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ST. JOSEPH COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT
PARENTING POLICY
( December, 2016)

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It is strongly recommended that parents develop their own arrangements which will take into consideration the unique circumstances of their family and can be changed from time to time.

It is usually in the children's best interest that each parent have frequent, meaningful and continuing contact with them.  The parents, in exercising parenting time, should be flexible enough to adapt to the circumstances of each other and to the children.

Parents should at all times avoid speaking negatively about each other and should firmly discourage such conduct by relatives or friends.  Children should never be used by one parent to spy on the other.  Each parent should encourage the children to respect the other.

Parents are encouraged to have their children maintain ties with both the maternal and paternal relatives.  In most cases, the children will visit the paternal relatives during times the children are with their father and with the maternal relatives when with their mother.

**THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE WILL BE CONSIDERED REASONABLE PARENTING TIME BY THE CIRCUIT COURT AND THE FRIEND OF THE COURT:**

A.  REGULAR PARENTING TIME

Every other weekend**,** from 6:00 PM Friday to 6:00 PM Sunday.
The alternating weekend schedule will remain in effect throughout the entire year "without exception".

B.  WEEKNIGHT PARENTING TIME

One weeknight for 2 to 4 hours depending on the parents' employment and the age of the child(ren).  This section does not apply during Christmas vacation, spring break, or summer.

C.  TRANSPORTATION

1.  Unless the court order says otherwise, the visiting parent is responsible for all transportation.

2.  Transportation must be done by a licensed driver known to the child, following all car seat/seat belt laws.

3.  The person transporting must be punctaul.  In the event of an unforeseen circumstance, up to a 30 minute delay is allowed for picking up and dropping off children.  Unjustified violations of this provision may cause forfeiture of future parenting time.

D.  HOLIDAYS

1.  The following holiday schedule applies to all children regardless of their age.  The holiday schedule takes precedence over any other regular parenting time.

In odd numbered years, the mother will have the following holidays:

    1) Easter
    2) Fourth of July
    3) Thanksgiving
    4) Christmas Day

In odd numbered years, the father will have the following holidays:

    1) Memorial Day
    2) Labor Day
    3) Christmas Eve

In even numbered years, the Mother will have the following holidays:

    1) Memorial Day
    2) Labor Day
    3) Christmas Eve

In even numbered years, the Father will have the following holidays:

    1) Easter
    2) Fourth of July
    3) Thanksgiving
    4) Christmas Day

HOURS FOR HOLIDAYS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Easter - 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM

Memorial Day - 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM

Fourth of July - 9:00 AM until 9:00 AM July 5th

Labor Day - 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM

Thanksgiving - 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM

Christmas Eve - December 24 from 9:00 AM until December 25 at 9:00 AM

Christmas Day - December 25 from 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM

2.  A holiday that falls on a weekend should be spent with the parent who is supposed to have the child(ren) for that holiday.  However, the balance of the weekend is to be spent with the parent who would normally have the child(ren) for that weekend.

3.  In the event that the holidays of Memorial Day, Labor Day, or Thanksgiving coincide with that parent's regular weekend schedule, the child(ren) remain with that parent for the entire extended weekend.

E. CHRISTMAS VACATION

Christmas Vacation- One half of the school winter vacation, a period which begins the evening the child(ren) is released from school and continues to the evening the child(ren) will return to school. Depending upon the alternate weekend schedule, the week will commence on Friday or Sunday evening. If the parents cannot agree on the division of this period, the father shall have the first half in the even-numbered years.

For preschool children, the same schedule shall apply, and the Christmas period shall be determined by the vacation period of the public school system in the custodial parent's school district.

F.  MOTHER'S DAY – FATHER'S DAY

1.  Mother's Day - Each year the Mother will have Mother's Day from 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM. This is over and above regular parenting time.

2.  Father's Day - Each year the Father will have Father's Day from 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM. This is over and above regular parenting time.

G.  CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY

The parents shall alternate the child(ren)'s birthdays. Mother will have the birthday(s) during even numbered years and father will have the birthday(s) during odd numbered years. If the birthday does not occur during regular parenting time, the parent with the birthday shall be entitled to a minimum of three hours parenting time on that date. Birthday parenting time includes siblings. If the parents cannot agree on a time, the time shall be from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

H.  SPRING SCHOOL BREAK

Spring school break is defined as 6:00 p.m. the day school recesses until 6:00 p.m. the day before school resumes. However, as the alternating weekend parenting time schedule remains in effect, spring break will usually be from Friday to Friday, or Sunday to Sunday, depending upon the vacation period and the weekend schedules. The same schedule shall apply to preschool children. In the even numbered years, the mother will have the Spring school break. In the odd numbered years, the father will have the Spring school break.

I.  SUMMER

1.  If the oldest child has not yet completed the first grade, the summer parenting time shall be three non-consecutive weeks during the summer, to be exercised one week per month.

2.  Once the oldest child of a family completes the first grade, all children are bound by the following visitation:

One half of the summer vacation is spent with each parent.

In the odd numbered years, the Mother will have the first half of the summer and the father will have the second half.

In the even numbered years, the Father will have the first half of the summer and the Mother will have the second half.

Summer vacation is defined as 6:00 PM the day after school recesses for the school year until 6:00 PM the day before the new school year resumes. The summer period shall be determined by the vacation of the public school system in the custodial parent's school district.

Summer parenting time should be confirmed by both parents no later than May 1st of each year.

3. Priority Summer Parenting Time- Summer parenting time with the non-custodial parent takes precedence over summer activities (such as Little League) when the parenting time cannot be reasonably scheduled around such events. Even so, the conscientious non-custodial parent will often be able to enroll the child(ren) in a similar activity.

J. <u>GENERAL PROVISIONS</u>

1. Parents shall at all times keep each other advised of their home address and telephone numbers. So far as possible, all communication concerning the child(ren) shall be conducted between the parents in person, or by telephone at their residences (and not at their places of employment).

2. Summer school necessary for the child(ren) to pass to the next grade must be attended.

3. A general itinerary and emergency telephone number will be provided to the other parent if an out of town vacation is planned.

4.Support abatement requests must be submitted within 90 days of the end of qualified parenting time.

5. The custodial parent shall have the child(ren) ready for parenting time at the time specified. Failure to do so may be cause for make-up parenting time.

K. <u>INFANT AND TODDLER PARENTING POLICY</u>

The age of a child is an important issue in determining the frequency and duration of parenting time. Earlier in a child's development, the child will need more frequent contact with each parent, but the duration of the contact should be shorter. As a child becomes older, the contact may become less frequent but of greater duration.

So, for most infants, frequent, short contacts are the best way to build relationships without overwhelming the infant with too much change in routine or environment.

Each infant will have different needs and established routines that will also be considered by the Court. Examples would be whether or not the child is nursing, does the child go to daycare, has the child ever spent the night with grandparents or other relatives, etc.

The following policy is for use when the parents live reasonably close to one another and cannot otherwise agree on parenting time.

1. Weekday and Weekend Parenting Time:

    a. <u>From birth to age 6 months, parenting time shall be:</u>

        Three days per week for two hours each day.

b. <u>Once the child reaches the age of 6 months, parenting time shall be:</u>

    Two days during the week for three hours each day.
    One day every weekend, for eight hours, not overnight.

c. <u>Once the child reaches the age of 12 months, parenting time shall be:</u>

    Two days during the week for three hours each day.  Weekends: one
    weekend for 24 hours, i.e. 6:00 PM Saturday until 6:00 PM Sunday and a
    three hour visit on the alternate weekend.

d. <u>Once the child reaches the age of 24 months, the general Friend of the
Court Parenting Policy shall apply</u>.

2.  Summer Parenting Time:

    Ages 6-12 months:  One week in July and one week in August, but no
    overnights.  Parenting time shall be every day for eight hours.  (If this option is
    selected by the non-custodial parent, this parenting time shall replace the
    regularly scheduled parenting time for that particular week).

    Ages 1-2:  One week in June, one in July and one in August.  Parenting time shall be everyday for
    for eight hours, plus two overnights during the week.  (If this option is selected by the non-custodial
    parent, this parenting time shall replace the regularly scheduled parenting time for these
    three weeks).

    Age 2 :  Pursuant to the general Friend of the Court Parenting Policy.

3.  Holiday and Birthday Parenting Time shall be pursuant to the general Parenting
    Policy.  If the Parenting Policy calls for an overnight before the child has
    reached the age of 12 months old, the child should be returned by 6:00 PM
    instead.