship</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> <li>c) Keep 4-8 hours on other days</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Introducing an overnight too early or adding too many at once when a relationship is still emerging may set the relationship back</li> <li>5) Consider 4 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to 3 per week, taking into account the child’s adjustment               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Keep time on other days</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent has been very involved</u></b> <b><u>Strong and healthy relationship exists</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overnight(s) can occur immediately               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If overnight factors are met (page 7) – (delay until factors are met)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range of up to 3 per week taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> <li>3) Daytime hours on other days as schedules permit</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Relationship exists but needs to grow stronger through more parent involvement</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and 4-8 hours on other days (up to 4 days total per week as schedules permit)</li> <li>2) Overnights once:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The relationship has strengthened; child is comfortable</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> <li>c) Consider 4 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to 3 per week, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> <li>d) Keep time on other days</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Time Sharing for Children Age 5 Years to 8 Years

The goal for this age range is to create a timesharing schedule that maximizes the child’s relationships, the child’s achievement of developmental milestones and that addresses any concerns or delays. Predictable schedules are best and the child can spend more time at each home, but will likely still need to have shorter time sharing periods so that the time away from each parent is not too long. The child’s school and activities become important to consider when developing a time sharing schedule. The younger children in this age range may do better with less time between seeing each parent. Consider whether the child needs shorter blocks of time sharing (less time away from both parents). When considering changes to time sharing take into account any other changes that may be occurring due to developmental transitions/changes – for example, a new daycare, starting school, achieving milestones, etc. Consider how child may handle multiple changes.

The following considerations presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

<b>Child 5-8 Years Old</b>	
<b>Minimally-Involved Parent</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>	<b>Existing Relationship</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was minimally involved</u></b> <b><u>Relationship needs to develop</u></b></p> <p>Consider 3-4 month step increments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 4-8 hours, 3 days per week, spaced apart</li> <li>2) 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) per week and 4-8 hours on 2 other days</li> <li>3) 1 overnight with 4-8 hours on 2 days under the following circumstances:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Parent/child relationship has become stronger</li> <li>b) Child has adjusted to 2 homes</li> <li>c) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Additional Overnights               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Begin with 2 per week</li> <li>b) Consider 4-5 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent has been very involved</u></b> <b><u>Strong and healthy relationship exists</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overnight(s) can occur immediately               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If overnight factors are met (page 7) (delay until factors are met)</li> <li>b) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Relationship exists but needs to grow stronger through more parent involvement</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and 4-8 hours on other days (up to 4 days total per week as schedules permit)</li> <li>2) Begin Overnight once:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The relationship has strengthened; child is comfortable</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Additional Overnights               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>

## Time Sharing for Children Age 9 Years to 12 Years

The goal for this age range is to create a timesharing schedule that:

- ❖ Maximizes the child’s relationships and the child’s achievement of developmental milestones;
- ❖ Addresses any concerns or delays;
- ❖ Incorporates the child’s school attendance and activities, which continue to increase in importance to the child during this time.

Predictable schedules are best and the child can likely spend more time at each home, but may still need to have weekly contact with both parents if parents adopt a week-to-week timesharing schedule. Consider how changes in time sharing relate to other developmental transitions the child may be experiencing – for example, advancing in grade/new school, activities, achieving milestones, etc.

The following considerations presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

<b>Child 9-12 Years Old</b>	
<b>Minimally-Involved Parent</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>	<b>Existing Relationship</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was minimally involved</u></b> <b><u>Relationship needs to develop</u></b></p> <p>Consider 3-4 month step increments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 6-8 hours, 3 days per week, spaced apart</li> <li>2) 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) per week and 4-8 hours on 2 other days or as schedules permit</li> <li>3) 1 overnight with 4-8 hours on 2 days under the following circumstances:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Parent/child relationship has become stronger</li> <li>b) Child has adjusted to 2 homes</li> <li>c) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Additional Overnights               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Begin with 2 per week</li> <li>b) Consider 3-4 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent has been very involved</u></b> <b><u>Strong and healthy relationship exists</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overnight(s) can occur immediately               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If overnight factors are met (page 7) (delay until factors are met)</li> <li>b) Consider 2-3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Relationship exists but needs to grow stronger through more parent involvement</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and 4-8 hours on 2 other days or as schedules permit</li> <li>2) Begin overnight once:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the relationship has strengthened; child is comfortable</li> <li>b) overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Additional Overnights               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Consider 3-4 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child’s adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>

## Time Sharing for Children Age 13 Years to 18 Years

The challenge for this age range is to create a timesharing schedule that maximizes parent/child relationships while also supporting the child achieving eventual independence/separation from both parents. The child will increasingly want to have a greater voice in decisions, though the parents remain the decision makers.

The child may want to have a primary home (regardless of current or prior schedules) for various reasons:

- ❖ Logistics of where school, friends, activities, employment are in relation to each home;
- ❖ Lack of a close relationship and/or conflict with a parent;
- ❖ If co-parenting has been chronically poor and the child has been in the middle (used as a messenger, emotional ally, etc.), the child may resolve conflict by picking one parent;
- ❖ Parental alignment by one parent/parent's family;
- ❖ Sibling groups often split as one or more siblings go with each parent:
  - Result of parent alignment on the part of one or both parents/families;
  - Result of how the separation occurred, children take sides;
  - Attempt by children to resolve relentless/chronic parental conflict.

The following considerations presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

<b>Child 13-18 Years Old</b>	
<b>Minimally-Involved Parent</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>	<b>Existing Relationship</b> <i>(includes prior to separation, post-separation or parents never lived together)</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent was minimally involved</u></b> <b><u>Relationship needs to develop</u></b></p> <p>Consider 3-4 month step increments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 6-8 hours, 3 days per week, spaced apart</li> <li>2) 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) per week and 4-8 hours on 2 other days or as schedules permit</li> <li>3) 1 overnight with 4-8 hours on 2 days under the following circumstances:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Parent/child relationship has become stronger</li> <li>b) Child has adjusted to 2 homes</li> <li>c) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Additional Overnights                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Begin with 2 per week</li> <li>b) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child's adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parent has been very involved</u></b> <b><u>Strong and healthy relationship exists</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overnight(s) can occur immediately                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If overnight factors are met (page 7) (delay until factors are met)</li> <li>b) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child's adjustment</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Relationship exists but needs to grow stronger through more parent involvement</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Begin with 2 full days (up to 12 hours/day) and 4-8 hours on 2 other days or as schedules permit</li> <li>2) Begin overnight once:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The relationship has strengthened; child is comfortable</li> <li>b) Overnight factors are met (page 7)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Consider 3 month step increments to add overnights within a range up to equal timesharing, taking into account the child's adjustment</li> <li>4) Daytime hours on other days as needed</li> </ol>

## Considerations for Long Distance Time Sharing

- ❖ For the youngest children: time sharing with the child will occur in the child’s residential city;
  - When no parent/child relationship exists, time sharing will begin in the child’s residential city;
- ❖ As the child gets older, and taking into account the child’s individual qualities, time sharing can increase and occur in the away parent’s location or another location;
- ❖ The stronger the parent/child relationship with the away parent, the more time the child can spend with the away parent with that time being in the away parent’s location;
- ❖ The child’s activities, summer school, and employment need to be considered;
- ❖ Distance between the homes need to be considered;
- ❖ Parental resources related to travel need to be considered;
- ❖ Any parental safety factors that exist need to be adequately addressed before time is spent in the away parent’s location;
- ❖ Video/phone contact may provide opportunities for developing/maintaining a relationship;
- ❖ Visits to the child’s residential location by the away parent (if practicable and safe) demonstrate additional commitment to the parent/child relationship;
- ❖ Time sharing can include school breaks, special days and summer;
- ❖ Consider vacation time for each parent;
- ❖ Consider rotating holidays, taking into account traditions and travel;
- ❖ Consider child’s need to readjust upon return to school home before school starts;
- ❖ Keep in mind that as the child gets older, the child’s interests – sports, activities, employment – will become more important and will likely affect the amount of time sharing with the away parent.

The following schedules for consideration presume that a parent 1) has been at least minimally involved (not absent) and 2) that no individual parental safety concerns are currently present. See page 14 for considerations when a parent/child relationship is absent and/or there are safety concerns with a parent.

	Children 0-3	Children 3-5	Children 5-8	Children 9-12	Children 13-18
Schedule Ideas	Time sharing in child’s residential location – consult the time sharing schedules identified on page 8 for this age range	Consult the time sharing schedules identified on page 9 for this age range	Consult the time sharing schedules identified on page 10 for this age range	Summers – take into consideration the child’s summer school and activities in both locations	Summers – take into consideration the child’s summer school, activities and employment in both locations
	Time sharing may need to occur in modified blocks of time related to parental resources for travel	Time in away parent’s location: begin with shorter periods to allow for the child’s adjustment	Summers – each summer may look different to account for the child’s increasing ability to spend longer times	<u>Summer range of time</u> 6-10 weeks	<u>Summer range of time</u> Up to the entire summer, except the time needed for readjustment before school starts and parental vacations
	Ensure that attachment relationship is established before overnights	Ensure that parent/child relationship is established before overnights	<u>Summer range of time</u> 4-6 weeks Consider splitting into blocks rather than one long stretch if resources allow	Consider parental vacation time  Consider the child’s need to readjust before school starts	Depending upon activities, sports, or employment, a child may request a specific schedule. Wishes should be considered

## Time Sharing Considerations when Parent/Child Relationship is Absent

Situations include:

- ❖ When a parent has never been involved;
- ❖ When the parent's involvement was so long ago that there is no current parent/child relationship;
- ❖ When one parent was withholding initially;
- ❖ When developing an attachment relationship with a child in the first 2+ years.

Consider supervised contact initially to develop a relationship. Options include:

- ❖ Supervised visitation by a relative/another person/the other parent (limited situations);
- ❖ Supervised visitation by a professional – individual or agency;
- ❖ Therapeutic reunification/visitation;
- ❖ *Attachment Relationship*: Developing an attachment relationship will take time and likely involve other individuals with whom the child is comfortable with to be transition persons initially to introduce the child to the parent – includes relatives, day care providers, and in limited cases, the other parent;
- ❖ As the parent/child relationship develops, time sharing can proceed to a schedule as described in each age range under *Minimally-Involved Parent*;
- ❖ Parental consistency is critical to developing the relationship. It is not in a child's best interest to have a parent who comes into and out of a child's life.

## Time Sharing Considerations when there are Safety Concerns with a Parent

Initially, due to concerns about the child's safety with the parent, consider all of the following:

- 1) No contact;
- 2) Supervised visitation by a professional – individual or agency;
- 3) Therapeutic visits;
- 4) Therapeutic reunification.

Questions to consider when changing the existing level of contact with the parent:

- 1) Is the parent actively addressing the concerns?
- 2) Once the parent has demonstrated sufficient progress in addressing the safety concerns:
  - a) For the youngest children: What level of contact will be safe and promote the attachment relationship?
  - b) For all other children: What level of contact will be safe and promote the parent/child relationship?
- 3) If there has been some level of contact while the parent was addressing the safety concerns:
  - a) What is the nature of the child's relationship now with the parent?
  - b) The *Minimally-Involved Parent* schedules defined above for each age range can be implemented to further develop the parent/child relationship;
- 4) If there has been no contact while the parent addressed the safety concerns
  - a) Supervised/therapeutic reunification/visits should be considered as a starting point.

## Considerations Regarding Parallel Parenting Schedules

- ❖ Child has strong and healthy relationship with both parents;
- ❖ Parents are meeting the needs of the child, ensuring attendance/progress at school and other activities;
- ❖ Parental communication has been hostile, with little to no chance of shifting;
- ❖ Each household can function independently and predictably;
- ❖ Child is not caught in middle because parents do not denigrate the other parent/parent's family;
- ❖ Time sharing/parenting plan are detailed – flexibility is discouraged;
- ❖ Communication is minimal, formal, only in writing (email, parent app) and is strictly child focused;
- ❖ Parents or the Court defines parameters of decision making, with no deviations;
- ❖ Parents do not conduct exchanges or exchanges are supervised by a professional/agency;
- ❖ Any modifications are facilitated by a third party or determined by the Court.

## Holidays and Special Days

It is important for parents to ensure that they make holidays and special days enjoyable for the children and not an opportunity for conflict and strife. Families typically have important traditions and these days are often spent with extended family. Parents should strive to figure out what works for their families and cooperate to maximize the child's opportunity to share in the traditions of both parents. Parents are encouraged to work together to determine the holidays important to them. By working together, parents can avoid compelling the court to order a holiday schedule. Work together to avoid last minute motions for holidays.

## Considerations for Exchanges

Exchanges can be opportunities for a child to observe parents show respect to each other  
or  
Exchanges can be opportunities for a child to observe some of the worst parental behavior

### The goal is to make exchanges peaceful for the child

It is the parents' joint responsibility to ensure that exchanges are not a burden or dangerous for the child. When parents create a hostile exchange, the child experiences conflicting feelings about both parents and this places the child in a most unfair position.

Children participate in exchanges because they have no choice.

Children can "read" the level of peace or conflict present during exchanges.

Children at any age respond to the emotional cues/behaviors the parents are exhibiting, which can create a range of feelings on a continuum from calm to fear.

Children begin anticipating exchanges in advance, sometimes well in advance. Children often exhibit behaviors reflective of the stress experienced as a result of this anticipation.

Situations to avoid that create a hostile environment for the child at an exchange:

The parent(s) bring others to the exchange for "support," intimidation or to record/video;

The parent(s) bring a new partner to incite the other parent;

The parent(s) utilize(s) the exchange to discuss issues that are not child-related;

The parent(s) utilize(s) the exchange to discuss inflammatory issues.

Discuss important issues at some other time than at an exchange.

If you believe you cannot exchange peacefully or safely with the other parent, there are options:

- 1) Create a time sharing schedule in which exchanges occur at:
  - a) School – consider how the child carries belongings
  - b) Daycare – can belongings be left at daycare for the exchange?
  - c) A relative's home who is providing care (all day, before/after school) – can belongings be left at relative's for the exchange?
  - d) School events, sport/other events – will this taint the event/sport for the child?
- 2) Have two other parties who are not in conflict conduct the exchange
- 3) Use one individual that both parents and child trust to conduct the exchange
- 4) A public location may provide some restraint on parental behavior – a store, the mall, etc.
- 5) If the child is old enough
  - a) The child can move between 2 vehicles with no one else getting out of the vehicles
  - b) The child can walk from vehicle to doorway
- 6) Use the paid services of an agency or an individual

Note on use of Law Enforcement sites for exchanges:

- 1) Consider the message the child receives if parents need the protection of law enforcement;
- 2) A logical question a child might ask: Am I safe if my parents need the police?

## Common 2 Week Time Sharing Schedules for Consideration

### 5/2 Schedule

Schedule shown gives one parent all weekends  
Other days can be selected, including splitting weekends

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight				
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight				

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work well with parental work schedules, especially if one parent works out of town
- ❖ Provides consistency that a child can anticipate
- ❖ Minimal exchanges, which depending upon the level of parental conflict, may be more easily managed when school is in session

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ One parent may end up with all weekends, depending upon the schedule decided upon
- ❖ May be too long for some children to go without seeing one parent – could add a dinner visit to address this

### 4/3 Schedule

Each week the child spends the same 4 days with one parent and the same 3 days with the other parent  
The schedule below provides one example; there are other ways to split the time

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work well with parental work schedules, especially if one parent works out of town
- ❖ Provides consistency that a child can anticipate
- ❖ Minimal exchanges, which depending upon the level of parental conflict, may be more easily managed when school is in session

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ One parent may end up with all weekends, depending upon schedule decided upon
- ❖ May be too long for some children to go without seeing one parent – could add a dinner visit to address this

### 9/5 Schedule

One parent has 9 straight days and other parent has 5 straight days  
Exchange day could be on any weekday in order to maintain the alternating weekends

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight					
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work well with parental work schedules, especially if one parent has a less traditional work week or works out of town for periods of time
- ❖ Provides consistency that a child can anticipate
- ❖ Minimal exchanges, which depending upon the level of parental conflict, may be more easily managed when school is in session
- ❖ Each parent gets a weekend

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ One parent may end up with all weekends, depending upon the schedule decided upon
- ❖ May be too long for some children to go without seeing one parent – could add a dinner visit to address this

### 50/50 Schedules

#### 2/2/5/5 Schedule

Child spends the same 2 days each week with each parent and the weekends rotate  
In the example below, exchanges occur either in the AM or PM on the day of the parent’s first overnight

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work well with younger children who do better with less time between seeing each parent
- ❖ Provides consistency that a child can anticipate
- ❖ Each parent gets a full weekend that rotates and is predictable

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ 4 exchanges in 2 weeks – may be problematic depending upon the level of parental conflict – may be more easily managed when school is in session

### 3/4/4/3 Schedule

Child spends 3 days with one parent, then 4 days with the other parent  
Then 4 days with the first parent, followed by 3 days with the other parent

Example 1

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

Example 2

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work with parental work schedules
- ❖ Each parent has a set 3 days that they can plan around, with a fourth that rotates (Thursday in Example 1 above, Wednesday in Example 2)

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ Weekends are either given to one parent only (Example 1 above) or the weekend will be split depending upon the time of the exchange (Example 2 above)
- ❖ 4 exchanges in 2 weeks – may be problematic depending upon the level of parental conflict – may be more easily managed when school is in session

### 2/2/3 Schedule

In a 2 week period, the child has the following rotation:  
2 days with Parent A, 2 days with Parent B, 3 days with Parent A, 2 days with Parent B, 2 days with Parent A  
and 3 days with Parent B – then the rotation begins again

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ May work well with younger children who do better with less time between seeing each parent
- ❖ Each parent gets a full weekend that rotates and is predictable

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ Other than every other weekend being set, the other days are not consistent week to week – may be confusing for parents and children alike
- ❖ 6 exchanges in 2 weeks – may be problematic depending upon the level of parental conflict – may not be more easily managed when school is in session

### Week to Week Schedule

Child spends 7 straight days with each parent  
Example below shows a Thursday exchange

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight
Week 2	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent A</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight	<b>Parent B</b> overnight

#### Benefits

- ❖ Predictable
- ❖ Can rotate weekends
- ❖ Exchange day can be any day
- ❖ Child may adjust/settle in more to each home within the 7 days

#### Drawbacks

- ❖ Not suggested for the youngest children who typically do better when there is less time between seeing each parent
- ❖ Child may adjust/settle in too well, which may make switching to the next home more difficult

### Other common schedules that are not suggested for consideration

#### Alternating every day schedule

- ❖ Too many exchanges and requires a very strong co-parenting relationship
- ❖ Child has no time to get settled in each home

#### Alternating every 2 days schedule

- ❖ Too many exchanges and requires a very strong co-parenting relationship
- ❖ Weeks are not consistent potentially creating confusion and misunderstanding between parents
- ❖ Difficult for young children to grasp, potentially creating confusion and anxiety

#### Every 3<sup>rd</sup> day schedule

- ❖ Weeks are not consistent potentially creating confusion and misunderstanding between parents
- ❖ Difficult for young children to grasp, potentially creating confusion and anxiety

#### Alternating every 2 weeks schedule

- ❖ Too long between seeing each parent

### Blank 2 Week Schedules for Practice

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1							
Week 2							

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1							
Week 2							

## Developmental Stages

*It is important to take into account the cultural, religious and ethnic characteristics of the family and child(ren) when considering each stage.*

*Caveat regarding signs of stress: even positive events can provoke signs that look like stress – it is important for parents to discuss how their child shows and handles stress so they can work together to decide if changes need to be made to the schedule.*

### **Birth to age 2**

#### Developmental Tasks

- ❖ Establishing a sense of trust in their environment and the people around them;
- ❖ Forming a secure attachment relationship with at least one parent/caregiver;
- ❖ Forming additional attachment relationships.

#### Signs of Stress

- ❖ Regression in terms of sleeping, waking, nightmares;
- ❖ Difficulty leaving parent; clinginess;
- ❖ General crankiness, temper tantrums, crying.

### **Ages 2 to 4 – Toddlers**

#### Developmental Tasks

- ❖ Developing a sense of self-awareness – I am me, you are you;
- ❖ Developing independence; walking, running;
- ❖ Developing speech and other forms of communication;
- ❖ Developing the ability to provide self-comfort and self-regulation in sleeping, feeding, and toileting.

#### Signs of Stress

- ❖ Same signs as for infants;
- ❖ Regression in terms of sleeping, toilet training or eating;
- ❖ Slowing down or regression in the mastery of new skills;
- ❖ Fear of abandonment.

### **Ages 4 to 8**

#### Developmental Tasks

- ❖ Development of peer and other, external to family, relationships;
- ❖ Development of mastery of skills – school tasks;
- ❖ Beginnings of moral and ethical development;
- ❖ Development of outside activities, sports.

#### Signs of Stress

- ❖ Feeling abandoned and rejected;
- ❖ Unexplained anger and outbursts;
- ❖ Crying;
- ❖ Loyalty conflicts – child begins to sense the presence of parental conflict;
- ❖ Disorganized behavior;
- ❖ Beginning of self-blame if separation occurred during this time or parental conflict increases.

## **Ages 9 to 12 – the Tweens**

### Developmental Tasks

- ❖ Further development of skills – mastery in school, sports, activities;
- ❖ Further development of peer group relationships;
- ❖ Development of a stronger sense of self – who I am, my strengths and weakness;
- ❖ Development of the ability to identify qualities and characteristics in others;
- ❖ Beginnings of puberty.

### Signs of Stress

- ❖ Tendency to blame self for parental conflict or separation especially if separation occurred during this time period or conflict worsens;
- ❖ May feel that family is different from other families;
- ❖ Excessive use of electronics and/or social media;
- ❖ May begin to show anger at one or both parents for being put in this situation;
- ❖ If co-parenting is poor, loyalty conflict will be intense;
  - Child will often suggest a 50/50 time sharing schedule to resolve parental conflict, irrespective of parental influence.

## **Ages 13 to 18 – Adolescence/Teenagers**

### Developmental Tasks

- ❖ Consolidation of personal identity – more self-focused;
- ❖ Psychological and eventual physical emancipation;
- ❖ Adolescents and 2 year olds share much in common!
  - Both need room for independence as well as guidance: trust but verify!
  - Both are vulnerable to influence and manipulation.
- ❖ Relationships and sexual development become more central;
- ❖ Learning the parameters of how much decision-making ability they actually possess and can exercise;
  - The statute provides that at age 14, the Court shall consider a minor’s wishes, but the wishes are not determinative;
  - Parents and others often provide misleading information to adolescents creating a false sense of over-empowerment and later disappointment when they learn the limit of their decision-making ability.
- ❖ Learning how to manage all types of relationships
  - Peer group is very important and will have influence on choices making;
  - Parents and other adults often use enticements to influence/manipulate adolescent decision-making.
- ❖ More sophisticated understanding of why/how rules exist.

### Signs of Stress

#### ***Signs of stress if not identified and addressed can lead to dangerous and lethal consequences***

- ❖ Loneliness, depression, withdrawal;
- ❖ Self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts/plans;
- ❖ Unexplained anger and outbursts;
- ❖ Flight into drugs, alcohol, inappropriate or abusive relationships;
- ❖ School problems;
- ❖ Excessive use of electronics and/or social media;
- ❖ Peer problems;
- ❖ Delinquent behavior;
- ❖ Removal of relationship with one parent to resolve chronic unrelenting parental conflict;
  - “Voting with feet”

## Attachment

Attachment can be defined as the strong bond that develops between a child and caregivers, ideally the child's parents. Attachment formation depends on reciprocal interactive processes that foster the ability of the child to discriminate parents/caregivers from others. A child benefits from multiple attachments and time sharing schedules should strive to maximize the child's attachment relationship with both parents. Infant-parent attachments are extremely important to the child's development of a sense of security, which lead to the beginnings of self-confidence, and the development of trust in others.

Addressing time sharing during the development of attachments is challenging for parents and professionals alike and necessitates a more thorough exploration of:

- ❖ The child's current attachment relationship with both parents;
- ❖ The child's developmental and/or special needs;
- ❖ The parents' abilities and willingness to meet the child's needs.

Balancing the child's developing attachment relationships with each parents' perspective/wishes regarding time sharing can be difficult when parents are not able or willing to work together.

- ❖ The child needs healthy and strong attachments;
- ❖ Attachments do not necessarily form in the same manner or at the same time with each parent.

It is not in the child's best interest when:

- ❖ A parent forming/strengthening an attachment relationship wishes to proceed too quickly negatively affecting the child's developing sense of comfort with the parent;
- ❖ A parent blocks the other parent from forming/strengthening an attachment relationship, assuming that no safety factors exist.

## Progressive Degrees of Separation

*It is important for parents and/or those helping parents to take into account the cultural, religious and ethnic characteristics of the family and child(ren) when considering the concepts of separation and individuation.*

This can be a useful guiding framework for understanding the parental shifts necessary to support a child progressing through developmental stages to adulthood

- ❖ A child progresses developmentally through stages to reach independent adulthood;
- ❖ A parent also evolves developmentally as a parent as the child moves through the stages;
- ❖ As the parent evolves and progressively separates from the child, this allows the child to successfully separate from the parent and navigate to adulthood;
- ❖ This reciprocal developmental relationship is one of the primary means through which the parent/child relationship develops and strengthens over time;
- ❖ As a parent guides the child in the achievement of developmental milestones the child's self-esteem and independence strengthens;
- ❖ Progressive Degrees of Separation is about loss and mourning the expected changes that occur in the parent/child relationship as the child ages;
- ❖ Acknowledging that loss is important for the parent in supporting the child's necessary progression to adulthood;
- ❖ Difficulty in acknowledging and effectively addressing the loss will impede both parent and child;
- ❖ Parental difficulty in shifting may impede the parent/child relationship and create conflict in the relationship, especially in adolescence when the child is asserting more independence in thoughts and actions. A weak parent/child relationship prior to adolescence often sets the stage for this difficulty and conflict.

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Custody, timesharing and parenting plan documents were reviewed from many states, including the following: Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Utah.

Custody, timesharing and parenting plan documents were reviewed from many countries, including the following: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, England, EU, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales.