

APPENDIX F
LONG DISTANCE PARENTING SCHEDULE – Effective January 1, 2016
(For parents who live more than 150 miles apart)

INTRODUCTION

Preserving a healthy and ongoing relationship between children and both parents after divorce or separation is of the greatest importance. Each parent must accept the disruption of his or her own schedule to meet the children's needs.

This Court expects that each parent shall make his or her best effort to resolve parenting issues by contacting the other parent first, and trying to work out the differences. The Court cannot enforce a parent's right with a child the same way property rights are enforced. The parenting schedule is only the beginning. It is up to the parents to cultivate a loving, warm and concerned parental relationship with their children.

Children benefit from regular and predictable contact with both parents. It is assumed that each parent shall take advantage of all scheduled parenting time. Because of the distance between parents' residences and the need to make travel arrangements, the parents are expected to communicate about the specific travel plans and be flexible about the arrival or departure dates to accommodate the other parent's availability and the children's activities, including mandatory school attendance.

No specific schedule will satisfy the changing needs of each child over the years. It is critical to the success of any schedule is that each parent be flexible, willing to change times and/or dates, by mutual cooperation and agreement, based on the changing needs of children as they grow older.

The above introduction includes statements adapted from the following sources: *Surviving the Breakup*, (Wallerstein & Kelly 1980); *Planning for Parenting Time*, Ohio's Guide for Parents Living Apart (Ohio Supreme Court, 2012); Appendix J, Hancock County Rules of Court, as amended August 1, 2007.

Whenever the non-residential parent is awarded the standard "Local Parenting Schedule" without restrictions, and either parent moves more than 150 miles from the residence of their child, this parenting plan automatically becomes the order of the Court without further court action. If you believe that the parenting plan is inappropriate for your circumstances, then you should file a motion seeking to change the parenting time order. See Local DR Rule 2.19.

If the Court Order indicates that the Long Distance Parenting Schedule is the Order for parenting time (Standard Order), then the ORDER OF THE COURT IS:

Summer Vacation - June 15th through and including August 15th each year; and in the

Even-numbered Years:

Christmas Vacation:

- a. School-aged child*: first day of vacation to Dec. 26
- b. Pre-schoolers**: Dec. 18 through Dec. 26

Spring Vacation Break:

- a. School-aged child*: Sixth day of vacation through last day of vacation
- b. Pre-schoolers**: Monday after Easter Sunday through the following Sunday

Odd-Numbered Years:

Thanksgiving: Wed., after school

Thanksgiving Day, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Christmas Vacation:

- a. School-aged child*: Dec. 26 to last day of vacation
- b. Pre-schoolers**: Dec. 26 through Jan. 2

Spring Vacation Break:

- a. School-aged child*: First full day of vacation through fifth day
- b. Pre-schoolers**: Sunday before Easter through Easter Sunday

*All school-aged and preschool-aged brothers and sisters of these parents’ relationship with each other are included in the exercise of parenting time rights, unless ordered otherwise.

**For pre-schoolers who have no school-aged brothers and sisters of these parents’ relationship with each other.

If the Court Order or Decree provides that the Optional Schedule of the Long Distance Parenting Schedule is the Order for parenting time, then the ORDER OF THE COURT IS THE FOLLOWING:

Summer Vacation - June 15 through and including August 15 each year, and in the:

Even-Numbered Years:

Christmas Vacation

- a. School-aged child: *first to last day of vacation
- b. Pre-schoolers: ** Dec. 18 through Jan. 2

Odd-Numbered Years:

Spring Vacation Break

- a. School-aged child: * first to last day of vacation
- b. Preschoolers: ** Sunday before Easter through Easter

*All school-aged and preschool-aged brothers and sisters of these parents’ relationship with each other are included in the exercise of companionship rights, unless ordered otherwise.

**For pre-schoolers who have no school-aged brothers and sisters of these parents’ relationship with each other.

ADDITIONAL COMPANIONSHIP TIMES UNDER EITHER LONG DISTANCE PARENTING SCHEDULE OUTLINED ABOVE:

- a. Weekend: Third Friday at 7 p.m. through the following Sunday at 7 p.m. every month if travel time between homes is less than three (3) hours. **Advance notice must be given to the residential parent of one (1) week to exercise this additional parenting time.**
- b. Father's Day to the father, and Mother's Day to the mother if there is **one (1) week advance notice to exercise this additional parenting time.**
- c. If the non-residential parent travels to the community where the residential parent lives, and gives **two (2) days notice** of intent to exercise parenting time, parenting time must occur.
- d. If the residential parent travels to the community where the non-residential parent lives, he or she must provide **two (2) days notice** and grant parenting time to the other parent.
- e. The residential parent shall enjoy the same additional parenting times as outlined above during extended summer visits with the non-residential parent.

The parents are referred to the following Long Distance Parenting Plan and Companionship Schedule for a fuller explanation of their rights and responsibilities.

LONG DISTANCE PARENTING PLAN AND COMPANIONSHIP SCHEDULE

The Court has established a specific order of parenting time for parents living separately for the following reasons:

1. To provide direction to both parents when disagreements occur about dividing their child(ren)'s time between them. Otherwise, a minor problem may easily turn into stressful, expensive and lengthy litigation.
2. To provide a minimum standard of time for the non-residential parent to have with the child(ren), and a basis for negotiating changes, without the parents incurring expenses for court costs and attorney fees.
3. To provide a statement of rights and responsibilities between the parents regarding implementation of the parenting schedule.

GENERAL REGULATIONS/GUIDELINES

a. Basis for Schedule

This parenting plan and schedule presumes that the father and mother are good parents who are each capable of meeting the physical and emotional needs of their child(ren); that their child is safe with each of them; that father and mother respect the right of their child to have two parents throughout the child's lifetime as necessary to the healthy and full development of their child; that mother and father respect the right of the other to parent their child; and that their child has the right to love both parents regardless of whether the parents get along with each other.

b. Keeping the Children Together

This schedule presumes that the parenting time will be exercised with all of the children of these parents together, not separately.

c. Exercise of Parenting Time

This schedule presumes that the non-residential parent shall exercise all companionship times and days outlined above as the Standard Order of the Optional Order, whichever the parties choose or the Court orders, so long as proper notice is given. The residential parent shall presume that the non-residential parent will exercise all companionship under the Order, and not schedule any plans for their child that interferes with the non-residential parent's rights of parenting time or deny the rights set forth in this schedule to the other parent.

d. Cancellation of Parenting Time by Non-residential Parent

The non-residential parent must give notice of intent NOT to have companionship, as soon as he or she is aware that parenting time is not possible, unless a last minute emergency occurs. A parent who does not exercise parenting time forfeits the time, and is not entitled to make-up time, unless the parties agree otherwise.

e. Summer School

Summer school that is necessary for a child to pass to the next grade should be attended at the location of the non-residential parent's home. The residential parent must make arrangements with both schools and be certain that documentation of completion is received by the child's school in the residential parent's community.

f. Communication between Parents

The parents are responsible for making the parenting time arrangements. The child(ren) cannot become the agent of the parent to make those arrangements. One of the most common mistakes made by parents who are having trouble communicating with each other is to use the child(ren) to make all parenting time arrangements. It is not the child's role to become involved in parental differences or disagreements on any issue.

When Parents Do Not Communicate With Each Other

Parents temporarily may use other adults to make arrangements for parenting time, but the best solution is to seek professional help to learn or improve their ability to work together for their child(ren)'s best interests. If one parent will not cooperate in counseling, the parent desiring counseling to assist in communication may file a motion with the Court to request counseling or other services to assist the parents.

g. Returning the child(ren) after Exercising Parenting Time

This schedule presumes that the non-residential parent will not return the child(ren) before the end of the scheduled parenting time period (not early, not on a different day), unless the parents agree in advance; nor return the child(ren) late; and that the residential parent or other responsible adult well-known to the child(ren) will be present at the place the child(ren) is to be returned.

h. Communication between Parent and Child

In place of frequent and regular physical contact that would be available if the parents lived nearer to one another, frequent and liberal communication between the non-residential parent and the child(ren) is vital. The children are permitted to contact a parent at any time via phone, video, or other electronic means, subject to reasonable limits on appropriate times, frequency, and length of contacts to avoid disruption of activities or excess costs. If it is the practice of the residential parent to use a telephone answering device, the parents should agree in advance when the other parent will call at a designated time, so that the call may be completed. Each parent must always provide a contact telephone number to the other parent where the child may be reached. The child must be allowed privacy by each parent for the purposes of communicating with the other.

Each parent must provide all written communication and gifts from the other parent to the child as soon as they are received, and must provide a home address to the other parent at all times.

i. Transportation for Exercise of Parenting Time

Unless otherwise agreed, the non-residential parent is responsible for the physical transportation of the child from the residential parent's home to his/her own home in exercising the long distance schedule. The residential parent is responsible for the physical transportation of the child from the non-residential parent's home to his/her home at the end of the parenting time. Travel by methods other than car requires the parent to transport the child timely to the location for departure and to pick up the child from the designated location upon return to that parent.

Transportation by Car: Any insured responsible adult well-known to the child(ren) and with a valid driver's license may be utilized by a parent to provide transportation. All child restraint laws must be complied with by a person driving the child(ren). No person transporting the child shall be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or any substance of abuse.

Transportation by Airplane: Airline regulations govern the age at which a child may fly unescorted. Any older child may fly under such regulations as each airline may establish. Airline reservations should be made well in advance and preferably non-stop, if possible. The parent who is taking the child to the airport must notify the other parent immediately upon departure that the child is arriving, and the parent who meets the child must immediately notify the other parent that the child has arrived. Parents should consider in making the decision on this method of transportation whether the child may need an adult to chaperon the flight.

Other Methods of Transportation

The parent should carefully consider in using any other method of transportation, the age of the child, the safety of the child traveling alone, and the child's experience in traveling alone, or whether an adult well-known to the child(ren) should be traveling with the child(ren).

Costs of Transportation

The non-residential parent shall pay for the transportation costs to the non-residential parent's

residence and the residential parent shall pay for the transportation costs to the residential parent's residence, unless the Court determines otherwise.

j. Child(ren)'s Clothing

The residential parent is responsible for providing sufficient appropriate clean clothing for the parenting time period, including good and play clothes, based on the lifestyle of the residential parent and child. If the planned parenting time activities require special or unusual clothing needs, the non-residential parent must notify the residential parent at least two days in advance of the parenting time period. If the child does not have the type of clothing requested, the residential parent is under no obligation to comply with the request. All clothing sent by the residential parent must be immediately returned at the end of the parenting time period.

k. Traditions and Family

This schedule is in no way meant to interfere with family traditions. Each parent is encouraged to respect each other's family traditions and to adjust the parenting time schedule accordingly. Each parent should expect new family traditions to develop. It is expected that the child(ren) will continue to have contact with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and any other family members during such times as they are with parents.

l. Children's Activities

Except as agreed by the parents to accommodate their children's activities and interests, scheduled parenting time must not be delayed or denied because a child wishes to schedule other activities with friends, work, lessons, or sports, that conflict with the non-residential parent's scheduled parenting time periods. No residential parent shall schedule or allow a child to schedule any event that conflicts with the times and dates for parenting time, unless the parents agree otherwise. This schedule anticipates that the child will develop new friends and relationships in the non-residential parent's community, which will benefit the child.

m. Child's Response to Long Distance Parenting Time

It is not uncommon for a child to have a strong emotional reaction to leaving his or her residential parent, or to have an equally strong reaction when leaving the non-residential parent. Parents need to know that their child's emotional response is natural and that it does not mean that the child does not love the other parent, or wishes not to be returned to that parent. Parents need to calmly reassure the child that he or she will see the other parent again. A healthy child should adjust to the situation.

Some parents are naturally concerned about a very young child being separated from the residential parent for extended periods of time set by this schedule. So long as the non-residential parent has an established relationship with the child, the general rule is that the child should spend the time set forth in the schedule with that parent and will adjust to new surroundings with the assistance of his or her parent.

If a child indicates strong opposition to being with the other parent, it is the responsibility of both

parents to calmly talk to the child as to the child's reasons, and to work together to do what is in the child's best interest, particularly avoiding confrontation or unpleasant scenes. If the matter is not settled quickly, either parent should seek the immediate assistance of a mental health professional or court-approved mediator, or file a motion with the Court. Although parents should consider their child's wishes and concerns, no parent should allow a child to decide when or whether a parenting time period will take place.

n. Information Required to be Shared with Non-residential Parent

Each parent shall promptly provide to the other parent information available involving the following: report cards, conference reports, honors, unsatisfactory reports, and graduate exercises, therapy reports, physician reports, school pictures, school year calendars, and other similar documentation as it relates to any child of these parents, of any court proceeding involving the minor child, of any investigation of any agency involving the minor child, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of any day care center and school where the child is enrolled, the names and addresses and telephone numbers of any treating physician, dentists, specialists of any mind who are treating the minor child(ren) (and authorizations to speak to any of the above named persons involved in the child(ren)'s life), unless the Court orders otherwise.

o. Child's Health

As a general rule, if a child is hospitalized or has a serious injury or illness, each parent is entitled to be notified. If the child is ill or injured while with the non-residential parent, the parent shall secure appropriate emergency treatment and notify the residential parent. Regularly prescribed medications should be sent for use during parenting time with appropriate instructions. Any health care regimen recommended by the child's doctor in case of certain symptoms should be copied and sent in advance of the parenting time period.

p. Step-parent Name

A parent should not suggest, encourage, or require a child to refer to any person other than the child's parents as "mom" or "dad", etc., nor permit any other person to do so.

q. Discipline and Changes in Child's Behavior

Parents should use methods of discipline consistent with the law, and consistent with each other as much as possible, and communicate with each other if the child is having a discipline problem. Parents need to discuss behavior problems and solutions with each other as the need arises. Parents who have major disagreements over appropriate discipline or solutions should seek the assistance of the Court or mental health professional. Examples of time for concern are a decline of child's grades, serious or chronic school problems, dramatic changes in behavior, and delinquency.

r. Moving

Either parent must notify the other in writing at least thirty (30) days in advance of their intent to change their residence, and provide a new address and telephone number within ten (10) days of establishing a new residence.