

## **Appendix C**

### **Age Appropriate Parenting Access Plans**

The vision of the Ohio Task Force on Family Law and Children was to create an environment in which children whose parents live in different homes:

- could go back and forth peacefully between Mom's house and Dad's house;
- have a weekly schedule that was developmentally appropriate; and
- feel comfortable loving and interacting with both parents.

The best schedule is one that is tailor-made to each family by the family and adjusted as the child grows and family circumstances change. Children differ not only by age and developmental variances, but also by temperament, personality, and special needs. As the child grows and family circumstances change, arrangements need to change as well. Flexibility is a key to successful, child-centered schedules.

The Task Force examined model schedules from many counties throughout the country and decided to include those developed by Maricopa County, Arizona because they offered more options and were supported by current social science research. These sample schedules are offered here to encourage creativity. They are not intended to be guidelines to be imposed by a court. The parenting access plans provided are examples of what may work well for children of a particular age and developmental stage, but should not be viewed as prescriptive. One size does not fit all.

Current research supports the involvement of both parents from the earliest days of a child's life. Perhaps the greatest creativity is required as teens develop and mature. Rigid schedules during those years may cause alienation, and supportive parents may find themselves showing up for sports' and extracurricular events rather than relying on the routine that served them well when a child was young.

Children need two parents. They need for the two most important people in their lives to learn how to work together without on-going conflict and rancor. When parents say "I'll do anything for my kids", the greatest gift and challenge may mean developing a cooperative parenting partnership with your child's other parent. Best Wishes!

## Sample Parenting Access Plans

### To Parents

Raising children presents challenges for all parents. When parents live in separate homes the challenges are greater because the relationships become more complicated. Sometimes parents disagree about how much time children should spend with each of them. The following information will help parents reach agreements about parenting time (access) with their children.

These plans were developed by a committee of judicial officers, mental health providers and attorneys in Maricopa County, Arizona, who consulted with nationally known experts in child development. The Ohio Task Force on Family Law and Children selected these plans after an extensive review of materials prepared in communities around the country and the world. These plans offer information about what children learn, feel and need at different ages. They also provide a variety plans appropriate for each age group, and language that may be included in court orders.

Children describe the loss of contact with a parent as the worst consequence of divorce or parental separation. Unless special circumstances exist, preserving a healthy and on-going relationship between children and both their parents after divorce, dissolution or separation is of utmost importance. Positive involvement with both parents furthers the child's emotional and social development, academic achievement, and overall adjustment.

### Why Plans Are Necessary

Written parenting access plans provide children and parents with some assurances of maintaining meaningful contact and can prevent future conflict. These plans are intended to encourage open dialog and cooperation between parents. The Courts prefer that parents reach agreements about schedules voluntarily. When parents reach agreements about schedules on their own, they are more likely to remain cooperative as their children grow up. Children do best when parents cooperate. The reverse is also true. Children who experience on-going conflict between parents are at high risk for suffering serious long-term emotional problems.

Parents must state their agreements about parenting time in their parenting access plan. A successful parenting access plan will state the agreements parents reach about parenting time, and the sharing of parenting functions and responsibilities. The schedule should consider each child's developmental needs as identified in this booklet.

## How To Use This Booklet

1. Locate plans for your child(ren's) age.
2. Meet with your child's other parent to discuss parenting time and which plan for access (A, B or C) best suits your family's needs.
3. To assist you, the plans include sample calendars with sample parenting access plan language to include in court orders. These are examples only. You may chose any days or times you wish.
4. Because each child is unique, you may wish to establish different plans for children of different ages while making sure that brothers and sisters are able to spend as much time together as possible. Be flexible!

## Which Plan Should We Choose?

The following options are designed to allow parents, or the Court if necessary, to select the proper plan after considering the family's unique circumstances. Children differ in how long they are comfortable being away from each parent. Some children prefer spending more time at one home, while others move back and forth on a regular basis with ease. Parents may need to tolerate disruption of their own schedule, and more or less time with their child than they might otherwise prefer to provide the children with a sense of security and well-being.

When creating a plan, parents should consider the child's relationship with each parent. If a parent has never been a part of a child's life or has not had contact with the child for an extended period, access should start slowly and gradually increase as the child adjusts and feels comfortable.

A parent who has an extremely busy work schedule, has not been the child's primary caregiver, or wants regular access without extensive care giving responsibility may consider **Plan A**.

A parent who has been involved in the day-to-day care of the child may desire greater access. This parent may consider **Plan B**.

A parent who has care giving experience and desires maximum access may consider **Plan C**.

As the child adjusts to the initial plan and feels comfortable, parents may consider increasing access by creating another plan. In some cases, it may be beneficial to change from one plan to another as the child gets older. When increasing access time, a parent's past involvement in caring for the child must be considered as well as the parent's willingness and ability to learn necessary care giving skills.

If parents cannot create a parenting access plan and access schedule that is best for their family, the Court will evaluate the case, and create a parenting access plan that it finds is in the best interest of the children.

### **Important Factors To Consider When Creating A Plan**

- the child's age, maturity, temperament and strength of attachment to each parent
- any special needs of the child and parents
- the child's relationships with siblings and friends
- the distance between the two households
- the flexibility of both parents work schedules and the child's schedule to accommodate extended access
- childcare arrangements
- transportation needs
- the ability of parents to communicate and cooperate
- the child's and the parents' cultural and religious practices
- a parent's willingness to provide adequate supervision even if the parent has not done so in the past
- a parent's ability and willingness to learn basic care giving skills such as feeding, changing, and bathing a young child, preparing a child for daycare or school, or taking responsibility for helping a child with homework
- a parent's ability to care for the child's needs

### **Children Benefit When Parents**

- initiate the child's contact with the other parent on a regular basis by phone, letter, audio and videotapes, e-mail and other forms of communication
- maintain predictable schedules
- are prompt and have children ready at exchange time
- avoid any communication that may lead to conflict at exchange time
- ensure smooth transitions by assuring the children that they support their relationship with the other parent and trust the other's parenting skills
- allow the children to carry "important" items such as clothing, toys, security blankets with them between the parents homes
- follow similar routines for mealtime, bedtime, and homework time
- handle rules and discipline in similar ways
- support contact with grandparents and other extended family so the children do not experience a sense of loss
- are flexible so the child can take advantage of opportunities to participate in special family celebrations or events
- give as much advance notice as possible to the other parent about special occasions
- provide an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached when on vacation
- establish a workable, "business-like" method of communication
- plan their vacations around the child's regularly scheduled activities

### **Children Are Harmed When Parents**

- make their child choose between mom and dad
- question their child about the other parent's activities or relationships
- make promises they do not keep
- argue with or put down the other parent in the child's presence or range of hearing
- discuss their personal problems with the child or in the child's range of hearing
- use the child as a messenger, spy or mediator
- withhold access because child support has not been paid

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

These sample plans may not apply to all family situations or all children. They are not appropriate if there are significant issues of:

- child abuse or neglect
- serious mental or emotional disorders
- drug or alcohol abuse or criminal activity
- domestic violence
- continuous levels of very intense conflict

When a child's physical or emotional safety is at risk, it is necessary to protect the child. Parents who have concerns about these issues should seek help from an attorney, mental health professional, court services, domestic abuse agency, or local social services agency.

**Remember, the welfare of the child is of utmost importance.**

Definitions of terms used in this booklet:

Attachment: the process of building strong emotional bonds to specific care givers, critical for the child's development during the first year. A sense of security, the development of trust in others and positive emotional and social adjustment occur as a result of attachment.

Bonding: the development of close, loving and trusting relationships.

Parenting access plan: means a plan for the parenting of a minor child, which provides for the allocation of parenting functions and responsibilities.

Transition: moving between parents' homes.

## SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS

### Birth to Twelve Months

Infants learn at a rapid rate. They are learning to love and trust familiar caregivers. Infants learn to attach to parents and others through consistent, loving responses such as: holding, playing, feeding, soothing, talking gently and lovingly, and meeting their needs promptly. They begin to respond to the different but equally valuable types of parenting mothers and fathers provide.

Infants cannot retain experiences over time, so it is important that they have frequent contact with both parents and a predictable schedule and routine. Infants can retain "emotional memories" of conflict that can have long-term negative effects, so parents should not argue when children, even infants, can overhear.

By six months, infants can recognize their parents and other caregivers, and may become uneasy around strangers. Regular caregivers are able to recognize their signals for food, comfort, and sleep. When away from them, infants may become anxious and may experience eating and sleeping problems.

At this young age, it is important to maintain the infant's basic sleep, feeding, and waking cycles. Schedules should be adjusted so that disruption does not occur. For example, in creating parenting access plans for this age group, parents should consider the special needs of breastfeeding infants.

All plans presume that the parent with access has appropriate baby supplies (infant seat, car seat, crib, diapers, toys) and that access will take place in a child friendly setting that is visually and intellectually stimulating. The parent with access time should personally care for the child as much as possible.

Return to the other home should be at least one half hour before bedtime. Once established, schedules should remain as consistent as possible.

**All plans that include overnights presume that the parent with access not only had care giving experience but that the child is sufficiently attached and accustomed to being in the care of that parent for long periods.**

## Birth to Twelve Months

**Plan A(1):** Three periods of three to six hours spaced throughout each week.  
**Comment:** Frequent contact helps the parent and child bond.

Parent A  Parent B 

	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	
8:00								
9:00								
10:00								
11:00								
Noon								
1:00	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>							
2:00								
3:00								
4:00								
5:00								
6:00								
7:00								
8:00								
Overnight								

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.


**Plan A(2):** Two six hour periods spaced throughout the week.  
**Comment:** This plan is helpful when the parents work schedules or their levels of conflict make more frequent exchanges difficult. Because in this plan there are only two opportunities to parent each week, bonding between the parent and child may proceed more slowly and the child may experience some difficulty going from one parent to the other.


	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							



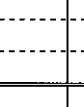
Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Birth to Twelve Months**

**Plan B:** Two three-hour periods and one eight hour period spaced throughout each week.

Parent A 

Parent B 

	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>						
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Vacation:** Time blocks that vary significantly from the above are not recommended.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the blocks noted above.



## Birth to Twelve Months

**Plan C:** Two periods of three to six hours and one or more overnights each week.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S	
8:00								
9:00								
10:00								
11:00			<b>Weekly Schedule</b>					
Noon								
1:00								
2:00								
3:00								
4:00								
5:00								
6:00								
7:00								
8:00								
Overnight								

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 4:30 p.m. to Sunday at 4:30 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Vacation:** Presuming that Plan C overnights have been ongoing, parents may have three consecutive overnights, weekend or midweek, twice each year. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the blocks noted above.

## SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS

### Twelve to Twenty-four Months

One to two year olds are becoming more aware of the world around them and the people who are frequently in contact with them. A baby at this age can be attached to many caregivers including grandparents, other extended family members, daycare providers, babysitters and family friends who are frequently in contact with the child.

One to two year olds are also becoming independent and are developing the ability to comfort themselves by thumb-sucking or holding onto favorite blankets or toys. Their sleeping and eating schedules are also becoming regular. They continue to respond to the different but equally valuable types of parenting mothers and fathers provide. Two year olds commonly test parental limits and appropriate parental responses can build the child's self-esteem for years to come.

Transitions between homes may become difficult for some one to two year olds and they may become upset at these times. Some resistance to exchanges is normal for some children. This behavior does not necessarily mean that the other parent is not a good parent or that he child does not want to be with the other parent. Parents can make exchanges easier for the child by following predictable schedules and by supporting the child's relationship with the other parent.

All plans presume that the parent with access has appropriate baby supplies (infant seat, car seat, crib, diapers, toys) and that access will take place in a child friendly setting that is visually and intellectually stimulating. The parent with access time should personally care for the child as much as possible.

Return to the other home should be at least one half hour before bedtime. Once established, schedules should remain as consistent as possible.

**All plans that include overnights presume that the parent with access not only had care giving experience but that the child is sufficiently attached and accustomed to being in the care of that parent for long periods.**

## Twelve to Twenty-four Months

**Plan A (1):** Three periods of three to six hours spaced throughout each week.

**Comment:** Frequent contact helps the parent and child bond.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Plan A(2):** Two six hour periods spaced throughout the week.

**Comment:** This plan is helpful when the parents work schedules or their levels of conflict make more frequent exchanges difficult. Because in this plan there are only two opportunities to parent each week, bonding between the parent and child may proceed more slowly and the child may experience some difficulty going from one parent to the other.

	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

## Twelve to Twenty-four Months

**Plan B:** Two four-hour periods and one eight hour period spaced throughout each week.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>						
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Vacation:** Time blocks that vary significantly from the above are not recommended, unless the child has gradually adjusted to overnights with parent A.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the blocks noted above.

## Twelve to Twenty-four Months

**Plan C:** One daytime period of three to six hours and two non-consecutive overnights each week.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday from 2:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Thursday at 5:30 p.m. to Friday at 8:30 a.m. and Saturday from 4:30 p.m. to Sunday at 4:30 p.m. the child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Vacation:** Presuming that Plan C overnights have been ongoing, parents may have one period of three consecutive overnights, midweek or weekend, with children 12 to 18 months old. After the age of 18 months, parents may have two one-week periods separated by at least four weeks. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the time blocks noted above.

## SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS

### Twenty-four to Thirty-six Months

Ages two to three are an important time for children to develop independent skills. Although children this age are learning to be independent, they may still cling to their caregiver and resist separation. They may be negative, and say "NO!" to parents' requests and demands just to express their independence. They may also be fearful about unfamiliar activities and objects. Predictable, regularly scheduled routines help children manage their fears and help them learn that the world is a safe place. Moving between parents' homes may become difficult for children at this age and they may become upset. This behavior does not necessarily mean that the other parent is not a good parent or that the child does not want to be with the other parent. Parents must ensure that the transitions between the two parents' homes are free of parental arguing and tension.

**Plan A(1):** Two three to four hour periods and one eight hour period spaced throughout each week.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>						
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.


**Vacation:** Time blocks that vary significantly from the above are not recommended.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the blocks noted above.

## Twenty-four to Thirty-six Months

**Plan A(2):** Two periods of three to six hours and one overnight each week.

Parent A 

Parent B 

	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>						
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 4:00 p.m. to Sunday at 10:00 a.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

**Vacation:** Presuming Plan A(2) overnights have been ongoing, parents may have two one-week periods separated by at least four weeks. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destinations, and places where the child or parent can be reached.

**Holidays:** When holidays or special occasions like Father's Day, Mother's Day and birthdays do not fall on a parent's access day, parents should consider dividing them consistent with the blocks noted above.

## Twenty-four to Thirty-six Months

**Plan B:** One period of three to six hours and two non-consecutive overnights each week.

**Comment:** Ideally a child of this age should not be separated on a regular schedule from either parent for longer than four days.

Parent A



Parent B



	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon	<b>Weekly Schedule</b>						
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week Wednesday 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Monday 8:00 a.m. to Tuesday 8:00 a.m. and Friday 8:00 a.m. to Saturday 1:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.


**Vacation:** Presuming that Plan B overnights have been ongoing, use Plan A(2) vacation plan for this age group.


**Holidays:** See Plan A(2) Holidays for this age group.



## Twenty-four to Thirty-six Months

Plan C: One period of three to six hours and two consecutive overnights each week.

Parent A 

Parent B 

	Plan C		Sample				
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Monday 5:30 p.m. to Wednesday 8:00 a.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Vacation: Presuming that Plan C overnights have been ongoing, use Plan A(2) vacation plan for this age group.

Holidays: See Plan A(2) Holidays for this age group.

## SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS

### Three to Five Years

Three to five year-olds are attached to their regular caregivers and separation may cause them to be uncomfortable and anxious. They may also be fearful about unfamiliar activities and objects and may experience night fears like “monsters” under the bed.

Three to five year-olds may show increased discomfort when moving between parents’ homes. They may become very upset at these times. This behavior does not necessarily mean that the other parent is not a good parent or that the child does not want to be with the other parent. Parents can make exchanges easier for children by following predictable schedules.

Three to five year-olds may benefit from structured time with children their own age, away from parents. This time helps them to develop social skills and to learn that they can be safe and happy away from both parents.

Children are more likely to resist going to the other parent if the parents are tense, hostile or argue with each other at the exchange. If tension is present, the child might become difficult to manage or might display a variety of behaviors consistent with emotional problems. If parents cannot be pleasant, or at least neutral, they should limit communications at these exchanges. Parents **must not** use the child as a messenger to communicate with the other parent. Children may also feel more secure if they can take favorite stuffed toys, family photos or other objects that will remind them of the other parent.

After age three, children become more aware of holiday celebrations. To avoid disputes, parents should schedule for as many holidays as are meaningful to the family, whether religious, cultural, or national in their access plan. Parents should also include family birthdays and annual parent day celebrations.

**The options discussed for 24 months to 36 months are also appropriate for this age group.**

**Plan A(1):** Two consecutive overnights every other week and an additional overnight or afternoon/evening period each week.

**Plan A(2):** Three consecutive overnights week one. Another overnight or afternoon/evening period of three to four hours may be added in week two.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan A1						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Friday at 5:30p.m. to Sunday at 6:00p.m. In addition, Parent A shall have time with the child each week from Wednesday at 5:30p.m. to Thursday at 8:00a.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

Plan A2						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Thursday at 5:30p.m. to Sunday at 6:00p.m. In addition Parent A shall have time with the child Wednesday at 5:30p.m. to Thursday at 8:00a.m. week two. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

### Three to Five Years

**Plan B:** Four consecutive overnights week one. Another overnight or afternoon/evening period of three to four hours may be added in week two.

**Plan C(1):** Parents split each week and the weekend.

**Comment:** This plan provides consistent routine and accommodates a young child's ability to be apart from either parent for only three days. It also allows the child to have a "stay home" day (Saturday or Sunday) with each parent each week, which is helpful to many young children. Parents may dislike not having full weekend access, but the schedule can be modified to allow full weekends during the summer or on holidays. If desired, parents may alternate exchanges so one week one parent has three overnights and the other has four overnights and the next week the number of overnights is reversed.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan B						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Thursday at 5:30p.m. to Monday at 8:00a.m. In addition, Parent A shall have the child from Thursday at 5:30p.m. to Friday at 8:00a.m. week two. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

Plan C1						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child each week from Sunday 8:00a.m. to Wednesday 12:00p.m. Parent B shall have time from Wednesday at 12:00p.m. to Sunday at 8:00a.m.

**Plan C(2):** Each parent has the same two consecutive midweek overnights each week and alternates the weekends.

**Comment:** This plan provides each parent with alternating full weekends with and without the children. The child is away from each parent during alternate weeks for five days, which may be difficult for some children at this age. This plan is helpful when the parents level of conflict makes exchanges difficult, because all exchanges can take place at day care.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan C2						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child every Monday after daycare or 5:30p.m. if not in daycare to Wednesday 8:00a.m. Parent B shall have time with the child every Wednesday after daycare or 5:30p.m. if not in daycare to Friday at 8:00a.m. The parties shall alternate weekends (Friday to Monday at 8:00 a.m.).

**Vacation:** Each parent shall have the opportunity to spend up to 10 days in town or out of town each year or two one week periods taken separated by at least three weeks. Telephone contact is recommended during out of town periods. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached.

**Holidays:** See the "What to do about the Holidays" section of this booklet.

## SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS

### Six to Nine Years

Six to nine year-old children may worry that one parent does not love them or that they will lose one parent. They may also experience intense longing for the absent parent. It is common for these children to fantasize that their parents will get back together.

Some six to nine year-olds benefit from spending more time at one home, while others move back and forth on a regular basis with ease. Children differ in how long they are comfortable being away from each parent. If the child has spent considerable quality time with the parent who has access, that child may cope better with a long separation from the other parent.

All scheduling should maximize parents' time off from work. If work schedules change, parents may vary access days with appropriate prior notice.

**Plan A(1):** Two consecutive overnights every other week. An additional three to six hour period or overnight may be added each week.

**Plan A(2):** Three consecutive overnights every other week and an additional four to six hour period each week.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan A1						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Friday at 5:30p.m. to Sunday at 6:00. In addition, Parent A shall have access each Wednesday from 5:30p.m. to 8:30p.m. each week. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan A2						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Monday at 5:30p.m. to Thursday at 8:00a.m. In addition, Parent A shall have access every Saturday from 2:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

### Six to Nine Years

**Plan B:** Four consecutive overnights week one with an additional overnight week two.

**Plan C(1):** Split each week and weekend.

**Comment:** This plan allows each parent to participate more in the child's academic life. It also provides a consistent routine, accommodates a young child's ability to be apart from either parent for only three days and allows the child to have a "stay home" day (Saturday or Sunday) with each parent each week, which is helpful to many young children. Parents may dislike not having full weekend access, but the schedule can be modified to allow full weekends during the summer or on holidays. If desired, parents may alternate exchanges so one week one parent has three overnights and the other had four overnights and the next week the number of overnights is reversed.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan B						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Wednesday at 5:30p.m. to Sunday at 8:00a.m. In addition, Parent A shall have access week two on Tuesdays from 5:30p.m. to Wednesday 8:00a.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

Plan C1						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child each week from Sunday 8:00a.m. to Wednesday 12:00p.m. Parent B shall have time from Wednesday at 12:00p.m. to Sunday at 8:00a.m.

## Six to Nine Years

**Plan C(2):** Each parent has the same two consecutive midweek overnights each week and alternates the weekends.

**Comment:** This plan provides each parent with alternating full weekends with and without the children. The child is away from each parent during alternate weeks for five days, which may be difficult for some children. This plan is helpful when the parents level of conflict makes exchanges difficult, because all exchanges can take place at school or day care.

**Plan C(3):** The parents share time with the child during alternating seven day periods. A midweek overnight is optional for the parent who does not have access that week. The exchange time can be Friday after school or work, Sunday afternoon or evening, or Monday after school.

**Comment:** This plan requires effective parental communication and cooperation to arrange weekly activities for the children. For example, if one parent wants to enroll the children in karate lessons on Tuesday evenings, the other parent must be willing to follow up with this activity when the children are with that parent. All exchanges for this plan can take place at school or day care if desired. While some children thrive with this access plan, other may find this arrangement disruptive.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan C2						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child every Monday after school to Wednesday at 8:00a.m. Parent B shall have time with the child every Wednesday after school to Friday at 8:00a.m. The parties shall alternate weekends (Friday after school to Monday morning).

Plan C3						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parents shall share time with the child for a seven-day period (alternating weeks). Week one: Parent A shall drop the child off at school Friday at 8:00a.m. and Parent B shall pick the child up after school. Week two: Parent B shall drop the child off at school Friday at 8:00a.m. and Parent A shall pick the child up after school. Repeat schedule weeks three and four. (Optional: The parent who does not have time with the child during the week shall be entitled to an overnight, normally to occur Wednesday from 5:30p.m. to Thursday at 8:00a.m.).

**Vacation:** Each parent shall have the opportunity to spend two, two week periods of in town or out of town vacation each year for children ages six to eight. Each parent shall have the opportunity to spend up to four consecutive weeks of vacation after the child is eight. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached. If the child is in town during a four week vacation period, the non-vacationing parent may have one weekend (Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m.) if desired.

**Holidays:** See the "what to do about the holidays" section of this booklet.

## **SAMPLE PARENTING ACCESS PLANS**

### **10 to 13 Years**

Ten to 13 year old children often want to be independent from their parents and are becoming more attached to their friends. They may blame one parent for the divorce, may be angry and embarrassed by the breakup of the family, and may side with one parent.

Children this age often want to have a say in their living arrangements. Parents should allow them to express their views, while making it clear that it is up to the parents to make the final decisions. As children begin junior high school, parents should give consideration to their school and extracurricular activities. Parents should be flexible remembering that access must still occur on a regular basis.

**All plans for six to nine year-olds are suitable for this age group.**

**Vacation:** Each parent shall have the opportunity to spend two, two week periods or up to one four week period for in town or out of town vacation. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached. Telephone contact is recommended. If the child is in town during a four week vacation period, the non-vacationing parent may have one weekend (Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m.) if desired.

**Holidays:** See the "what to do about the holidays" section of this booklet



## 14 to 18 Years

During the later teen years, children want to be independent and believe they are capable of making their own decisions. Often, their focus is on their friends, school, activities, or work more so than on their family. Fourteen to 18 year-olds may resist a rigid or well defined access schedule. Parents should be flexible and accept the children's increasing ability to care for their own needs. Many older teens prefer a primary house to use as a base where their friends can contact them. Sometimes they prefer it just because it is less confusing. As a result, for some children, having one parent's house as a primary home is important. Parents should consult with older teens regarding their ideas for living arrangements, access schedules, and family activities. Parents, however, must remind their teens that final decisions rest with the parents.

**All of the plans listed from age 6 and older are suitable for this age group.**

**Plan A:** Two consecutive overnights every other week, preferably on the weekend and an optional additional afternoon/evening period each week. One household becomes the "home base".

**Plan B:** The parents share time with the child during alternating seven-day periods. A midweek overnight period is optional for the parent who does not have access that week. The exchange time can be Friday after school or work, Sunday afternoon or evening, or Monday after school.

**Comment:** The plan requires effective parental communication and cooperation to arrange weekly activities for the children. For example, if one parent wants to enroll the children in karate lessons on Tuesday evenings, the other parent must be willing to follow up with this activity when the children are with that parent. While some children thrive with this access plan, others may find this arrangement disruptive.

### Sample Monthly Schedule

Plan A						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parent A shall have time with the child every other week from Friday at 5:30p.m. to Sunday at 6:00p.m. In addition, Parent A shall have time with the child each week from Wednesday at 5:30p.m. to 9:00p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan B						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parents shall share time with the child for a seven-day period (alternating weeks). Week one: Parent A shall drop the child off at school Monday at 8:00a.m. and Parent B shall pick the child up at school at 5:30p.m. Week two: Parent B shall drop the child off at school Monday at 8:00a.m. and Parent A shall pick the child up at school at 5:30p.m. Repeat schedule weeks three and four. (Optional: The parent who does not have time with the child during the week shall be entitled to an overnight, normally to occur Wednesday from 5:30p.m. to Thursday at 8:00a.m.).

**Plan C:** The parents shall share time with the child during alternating fourteen-day periods. While scheduled to be with one parent, the child may have access to the other parent intermittently, as determined by the child's school and activity schedules, as well as the child's needs and desires.

Plan C						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su

Parents shall share time with the child on an alternating 14-day basis. Week one: Parent A shall drop the child off at school Friday at 8:00a.m and Parent B shall pick the child up after school. Week three: Parent B shall drop the child at school Friday at 8:00a.m. and Parent A shall pick the child up after school. (Optional: The parent who does not have time with the child during the fourteen day period shall have access as determined by the child's school and activity schedules, as well as the child's needs and desires.)

**Vacation:** Each parent shall have the opportunity to spend two, two week periods or up to one four week period for in town or out of town vacation. Each parent shall give the other parent thirty days written notice of vacation plans and an itinerary of travel dates, destination, and places where the child or parent can be reached. Telephone contact is recommended. If the child is in town during a four week vacation period, the non-vacationing parent may have one weekend (Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m.) if desired.

**Holidays:** See the "What to do about the Holidays" section of this booklet.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS

Parents May:

1. Divide: Split the day or weekend (not necessarily equally) with both parents.

Sample parenting access plan language: Parent A shall have access on [specify holiday] from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Parent B shall have access from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

2. Alternate: One parent has access on certain holidays in even years and the other parent has access in odd years.

Sample parenting access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child on [specify holiday] in all even years from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Parent B shall have time with the child from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on [specify holiday] in all odd years.

3. Substitute: One parent always has a specific holiday in exchange for another holiday.

Sample parenting access plan language: Parent A shall have [specify holiday] each year and parent B shall have [specify holiday] each year.

4. Scheduled: Parents follow their regular schedule and celebrate the holiday with the child if they have access on that day or time.

Sample parenting access plan language: Parents shall celebrate [specify holiday] if it falls on the day they regularly have access.

5. Each parent celebrates his or her parent day with the child.

Holidays and days of special meaning have priority over regular access periods.

Parents may vary their choice or method for each holiday because one method may work well for one holiday, but not for another.

## PARENT/CHILD ACCESS - LONG DISTANCE

Special considerations may arise when a parent moves a long distance away from his or her child, but close relationship between the child and the parent should be maintained. Access shall be provided throughout the year at regular intervals. Parents must consider the age and maturity of the child, school schedules and work schedules of other family members when deciding how often and how long visits should be. **Parents should refer to the developmental information provided in this booklet when creating long distance plans.**

Parents must also consider their financial ability to provide transportation and the cost/availability of childcare when children are visiting from out of town. If the Court has not allocated travel expenses in the child support order, parents should allocate these costs by agreement prior to finalizing any schedule.

Depending upon the actual distance between the two parents' homes, and the availability of transportation, there shall be a minimum of four access periods each year. Access shall occur in the summer, during the winter holiday season, during Thanksgiving or spring break, and on or near the child's birthday. If the child's birthday falls during one of the other scheduled access periods, a fourth access period shall be scheduled at another time. If logistically possible, twice-monthly visits should occur. If parents live within driving distance, they should each drive one direction or meet half way. Ideally, children under age eight should not fly alone.

As children approach age three, they become aware of holidays. Holidays can be a challenge to parents who live far apart. Parents must be flexible and cooperative so that the child can enjoy holidays with both of them. To avoid disputes, parents should schedule for as many religious, cultural or national holidays as are meaningful to the family. Parents should also include family birthdays and annual parent day celebrations.

### **What to do about holidays-long distance**

When parents live a long distance apart, all the options available for short distance plans are not available. Parents must consider the child's school and work schedules when arranging for holiday visits. Parents may:

1. Alternate: One parent has access on certain holidays in even years and the other parent has access in odd years. Holidays begin at 6:00 p.m. on the last day of school and conclude at 6:00 p.m. the day before school starts.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child on [specify holiday] on all even years from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday to 6:00 p.m. Sunday. Parent B shall have time with the child for [specify holiday] on all odd years.

2. Substitute: One parent always has a specific holiday in exchange for another holiday.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have [specify holiday] each year and Parent B shall have [specify holiday] each year.

3. Scheduled: Parents follow their regular schedule and celebrate the holiday with the child if they have access on that weekend. The weekend shall be extended to include the holiday.

Sample access plan language: Parents shall celebrate [specify holiday] if it falls on or close to the weekend they regularly have access.

Parents may vary their choice or method for each holiday because one method may work well for one holiday, but not for another.