

ADVANCED Psych Care

Guidelines for Visitation

PARENTS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT:

1. Conflicts over visitation often stem from prior, unresolved marital problems and serve, not only to undermine the parent's relationship with the child, but often burden the child with a sense of responsibility for the conflicts.
2. Visitation is arranged so that the child may continue to experience a nurturing relationship with both parents. Thus, the pattern of visitation agreed upon should meet the particular needs of the child and not simply those of the parents. It should reflect also the parent's willingness to adapt to the changing developmental needs and circumstances of the child.
3. Visitation commitments should be kept; only real emergencies should justify cancellation or changes in visitation. If changes must be made, it is the responsibility of the parent making the change to explain to the child and the other parent the reasons necessitating such change.
4. Issues of child support should not be confused with the visitation schedule, and one matter must not be used manipulatively to gain in another area.
5. A visitation situation will require a substantial period of adjustment for both the child and the parents.
6. Work schedules, schools and child care facilities available to each parent must be considered in planning a visitation schedule.
7. Telephone calls to the child from parents in the same community are expected to be frequent and at a reasonable time. Parents living out of the community should make long distance calls as finances permit, preferably on a regular schedule.
8. For families with more than one child, these guidelines will require additional adjustments in order to meet the respective needs of each child.

INFANT TO AGE 2

1. One or two hours, at least twice a week, preferably in the home of the custodial parent is recommended. In instances when the non-custodial parent has assumed equal primary care for the child, infants and very young children should have the time extended to over-nights and weekends.
2. Overnights should be considered only if the non-custodial parent has been an active participant in the ongoing daily care of the infant including feeding, changing, bathing, and caring for illnesses.
3. The infant should always be returned at least two hours before bedtime.

PRESCHOOL AGE (2 TO 5 YEARS)

1. One full day each weekend, OR
2. If the child is accustomed to independent time with the non-custodial parent, alternate weekends consisting of two days and the night in-between may be scheduled. To provide consistency, these should be scheduled routinely for either the first and third, or second and fourth, weekends.
3. At least one midweek visit of two to three hours away from the custodial home.
4. The child should always be returned at least one hour before bedtime.
5. One or two weeks during the non-custodial parent's available vacation period.

GRADE SCHOOL AGE (6 TO 12 YEARS)

1. Alternating weekends, Friday nights to Sunday nights, to be scheduled routinely for either the first and third or second and fourth weekends.
2. At least one midweek visit from after school to one hour before bedtime away from the custodial home.
3. The child should always be returned at least one hour before bedtime.
4. These visits should be flexible enough not to deprive the child of participation in special events. When appropriate, the non-custodial parent may be responsible for taking the child to these activities during the visitation period.
5. Summer vacation:
 - a. For the Child 6 to 9 years, four weeks
 - b. For the child 10 to 12, four to six weeks, either consecutively, or split into two or three week segments.

The child should be returned to the custodial home at least one week prior to the first day of school.

ADOLESCENCE (13 TO 18 YEARS)

1. At this age, criteria for visitation should be flexible.
2. Parents should be sensitive to the importance of the adolescent's peer and social activities.
3. Frequent communication and flexible visitation should be encouraged.

OUT-OF-TOWN VISITATION

1. Very young children should not travel out-of-town unless accompanied by a responsible adult known to the child and approved by the custodial parent.
2. When the out-of-town non-custodial parent is visiting in the city of the custodial parent, extra visitation should be allowed provided reasonable notice is given.

HOLIDAYS

1. Parents living in the same community:

Religious and secular holidays normally celebrated by the child, and the child's birthday, should be shared equally between the parents. One-half of the child's normal waking hours on that day should be spent with each parent.

Extended school holidays or vacation periods other than the summer may be shared equally with one-half of each period going to each parent, or alternated.

The parent should have the option of having the child with them on their respective birthdays, and Mother's/Father's Days for up to an eight-hour period, if not a school day. When these days occur during the school week, visits may be from after school to one hour before bedtime.

2. Parents out-of-town

Finances permitting, at least one-half of the extended school vacation periods including Thanksgiving break and Spring break and the mid-winter holiday period should be spent with the non-custodial parent. If this is not possible, the non-custodial parent should have the option of choosing one holiday in addition to the summer, for visitation.

Extended school holidays or vacation periods, other than the summer, may be shared equally with one-half of each period going to each parent, or alternated.

The parent should have the option of having the child with them on their respective birthdays, and Mother's/Father's Days for up to an eight hour period, if not a school day. When these days occur during the school week, visits may be to one hour before bedtime.

MISCELLANEOUS GUIDELINES

I. GUIDELINES FOR COURT APPEARANCES BY CHILDREN OF THE PARTIES

In all cases in which children of the parties are involved in any way, parents and counsel must give highest priority to the welfare of the children and to that end must take every precaution to avoid traumatic or disturbing experiences. Bring children into the courthouse during any hearing between parents in a domestic relations matter is not in the best interests of the children and should be avoided, except as provided below.

CUSTODY AND VISITATION MATTERS

The Court will arrange the time for interviews with children, whether the Court wishes to interview the children on its motion or at the request of counsel. Children should not be brought to the courthouse other than at the time arranged for the interview. Every effort will be made not to interfere with the children's attendance at school or other scheduled activities. All such interviews will be conducted by the Court in chambers, preferably without the presence of either parent or counsel. Presence of counsel and a court reporter shall be at the discretion of the Court.

NON-CUSTODY MATTERS

If a child of the parties is required to testify in a non-custodial matter, counsel should advise the Court in advance of trial so that the propriety of such testimony and the competency of the child to testify can be determined. Arrangements should be made to avoid the presence of children at the courthouse during any portion of a trial or hearing not requiring their attendance. Children should not be subpoenaed for such testimony. If the Court allows testimony of children in non-custodial matters, the preferred method is to have the children testify in open court.

II. GUIDELINES FOR PAYMENT OF CHILDREN'S MEDICAL AND DENTAL EXPENSES.

As part of the child support obligation of both parents, the parents shall cooperate in an effort to have all the children's medical and dental expenses covered by insurance in effect at the commencement of the action. This coverage shall be continued in force as long as the policy may be available or until appropriate orders from the Court. Should such coverage be terminated by circumstances beyond the parent's control, they will cooperate in attempting to obtain similar coverage.

Any non-covered medical and dental expenses reasonably incurred shall be shared by the parties.