

POINTERS FOR PARENTS AND PARENTING PLANS

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

A committee consisting of an attorney, a co-parenting mediator, and a divorce education manager created this model. Decisions about access depend on many circumstances, but the age of the child is very important. This model offers information about what children learn, feel, and need at different ages. It also provides suggested 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 ongoing relationship between children and both their parents after divorce 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 access plans provide children and parents with some assurances of maintaining meaningful contact and can prevent future conflict. This model is intended to encourage open dialog and cooperation between parents. The Court prefers 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 their parents cooperate.* The reverse is also true. Children who experience ongoing conflict between parents are at high risk for suffering

serious long-term emotional problems. If parents need assistance in working out the schedules, private and court sponsored mediation services are available in Utah. In Utah's Third District Court, whenever a parent files a motion with issues regarding their co-parenting relationship, the parents are referred to the Co-Parenting Mediation Program before obtaining a court hearing. The Co-Parenting Mediation Program is dedicated to helping co-parents resolve parenting issues, helping to create co-parenting plans, and to building bridges so children can transition between parents while maintaining healthy relationships. Mediation is less adversarial than court, and parents are able to work collaboratively and constructively together to create parenting plans for their children.

Parents must state their agreement about legal custody in their parenting plans. Parents may agree that one parent should have sole custody or that joint legal custody is in their children's best interests. A parent who has sole custody has the right to make major decisions about the children's health, education and religious upbringing. Parents who have joint legal custody have equal rights to make such decisions, unless otherwise specified. Joint legal custody does not necessarily mean equal parenting time.

The key to a successful custody arrangement is the written parenting plan which should state the agreements parents reach about legal custody, the sharing of rights and privileges and the schedule for access. 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/children's age(s).
2. Meet with your child's other parent to discuss custody and to decide which plan for access (A, B or C) best suits your family's needs.
3. After you decide which access plan is best, use the blank calendar at the end of this booklet to shade in the days and times each parent has access. To assist you, this model includes sample calendars with sample access plan language to include in court orders. These are examples only. You may choose 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 brothers and sisters are able to spend as much time together as possible. Be flexible.
5. If you are in a county with a self-service center, or you have access to the Internet, you may obtain a Parenting Plan form for custody and access that may be submitted to the Court. The Online Court Assistance Program (OCAP) or the Utah State Law Library located in Matheson Courthouse, 450 S. State St., Salt Lake City, may have resources.
6. Online Link: www.utcourts.gov/howto/divorce

WHICH PLAN SHOULD WE CHOOSE?

The following access 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 schedules, and to spend more or less time with their children than they might otherwise prefer in order to provide their children with a sense of security and well being.

When choosing a plan, parents should consider the child's relationship with each parent. If a parent has never been 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, who has not been the child's primary caregiver, or who 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**. *For ages three and older, all Plan C schedules are for shared access.*

As the child adjusts to the initial plan and feels comfortable, parents may consider increasing access by choosing 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 decide which custody arrangement and access schedule is best for their family, the Court will evaluate the case, will designate custody and will create an access plan it finds is in the children's best interests.

If the distance between the two residences is more than 100 miles, parents should refer to the "*Long-Distance Parent/Child Access*" section of this booklet.

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING 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 relationship with siblings and friends
- The distance between the two households
- The flexibility of both parents' work schedules and the child's schedule in order to accommodate extended access

- Childcare arrangements
- Transportation needs
- The ability of the parents to communicate and cooperate together
- The child's and 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 and 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 with the family
- Are flexible so the child can 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 within the child's 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 to the other parent because child support has not been paid

Refer to the information you received and learned at the Divorce Education for Parents and Divorce Orientation for Parents classes. If you still have questions you may want to seek professional advice.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

These access plans do 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, the parent's primary task is to protect the child. Parents who have concerns about these safety issues should seek help from an attorney, mental health professional, court services, domestic abuse agency or local social services agency.

REMEMBER! THE CHILD'S WELFARE AND SAFETY IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY!

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS BOOKLET

Attachment: the process of building strong emotional bonds to specific caregivers; critical for the child's development during the first year.

Results of attachment for the child:

- Sense of security
- Development of trust in others
- Positive emotional and social adjustment

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

Parenting Plan: a plan that outlines the parents' agreements about custody and access to the child and describes each parent's rights and responsibilities.

Transitions: moving between parents' homes.

MODEL PARENTING TIME PLANS

INTRODUCTION: All plans for infants presume that each parent with access has appropriate baby supplies (infant seat, car seat, crib, diapers, food, and toys). All plans

presume that access will take place in a child-friendly setting and 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 has care giving experience and the child is sufficiently attached to and accustomed to being in the care of that parent for long periods of time.

Samples of plans can be found in the Utah Code, UCA 30-3-35.5, http://le.utah.gov/Documents/cod_const.htm

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 having their needs met promptly. They begin to respond to the different types of parenting mothers and fathers provide.

Infants cannot remember experiences over time, so it is vital they have frequent contact with both parents and a predictable schedule and routine. But infants *can* retain "emotional memories" of conflict. These "emotional memories" can have long-term negative effects. Parents should not argue when infants can overhear them.

By **six months**, infants can recognize their parents and other caregivers and may become uneasy around strangers and those people with whom they do not have regular contact. Regular caregivers are able to recognize their signals for food, comfort, and sleep. When away from their regular caregivers, 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. Access plans should be adjusted so that disruption in the baby's schedules does not occur. For example, in creating access plans for this age group, parents should consider the special needs of breast-feeding infants.

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

Comment: Frequent contact helps the parent and child bond.

Plan A (2): Two six-hour periods spaced throughout each week.

Comment: This plan is helpful when the parents' work schedules or their levels of conflict make more frequent exchanges difficult. Because this plan has only two visits 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.

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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

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

See Plan (A) above for Vacation and Holiday

PLAN C: Two periods of three to six hours and one overnight each week.

Vacation: Presuming that Plan C overnights have been ongoing, parents may have three consecutive overnights, during the 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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

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 types of parenting mothers and fathers provide. Two year-olds commonly test parental limits ("terrible twos") and appropriate parental responses can build the child's self-esteem for years to come.

Transitions between homes may become difficult for some two year-olds and they may become upset at these times. Some resistance to exchanges is normal. 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 the child by following predictable schedules and by supporting the child's relationship with the other parent.

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

Comment: Frequent contact helps the parent and child bond.

Plan A (2): Two six-hour periods spaced throughout each week.

Comment: This plan is helpful when the parents' work schedules or their levels of conflict make more frequent exchanges difficult. Because this plan has only two visits 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.

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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

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

See Plan (A) above for Vacation and Holiday

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

Vacation: Presuming that Plan C overnights have been ongoing, parents may have one period of three consecutive overnights, during 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 his/her 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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

Twenty-four to Thirty-six Months

Ages **two to three years** 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 to 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.

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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

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

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 his/her 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 in a way that is consistent with the time blocks noted above.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 communication 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, into 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 child.

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.

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 weekend.

Comment: This plan provides a consistent routine and accommodates a young child's ability to be apart from either parent for three to four days. It also allows the child to have a "stay home" day (Saturday or Sunday) with each parent each week. 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. For instance, one week one parent has three overnights and the other parent has four overnights, and the next week the number of overnights is reversed.

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 child. The child is away from each parent during alternate weeks for five days, which may be difficult for some children at this age.

Vacation: Each parent shall be entitled to up to 10 days in town or out of town each year, or two, one-week periods 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, destinations and places where the child or parent can be reached.

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

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 can move back and forth 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.

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 three days, and allows the child to have a "stay home" day (Saturday or Sunday) with each parent each week. 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 that one week, one parent has three overnights and the other parent has four overnights, and the next week the number of overnights is reversed.

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 child. 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 make exchanges difficult, because all exchanges can take place at school or day care.

Plan C (3): The parents share time with the child on 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: This plan requires effective parental communication and cooperation to arrange weekly activities for the child. For example, if one parent wants to enroll the child in karate lessons on Tuesday evenings, the other parent must be willing to follow up with this activity when the child is with that parent. All exchanges for this plan can take place at school or daycare if desired. While some children thrive with this access plan, others may find this arrangement disruptive.

Vacation: Each parent shall be entitled to two, two-week periods in town or out of town vacation each year. Each parent shall be entitled to up to four weeks of vacation after the child is eight years old. 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 5:30P.M. to Sunday at 6:00P.M.), if desired.

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

Ten to Thirteen Years

Ten to thirteen-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 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 while 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 be entitled to two, two-week periods or up to one, four-week period. 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. Telephone contact is recommended. If the child is in town during a four-week vacation period, the non-vacating 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 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 than on their family. Fourteen to eighteen year-olds may resist a rigid or well-defined access schedule. Parents should be flexible and accept the child'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 a primary house because it is less confusing. 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: This plan requires effective parental communication and cooperation to arrange weekly activities for the child. 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 child is with that parent. While some children thrive with this access plan, others may find this arrangement disruptive.

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 by the child's needs and desires.

Vacation: Each parent shall be entitled to two, two-week periods or up to four weeks of 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, destinations 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-vacating 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 holidays" section of this booklet.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT HOLIDAYS

Options:

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

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have access on (specify holiday) from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Parent B shall have access from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child on (specify holiday) in all even years from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Parent B shall have time with the child from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on (specify holiday) in all odd years.

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.

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

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

Mother's and Father's Day: Each parent celebrates his or her parent day with the child, regardless of the schedule.

NOTE: Holidays and Special Days have priority over regular access periods.

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

PARENT/CHILD ACCESS - LONG DISTANCE

Parents cannot always relocate without court permission. Under the Utah Relocation Statute 30-3-37, when either parent decides to move from the state or more than 150 miles or more from the residence specified in the court's decree, that parent shall provide, if possible, 60 days advance written notice of the untended relocation to the other parent. Special considerations may arise when a parent is required to move out of state. Long-distance parent/child access may apply where the distance between the residences of the two parents is more than 150 miles. 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 more than 100 miles 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 holidays, whether religious, cultural or national, that are meaningful to the family in their access plan. Parents

should also include family birthdays and annual parent day celebrations. Parents should refer to the "*What to Do about Holidays-Long Distance*" section in this booklet when creating their Long Distance Access Plan.

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

All plans that include overnights presume that the parent with access has care giving experience and the child is sufficiently attached to and accustomed to being in the care of that parent for long periods.

Birth to Twelve Months

One weekend per month at the non-residential parent's home. An additional weekend (consecutive or not) may be added each month in the residential parent's community.

Comment: Parents are encouraged to have contact at least twice monthly. Infants cannot remember experiences over time, so it is vital they have frequent contact with both parents and a predictable schedule and routine. But infants *can* retain "emotional memories" of conflict. These "emotional memories" can have long-term negative effects. Parents should not argue when infants can overhear them.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child once each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

This schedule should be adjusted to accommodate breast-feeding infants.

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

Holidays: See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Twelve to Twenty - Four Months

One weekend per month at the non-residential parent's home. An additional weekend may be added each month (consecutive or not) in the residential parent's community.

Comment: Parents are encouraged to have contact at least twice monthly. Infants cannot remember experiences over time, so it is vital they have frequent contact with both parents and a predictable schedule and routine. But infants *can* retain "emotional memories" of conflict. These "emotional memories" can have long-term negative effects. Parents should not argue when infants can overhear them.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child once each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. 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 weekend, parents should consider alternating holidays. See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Twenty-Four to Thirty-Six Months

Two weekends, consecutive or not, per month at the non-residential parent's home. In the alternative, one weekend may be taken in the residential parent's community. In alternate years, one seventy-two hour period inclusive of the child's birthday.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child twice each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Alternating weekends (Friday 6:00pm – Sunday 7:00pm); one weekday evening per week (5:30pm – 8:30pm); two, one-week periods separated by 4 weeks (usually summer parent-time), one week is uninterrupted for non-residential parent; the other is subject to parent-time for residential parent.

Child's birthday: Odd numbered years: 3:00pm – 9:00pm the day before or after the child's actual birthday. No overnight parent-time. Even numbered years: 3:00pm – 9:00pm on the child's birth date. No overnight parent-time.

Vacation: Two one-week periods separated by at least four weeks.

Holidays: See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Three to Five Years

Two weekends per month, consecutive or not, at the non-residential parent's home. In the alternative, one weekend may be taken in the residential parent's community. In odd-numbered years, one seventy-two hour period inclusive of the child's birthday.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child twice each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Alternating weekends (Friday 6:00pm – Sunday 7:00pm); one weekday evening per week (5:30pm – 8:30pm); two, two-week periods separated by 4 weeks (usually summer parent-time), two weeks are uninterrupted for non-residential parent, the other two are subject to parent-time for residential parent.

Child's birthday: Odd numbered years: 3:00pm – 9:00pm the day before or after the child's actual birthday. No overnight parent-time. Even numbered years: 3:00pm – 9:00pm on the child's birth date. No overnight parent-time.

Vacation: Two one-week periods separated by at least two weeks for ages three and four and four weeks at age five; during this period, the residential parent shall have the option of having the child on alternating weekends, at the residential parent's expense.

Holidays: See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Six to Nine Years

Two weekends per month, consecutive or not, at the non-residential parent's home. If a month has a Monday school holiday, parents should select that long weekend whenever possible. In the alternative, one weekend may be taken in the residential parent's community. In alternate years, one seventy-two hour period inclusive of the child's birthday.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child twice each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Summer or Other Extended School Breaks: Up to four weeks at ages six and seven. Up to eight weeks, for ages eight and nine, consecutive or not. During these periods, the residential parent shall have the option of having the child on alternating weekends, at the residential parent's expense.

Holidays: See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Ten to Thirteen Years

Two weekends per month at the non-residential parent's home. If a month has a Monday school holiday, parents should select that long weekend whenever possible. In the alternative, one weekend may be taken in the residential parent's community. In alternate years, one seventy-two hour period inclusive of the child's birthday.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child twice each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Summer or Other Extended School Breaks: Up to eight weeks, consecutive or not. During this period, the residential parent shall have the option of having the child on alternating weekends, at the residential parent's expense.

Holidays: See the "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Fourteen to Eighteen Years

Parents should expect that normal weekend access may become difficult during the school year because of the child's involvement in school activities, work and friends. If parents have established access in accordance with the schedule for ages 10 to 13, they should attempt to maintain that pattern after considering the child's activities. Parents should attempt to continue including one seventy-two hour period inclusive of the child's birthday, in alternate years. Flexibility is critical. As with any plan, parents must make the final decision about schedules.

Summer access is very important for the child at this age and can ensure that the non-residential parent and the child have a continuing relationship in spite of the distance between them. The non-residential parent should make every effort to provide activities and/or employment for an older child so that the child remains enthusiastic about continuing the summer schedule.

Sample access plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child once each month from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 6:00 p.m. in Parent A's own community. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Summer: Up to eight weeks, consecutive or not. During this period, the residential parent shall have the option of having the child on alternating weekends, at the residential parent's expense.

Holidays: See below, "What to do about holidays-long distance" section of this booklet.

Special considerations apply when a parent moves to a location that is 150 miles or more from the parent's current location. The relocating parent must provide the other party notice of the relocation at least 60 days, if possible, prior to the intended move. Either party can then request a court hearing to modify the parent-time arrangements.

For parents with school age-children the parents should make arrangements for equal division of school breaks and holidays. The relocating parent is generally responsible for the holiday travel expenses of the children. The parents equally share the travel expenses for school breaks. Parents must consider the child's school and work schedules when arranging for holiday visits.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT HOLIDAYS-LONG DISTANCE

Options:

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 Thanksgiving 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 Thanksgiving on all odd years.

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.

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 in which they regularly have access.

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

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

SAMPLE CALENDARS

Birth to Twelve Months

Plan A1 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
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							

Parent A

Parent B

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 A2 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun

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							

Parent A

Parent B

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.

Plan B - Weekly Schedule

Parent A

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
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							

Parent B

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 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan C - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
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							

Parent A

Parent B

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 4:30 p.m. to Sunday 4:30 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Twelve to Twenty-four Months

Plan A1 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Parent A

Parent B

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.

11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

to 3:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan A2 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Parent A

Parent B

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.

11:00								
Noon								
1:00								
2:00								
3:00								
4:00								
5:00								
6:00								
7:00								
8:00								
Overnight								

The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan B - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Parent A

Parent B

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 Saturday from 10:00 a.m.

11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan C - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week

11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

to 6:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan A2 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Parent A

Parent B

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.

11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

to Sunday at 10:00 a.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan B - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child each week on Monday from 8:00 a.m. to Tuesday 8:00 a.m., Wednesday from 4:30 p.m. to

11:00							
Noon							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
Overnight							

7:30 p.m. and Friday for 8:00 a.m. to Saturday 1:00 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time.

Plan C - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00							
9:00							

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent

10:00						
11:00						
Noon						
1:00						
2:00						
3:00						
4:00						
5:00						
6:00						
7:00						
8:00						
Overnight						

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

3 - 5 Years Old

Plan A1 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

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Plan C2 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

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

6 - 9 Years Old

Plan A1 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

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

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Plan A2 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child week one from Monday at 5:30 p.m. to Thursday at 8:00 a.m. In addition, Parent A shall have access every Saturday from 2:00 p.m. to 8:0 p.m. The child shall be with Parent B the remainder of the time. Repeat schedule weeks three and four.

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Plan B monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

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

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Plan C1 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

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

Plan C2 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent A shall have time with the child every Monday after school to Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. Parent B shall have time with the child every Wednesday after school to

Friday at 8:00 a.m. week two. The parties shall alternate weekends (Friday after school to Monday morning).

Plan C3 monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language:

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 8:00 a.m. and Parent B shall pick the child up after school. Week two Parent B shall drop the child off at school Friday at 8:00 a.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 5:30 p.m. to

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Plan B monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
		Optional				
		Optional				
		Optional				
		Optional				

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language: Parent 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 8:00 a.m. and Parent B shall pick the child up at school at 5:30 p.m. Week two: Parent B shall drop the child off at school Monday at 8:00 a.m. and Parent A shall pick the child up at school at 5:30 p.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 5:30 p.m. to Thursday at 8:00 a.m.

Plan C monthly schedule						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Parent A

Parent B

Sample parenting plan language:

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 8:00 a.m. and Parent B shall pick the child up after school. Week three: Parent B shall drop the child at school Friday at 8:00 a.m. and Parent A shall pick the child up after school.

Optional: The parent who does not have time with the child during the 14-day period shall have access as determined by the child's school and activity schedules, as well as the child's needs and desires.

Sample Template of Weekly Calendar for Planning

Parent A:

Parent B:

Plan A1 - Weekly Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
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							

Notes:

Sample Template of Monthly Calendar for Planning

Parent A:

Parent B:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Notes:

Thanks to the Utah and Arizona Administrative Offices of the Courts.

2010