

Washtenaw County

PARENTING TIME GUIDELINES

Parenting time is the right of your child to spend time with each parent. The purpose of this guideline is to give you tips that help your child(ren) adjust to having two homes and spending time with both parents.

- If your court order states that parenting time shall be as agreed between the parents, the Court expects that the parents will be able to agree on what is best for their child.
- If you have a specific parenting time schedule, the Court expects that it will be followed. The parents are welcome to agree to changes and are encouraged to be flexible.
- Parents are expected to be on time to pick up and return their child for parenting time. A child should not be kept waiting for a parent. It is expected that each parent will provide the other with a 15 minute grace period. If a parent expects they will be later than 15 minutes, then that parent should immediately contact the other parent. A grace period of 30 minutes is to be used in emergencies only.
- Parents should not use the child as a source of information as this is emotionally upsetting to your child. In addition, the parents should not use the parenting time exchange to discuss parenting time concerns, financial disputes or display disrespect for the other parent.
- Parents are encouraged to share in parenting time transportation. Please refer to your order. If the order does not address this issue, the parent exercising parenting time is responsible for all transportation.
- Holiday parenting time takes precedence over regular parenting time.
- If you do not have a drivers license you are expected to have a licensed driver transport your child. Car seats are the responsibility of both parents and must be provided based on Michigan law.
- Neither parent has the right to stop paying child support or deny parenting time because support is not paid. These are two separate issues. Parenting time shall occur regardless of whether or not a parent is making child support payments and a parent is expected to make support payments even if parenting time is not occurring.
- Parenting time is about your child being comfortable. Daily needs such as food, diapers and personal hygiene items are the responsibility of the parent exercising parenting time. Clothing and other comfort items should be sent to help your child adjust to both homes. Seasonal items such as coats and boots should be sent and returned. All items sent should be returned in the same condition received.
- All prescription medications should be sent with a child with instructions for use. The parents are expected to discuss health and medication issues either in person or in writing.
- The custodial parent is expected to encourage a child to be prepared emotionally and physically for parenting time.

- Parenting time should NOT BE DENIED for the following reasons:

The child is sick. Illness is only a valid reason when a doctor has provided written verification that a child is restricted from exercising parenting time.

The weather was bad.

The child had somewhere else to go, was not home or had other things to do.

The child refused to go.

Do not deny parenting time because you disagree with the other parent's method of discipline or parenting style.

You may not deny parenting time if the other parent is behind in child support.

Denial of parenting time may not occur just because your child fusses when it is time to go. Your child will experience some stress regardless of whether the parents work together to be flexible.

The parent refusing to allow parenting time has the burden of proving that the denial was justified. The Friend of the Court expects that the Court orders will be followed.

- The Friend of the Court does not investigate abuse or neglect. You will need to contact Child Protective Services in the county where your child resides.
- Do not contact the police for routine denial of parenting time. The police will refer you to the Court for resolution as denial of parenting time is a civil matter. The police should only be contacted if you suspect that your safety or your child's safety is an issue.
- Keep your children out of your problems. If you cannot speak civilly to each other then communicate by email or text messaging.
- How you interact with the other parent *will* affect your child. Saying that you can't communicate or that the other parent is too difficult is not a sufficient reason to stop communicating.

The Friend of the Court offers mediation to help parents prevent or resolve custody and parenting time problems. Mediation is voluntary, confidential and at no cost. Applications to mediate are available at the FOC office. If you wish to modify your parenting time order and the other parent does not agree to the change or to mediate, you may need to file a petition to modify parenting time. If you are representing yourself, the FOC will provide you with the motion to change parenting time. We also offer the ability for the parents to request parenting time assistance if they believe that the parenting time order has been violated. The form is available online at www.ewashtenaw.org or at the FOC office. This is the form required to initiate parenting time enforcement per your court order. General information will be provided over the phone at 734-222-3050 or by email at intake@ewashtenaw.org.