

## **SAMPLE PARENTING TIME GUIDELINES**

### **I      ASSUMPTIONS:** These Guidelines assume that:

1. Both parents are fit and able to provide care for the children
2. Both parents desire to have a meaningful, ongoing relationship with the children
3. In most cases, children benefit from having frequent, meaningful access to each parent
4. A negotiated solution with meaningful input from both parents (and, in many cases, the children) is preferable to a solution imposed by the Family Court.
5. Children need reliability, predictability and consistency on the part of each parent.

### **II     GENERAL RULES:**

Compliance with a few common sense guidelines will ensure that the child's well-being is enhanced by the shared parenting process. The following general rules should serve as guidance for parents, unless the Family Court orders otherwise.

1. The parents should not discuss their relationship problems with the child; nor should they attempt to harm the child's relationship with the other parent by discussing the other parent's shortcomings with, or in the presence of, the child.
2. Parents should not abuse drugs or alcohol when the children are in their care.
3. Parents should not have overnight visits from unrelated members of the opposite sex when the children are present.
4. Parents should not attempt to eliminate the children's communication with their grandparents or other relatives or friends with whom the children have a close relationship.
5. During visitations, parents should minimize the amount of time the children are in the care of others. Children should not be left for extended periods of time with grandparents or other relatives as a convenience to the parent who is exercising parenting time.
6. Parents should not interrogate the children regarding the activities of the other parent.

7. Both parents should have access to the children's records and information, including, but not limited to, records maintained by health care providers and educational institutions. Both parents should be aware of any medication that has been prescribed and such medication should accompany the child when parenting time is exercised.
8. Both parents should share in the major decisions involving the child, including major medical treatment and educational decisions.
9. Parents should provide each other with their home and work addresses and telephone #'s.
10. The parent with whom the children primarily live should prepare the children, both physically and emotionally, for their parenting time with the other parent. The children and adequate clothing and belongings should be ready at the agreed-upon exchange time. All clothing and belongings should be returned after each parenting time period.
11. The children should be encouraged to enjoy their time with each parent. Children should not be asked to report on the activities of the other parent.
12. Parents should encourage the children to have regular telephone contact with the other parent.
13. Parents should not make promises that they cannot keep.
14. Parents should be on time for appointments with the children. If, for some reason, the parent is unable to pick the children up as scheduled, he or she should notify the other parent and the children as soon as possible. Parents should remain flexible to the extent possible regarding the scheduling of make-up time. However, the parent who missed the parenting time should also be responsible for reasonable child care expenses if the other parent incurs these expenses as a result of a failure to honor the parenting time schedule.
15. Parents should not attempt to deny the other parent his or her parenting time in retaliation for nonpayment of child support. Neither should a non-custodial parent withhold child support payments in retaliation for disagreements over parenting time issues.
16. Parents should coordinate their approaches to discipline, homework, bedtimes and other household rules so that the child's routine is as consistent as possible.
17. Both parents are entitled and encouraged to attend and participate in special activities in which the child is engaged, such as school programs, graduation or extra curricular sports or other activities. In the event that a child has an extracurricular activity during a scheduled parenting time, then the parent who is caring for the child should assure that the child attends

his or her activity as scheduled. Each parent is responsible to notify the other of all activities in which the child participates. The child's wishes should be taken into account.

18. Children deserve a smooth transition from the home of one parent to the home of the other. In this regard, both parents should avoid conflicts regarding transportation of the child for scheduled parenting time. As a general rule, the non-custodial parent should pick the child up for the scheduled parenting time and the custodial parent should pick the child up when the parenting time has ended. In addition, unless agreed upon by both parents, third parties should not be involved in transporting the child for parenting time.

### **PARENTING TIME GUIDELINES**

Unless otherwise specified, the term "reasonable visitation" contained in a Family Court Order in the State of South Carolina shall mean parenting time in compliance with the provisions contained herein.

Please note that the Judges prefer that the parents consult and agree upon parenting time because it is the parents who best know their own work and child's schedule. A parenting time schedule agreed upon by both parents is more likely to work to the satisfaction of the parents and the child. This schedule may be used as a starting point to begin negotiations on parenting time.

#### **GENERAL:**

**THE PARENT WITH PRIMARY CUSTODIAL CARE IS REFERRED TO HEREIN AS THE CUSTODIAL PARENT (CP) AND THE OTHER PARENT IS REFERRED TO AS THE NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT (NCP).**

#### **A. INFANT PARENTING TIME (INFANT TO 18 MONTHS)**

Because infants are in particularly need of receiving continuity and consistency of care by one primary caretaker and the NCP needs to establish a meaningful bond with the infant, the following parenting time should balance the needs of both parent and infant, regardless of whether that infant has older siblings that enjoy extended parenting time with the NCP.

**1. WEEKENDS:** The NCP shall be entitled to parenting time on alternate weekends beginning Friday at 6:00 p.m. and ending Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

**2. WEEKDAY PARENTING TIME:** The NCP shall be entitled to parenting time one evening per week from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. The evening shall be the same every week and varied only if conflicts with the holiday or vacation schedule. If the parties cannot agree, weekday visitation shall be on Wednesdays.

**3. HOLIDAYS:** In odd-numbered years the NCP shall be entitled to spend Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Easter, July 4th, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day with the minor child; and the CP shall be entitled to spend Memorial Day, Labor Day, Christmas Eve and New Years. In even numbered years, the schedule shall be reversed. The Holiday schedule shall take priority over weekday and weekend visitation schedules. These guidelines revolve around Christian Holidays. If either or both parties celebrate other holidays, then they should be written down, divided and alternated each year.

- a. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, July 4th, Labor Day, and Memorial Day** – Parenting time shall be from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on the official holiday.
- b. Easter** – Parenting time shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on the Saturday before Easter Sunday and end at 6:00 p.m. on Easter Sunday.
- c. Thanksgiving** – Parenting time shall begin on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving at 6:00 p.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day.
- d. Christmas Eve** – Parenting time shall begin at noon on Christmas Eve and end at 10:00 a.m. on Christmas Day.
- e. Christmas Day** – Parenting time shall begin at 10:00 a.m. on Christmas Day and end at noon December 26th.
- f. Mother's Day** – Shall be spent with the Mother every year with priority over any other parenting time schedule. Parenting time hours are from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Mother's Day.
- g. Father's Day** – Shall be spent with the Father every year with priority over any other parenting time schedule. Parenting time hours are from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Father's Day.
- h. Mother's Birthday** – Shall be spent with the Mother every year. If the Mother is the NCP and the Mother's birthday is on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, parenting time shall be between 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. If the Mother's birthday is on a Friday or a Saturday, parenting time shall be from 6:00 p.m. on Friday and end on 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Mother's Birthday will not take priority over any other scheduled holiday parenting time.
- i. Father's Birthday** - Shall be spent with the Father every year. If the Father is the NCP and the Father's birthday is on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, parenting time shall be between 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. If the Father's birthday is on a Friday or a Saturday, parenting time shall be from 6:00 p.m. on Friday and end on 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Father's Birthday will not take priority over any other scheduled holiday parenting time.
- j. Child's Birthday** – The child will celebrate his or her birthday with the NCP on odd-numbered years and the CP on even-numbered years. In years that the child spends his or her birthday with the NCP, if the child's birthday falls on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, parenting time shall be between 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. If the child's birthday is on a Friday or a Saturday, parenting time shall be from 6:00 p.m. on Friday and end on 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The parent holding a birthday party for the child may wish to consider inviting the other parent to the party.

#### **4. ANNUAL PARENTING TIME FOR INFANTS (INFANT TO 18 MONTHS):**

Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, regular weekend and weekday parenting time shall be maintained year round.

#### **B. REGULAR VISITATION (AGE 18 MONTHS AND OLDER)**

**1. WEEKENDS:** The NCP shall be entitled to alternate weekend parenting time. Parenting time shall begin on Friday at 6:00 p.m. and end on Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

**2. WEEKDAY PARENTING TIME:** The NCP shall be entitled to parenting time one 5 evening per week from 3:00 p.m. or when school releases until 8:00 p.m. The evening shall be the same every week and varied only if conflicts with the holiday or vacation schedule. If the parties cannot agree, weekday visitation shall be on Wednesdays.

**3. HOLIDAYS:** In odd-numbered years the NCP shall be entitled to spend Martin Luther King Jr. Day Weekend, Easter, July 4th Weekend, Thanksgiving and the first half of Christmas vacation with the minor child; and the CP shall be entitled to spend Spring Break vacation, Memorial Day Weekend, Labor Day Weekend, Halloween, and the second half of Christmas vacation with the minor child. In even numbered years, the schedule shall be reversed. The Holiday schedule shall take precedence over weekday and weekend visitation schedules. These guidelines revolve around Christian Holidays. If either or both parties celebrate other holidays, then they should be written down, divided and alternated each year.

**a. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Weekend, July 4th Weekend, Labor Day Weekend, and Memorial Day Weekend–**

Parenting time shall begin at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and end at 6:00 p.m. on Monday.

**b. Easter** – Easter often falls within the Spring Break vacation period. In the event that it does not, then the child shall spend Easter with the NCP during odd-numbered years, and the CP during even-numbered years. If Easter falls within the Spring Break period, then parenting time shall be with the parent entitled to spend the spring break vacation period with the child. Easter parenting time shall be from 6:00 p.m. on Friday until Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

**c. Thanksgiving** – Parenting time shall begin on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving at 6:00 p.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

**d. Christmas Vacation** – The first half of the Christmas parenting time shall begin on December 18th at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m. on December 24th. The second half of Christmas parenting time shall begin at 8:30 p.m. December 24th and end at noon January 1st.

**e. Halloween** – If the holiday falls on a weekday, parenting time shall be from 3:00 p.m. or when school releases until 9:00 p.m. If the holiday falls on a weekend, parenting time shall be from 9:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. on Halloween.

- f. **Mother's Day** – Shall be spent with the Mother every year. In the event that the holiday falls on a weekend that is scheduled to be spent with the other parent, parenting time shall be from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Mother's Day.
- g. **Father's Day** – Shall be spent with the Father every year. In the event that the holiday falls on a weekend that is scheduled to be spent with the other parent, parenting time shall be from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Father's Day.
- h. **Mother's Birthday** – Shall be spent with the Mother every year. If the Mother is the NCP and the Mother's birthday is on a weekday, parenting time shall be from 3:00 p.m. or when school releases until 8:00 p.m. If the Mother's birthday is on weekend that is scheduled to be spent with the other parent, parenting time for the Mother shall be from 9:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on the Mother's birthday. This visitation will not take priority over other vacation or holiday parenting time.
- i. **Father's Birthday** - Shall be spent with the Father every year. If the Father is the NCP and the Father's birthday is on a weekday, parenting time shall be from 3:00 p.m. or when school releases until 8:00 p.m. If the Father's birthday is on weekend that is scheduled to be spent with the other parent, parenting time for the Father shall be from 9:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on the Father's birthday. This visitation will not take priority over other vacation or holiday parenting time.
- j. **Child's Birthday** – The child will celebrate his or her birthday with the NCP on odd-numbered years and the CP on even-numbered years. In years that the child spends his or her birthday with the NCP, if the child's birthday falls on a weekday, parenting time will be from 3:00 p.m. or when school releases until 8:00 p.m. If the child's birthday falls on a weekend that is scheduled to be spent with another parent, parenting time shall be from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on the child's birthday. The parent holding a birthday party for the child may wish to consider inviting the other parent to the party. This visitation will not take priority over other vacation or holiday parenting time.

**4. ANNUAL VACATION:** Parenting time shall be as follows:

- a. **CHILDREN AGE 18 MONTHS THROUGH EIGHT YEARS OLD:** Three one week periods (not consecutive) during the summer to start no sooner than the first full week of June and to end no later than the first full week of August. In the event that written notification is not given as set forth in **Section d. Scheduling Annual Vacation** (below), parenting time shall be the second full week of June, the second full week of July and the first full week of August. The one week parenting time period shall begin 6:00 p.m. Friday and end at 6:00 p.m. the following Friday.
- b. **CHILDREN AGE EIGHT YEARS AND OLDER:** Four weeks in the summer to begin no sooner than one full week after the last day of school and to end no later than one full week before the first day of school. Parenting time may be exercised in one three week period plus a one week period or two two-week periods that shall not be consecutive. In the event that

written notification is not given as set forth in **Section d. Scheduling Annual Vacation** (below), parenting time shall be the last two full weeks of June and the last two full weeks of July. Parents should schedule annual vacation time around the school calendar, including summer school if applicable.

- c. CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS:** If there are two or more children whose ages span different age groupings entitling the children to different parenting time schedules, the youngest child will follow the oldest child's parenting time schedule. **THIS PROVISION DOES NOT APPLY TO INFANTS (BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS). PARENTS OF INFANTS MUST FOLLOW THE INFANT PARENTING TIME SCHEDULE REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE INFANT HAS OLDER SIBLINGS.**
  
- d. SCHEDULING ANNUAL VACATION:** The NCP will have first choice of scheduling the annual vacation schedule and shall designate in writing to the CP his or her choice for annual vacation by April 15th of each year. Unless specifically prohibited by Court Order, either parent may temporarily remove the child from the State for the purposes of annual vacation **ONLY IF** the parent traveling with the child provides the other parent with a written general itinerary and contact phone numbers where the child can be reached during the vacation.