

Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

AFCC's Online Training Program



March 13–16 and March 20-22, 2023

Training Team

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Parenting Plans

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Goals of this section

Upon completion of this section,
participants will be able to

1. Identify research-based information regarding fostering healthy development and strengthening parent-child relationships.
2. Describe the controversies and consensus points regarding shared parenting time.
3. Apply research-based information when crafting developmentally appropriate parenting time schedules.
4. Apply research-based information to avert potential parenting plan implementation problems.

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Key Features of a Parenting Plan

- Decision-making: sole, joint
- Parenting time: shared, equal, primary/non-primary home
- Information sharing to meet to child's needs
- Arrangements for the child
- Court ordered plan



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Value of a Parenting Plan

- Reduction of parental conflict
- Support for children's development
- Protects parent-child relationships
- Provides structure and clarity
- Accounts for flexibility




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	<h2>Considerations</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Changing nature of children, families, and adjustment➤ Recognition that “shared parenting time” is not the same as “equal parenting time”➤ Diversities of families and children➤ Safety concerns:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)<input type="checkbox"/> Child Maltreatment<input type="checkbox"/> Substance Misuse<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Illness	 <p>5</p>

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<h2>PARENTING PLANS THAT FOSTER CHILDREN’S ADJUSTMENT</h2>	

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	<h2>What Does “Adjustment” Mean?</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Psychological and behavioral functioning➤ Academic performance➤ Relationship functioning➤ Later adult functioning and well-being
	7

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<h2>Quality Parenting</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Responsiveness and Warmth➤ Expectations and Demands➤ AKA: “Authoritative Parenting”➤ “Good Enough” Parenting <p>Bettleheim, 1988; Baumrind, 1966</p>	
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What Fosters Adjustment?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Feeling loved and cared for by both parents2. Stable and meaningful involvement with both parents3. Quality Parenting	
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<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Maintenance of positive existing relationships, routines, and activities5. Important belongings go back and forth6. Consistent sleep, feeding schedules, and certain other routines between homes7. Functional coparent communication8. Protection from chronic parental conflict	
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Protecting Children from Conflict

- Alleviate pressures on children to choose
- Model respectful behavior and communication
- Refrain from criticism and disparagement of the other parent
- Not expecting children to convey information, coordinate plans, and handle exchange of items
- Preventing exposure to parental arguments
- Allowing child to attend important family events with other parent
- Acknowledgement that differences between households are not “bad”

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Functional Coparenting

- **Cooperation:** extent to which parents value and respect each other and are able to make healthy joint decisions for their children
- **Conflict:** parents cannot resolve disagreements, undermine coparent’s child- rearing efforts and decisions
- **Triangulation:** parent-child coalitions that undermine the other parent or blur parent- child boundaries (Margolin et al., 2001) and form an inappropriate alliance with the child at the exclusion of other parent
- **Communication:** effective enough to make arrangements, exchange information, make major decisions, and coordinate to meet child’s needs

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	<h2>Value of Functional Coparenting</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better short and long-term child adjustment (Cowans and Pruetts, 2009; 2014; McConnell, & Kerig, 2002; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998) ➤ Better parenting and family stability (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Cabrera, Scott, Fagan, Steward-Strend, & Chien, 2012; Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010)
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	<h2>Value of hearing from Children</h2> <h3>Birnbaum & Saini (2015)</h3>
	<p>Meta-analysis of studies between 2000-2014. Children favored shared care when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They had input into decision making ➤ Their parents integrated their feelings ➤ Parenting plan emphasized and maximized time with both parents ➤ Plan supported continuous and meaningful relationship with their parents and siblings ➤ Children had flexibility to modify parenting plan ➤ Goodness of fit with children's changing schedules and priorities ➤ Parents' ability to shelter children from conflict ➤ Parents' ability to support children's relationship with other parent
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Which of the factors listed below is NOT known to foster children's adjustment to separation/divorce?

- A. Protection from parental conflict
- B. Stable and meaningful relationships with both parents
- C. Equal parenting time
- D. Maintaining positive existing relationships, routines and activities

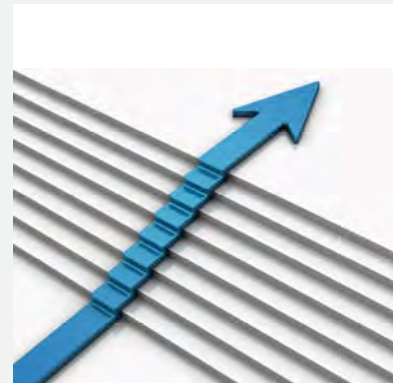
Answer: C

Comment: "Equal parenting" is not the same as "shared parenting." **Involvement of both parents** fosters adjustment.

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DEVELOPMENTALLY
APPROPRIATE
PARENTING TIME
SCHEDULES



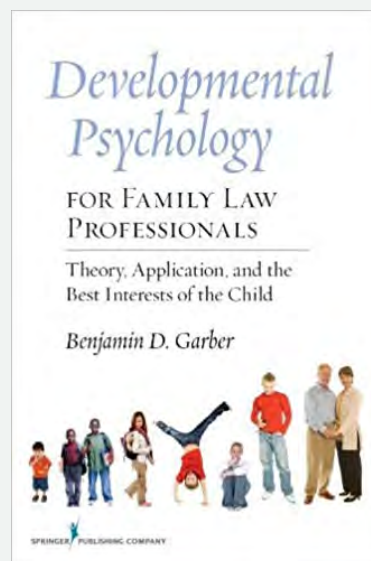
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What is a Developmentally Appropriate Parenting Time Schedule?

- Accounts for child's age and stage of development
- Supports child's healthy development and coping skills
- Considers practical circumstances of the family
- Recognizes every family is unique; no one template fits all
- Recognizes there is no such thing as "the right" parenting plan

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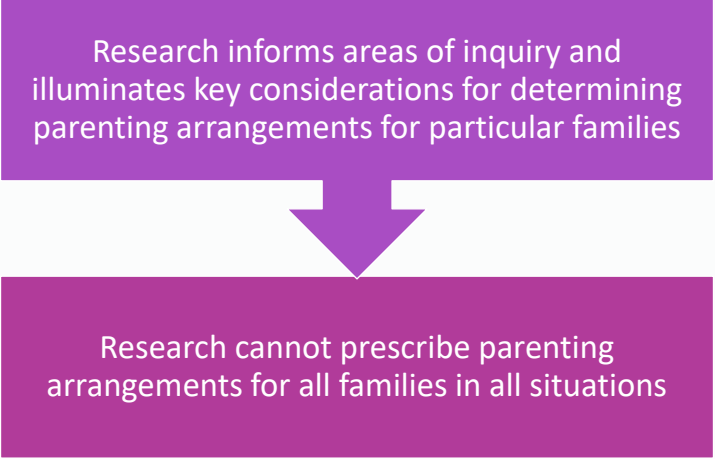
Practice Tip: Have a current copy of a research-based child development textbook in your library.

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	<h2>Social Science Literature</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pruett, M. K., & DiFonzo, J. H. (2014). AFCC Think Tank final report—Closing the gap: Research, policy, practice, and shared parenting. <i>Family Court Review</i>, 52, 152–174. • Steinbach, A., & Augustjin, L. (2022). Children’s Well-being in Sole and Joint Physical Custody Families. <i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>, 36 (2), 301-311. • Child Development Literature
	19

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<p>Using Research to Craft Parenting Plans</p>	
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<h2>Reality Check</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There is no research that supports an amount of time that is most beneficial for children to be with a parent post-separation ✓ Presumptions (shared care, approximation rule, primary residence) have been tried and failed ✓ Evidence does supports benefit to children of meaningful relationship with both parents ✓ The challenge: Balancing stability with meaningful involvement <p style="text-align: right;">21</p>
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	<h2>Parenting Plan Controversies</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General agreement that both parents should be meaningfully involved, but how to accomplish it? ➤ Research limitations regarding shared parenting time ➤ Misrepresentation (overgeneralization) of limited data and findings ➤ Read research carefully <p style="text-align: right;">22</p>

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	<h2>Consensus Points</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Research offers professionals the best available information without providing answers for individual cases.➤ When parents <u>choose</u> shared parenting arrangements, they report their children do better behaviorally, socially, academically, emotionally, than children in sole custody arrangements➤ This is true across countries and cultures for children preschool age and older
	23

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	<h2>However...</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ When there are vulnerable circumstances, we do not know the benefits of shared parenting.➤ Vulnerable circumstances: young children, high conflict, mental illness, violence, court mandated shared time
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	<h2>Shared vs Equal Parenting</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Lots of support for shared parenting (30% or more time)➤ We know little about equal time vs shared time
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	<h2>Factors to consider</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Parenting➤ Child temperament➤ Age of child➤ Conflict and quality of co-parenting relationship➤ Domestic Violence➤ Mental illness (untreated or resistant to treatment)➤ Severe substance misuse➤ Children with special needs➤ Broader coparenting and cultural environment
	26

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Cameron is a 6-year-old first grader. To craft a developmentally appropriate parenting time schedule for Cameron, an evaluator would need to know (check all that apply):


- A. Cameron's particular family circumstances
- B. The proper parenting schedule for Cameron's age
- C. Cameron's temperament, personality and unique needs
- D. Literature regarding Cameron's age and stage of development

Answer: A,C and D, NOT B

Comment: There is no single "right" or "right" parenting plan for any child.

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	<p>Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers</p>	

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Key Considerations

- Rapid period of development
- Need for caregiver consistency and responsiveness is high
- Involvement of both parents in caregiving fosters relationship development and secure attachment
- Children's temperaments vary
- Sensitive to displays of conflict

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Further Considerations

- Internal coping and self-soothing skills are not well developed
- Sense of time is not well developed
- Generally, more frequent exchanges are necessary to foster relationships with both parents
- Heightened coordination between parents is necessary
- Number of caregivers and child's overall schedule needs to be considered

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Parenting Plan Details

- How will caregiving routines be coordinated?
- How will caregiving information be exchanged?
- How will attendance at healthcare appointments and preschool activities be handled?

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Grace recently turned three years old. Her parents are separating after a relationship marked by arguing, poor problem-solving, and lack of mutual support. Grace attends preschool three mornings a week and is cared for by her maternal grandparents when she is not in preschool. Grace is healthy and developing well, but she is not yet fully potty trained, resists going to sleep in her own bed, is a picky eater, and is described as “strong-willed.” What provisions in the parenting plan might support Grace’s developmental needs?

- A. Defined behavioral expectations of the parents when they are in Grace’s presence
- B. Structured exchange of information about Grace’s toileting, sleeping, eating habits and notable behavioral incidents
- C. Protocol for attendance at healthcare and preschool meetings

Answer: A, B and C

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**School-age
Children
(ages 5–11)**


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<h2>Key Considerations</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development occurs across different domains: cognitive, social-emotional, physical ➤ School-age children understand time and schedules ➤ Sense of competency and confidence grows ➤ Concrete thinking dominates this cognitive stage of development 	
	<p>35</p>

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Piaget's conservation tasks with a typical child. Demonstrates concrete operations.



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	A few take-aways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Challenge and support are necessary for optimal development➤ Children become keen observers of parental conflict<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Alignments and allegiances more likely to form than at earlier ages❑ “Caught in the middle” and loyalty conflicts may arise
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	Further Considerations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Children often have views and preferences and want to be heard➤ Involvement of both parents in school, activities, experiences helps build strong relationships➤ Accounting for school schedules and activities in the parenting plan is necessary:<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Exchanges❑ Homework❑ Activities
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Which of the following are important considerations when crafting parenting plans for school-age children (check all that apply):

- A. Children generally do not want to be asked about their views and preferences at this age.
- B. Having one parent in charge of the child's homework and activities is a good idea at this age.
- C. Alignments and loyalty to one parent are more likely to form than at younger ages.
- D. Longer stretches of time with each parent are often appropriate.

Answer: C and D

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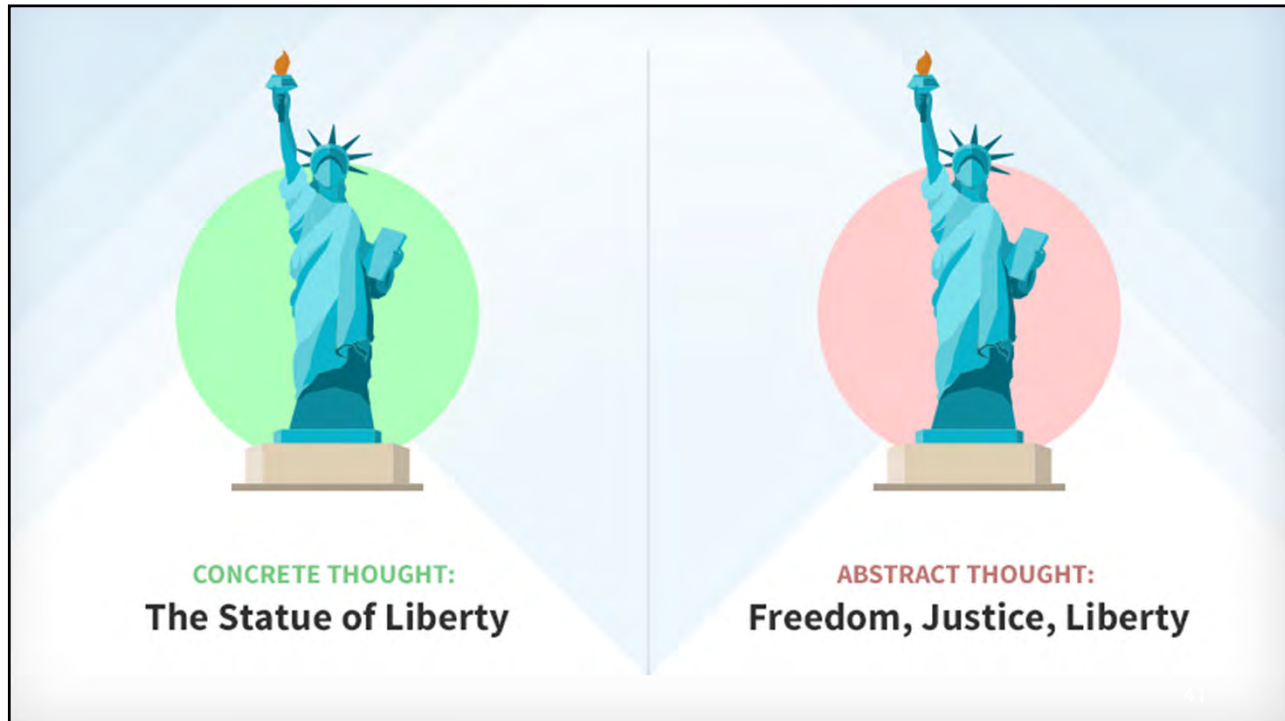
Adolescents (ages 12–18)

- Able to consider multiple perspectives
- Thinking becomes more logical and flexible
- Egocentrism (focus on self) diminishes over adolescence
- Forming identity while maintaining connection with family
- Rapid period of development
- Maturity continues to vary across domains
- Abstract reasoning matures



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	<h2>Key Considerations for Adolescents</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Desire for a “home base” or “flexibility” is common ➤ Demands in the teen’s life increase ➤ Parental responsiveness, warmth, demands and expectations still important, although independence and freedom increases ➤ Meaningful relationships with both parents still needed ➤ Clarity needed about who is responsible for the teen at all times
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Jen is a 13-year-old teen who is furious with her father for having had an affair which precipitated her parents' divorce. She complains that going back and forth between two homes will create a "huge inconvenience" for her and her dad is "selfish and does not deserve to have any time with her after what he did." Which of the following statements can probably be said about Jen:

- A. Due, in part, to age-appropriate egocentrism, Jen may be having difficulty "seeing the big picture" regarding the value of both parents' involvement in her life.
- B. Teenagers "think with their feet" and Jen will rebel if parenting time is required against her wishes.
- C. When she enters high school, Jen will be too busy to shuffle between homes.
- D. A key developmental task for Jen is forming her identity while maintaining connection with her family.

Answer: A and D

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<p>Children with Special Needs</p>	
	<p>44</p>

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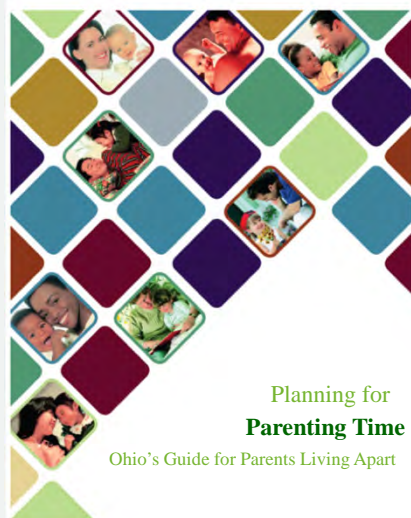
Key Considerations

- Recognize challenges of two homes for children with special needs.
- Recognize greater need for coparent communication and coordination.
- Consider parent availability, resources and proficiency to provide necessary interventions and structure.
- Consider steps that might be taken to reduce challenges and likelihood that those steps will be successful.

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Guides to Parenting Time Schedules



Consider pros and cons and family's unique circumstances

Ohio's Guide is similar to many others, e.g., Arizona, Ontario, etc.

Also see: AAML Child Centered Residential Schedules

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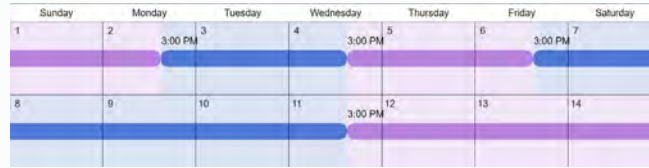
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Examples of Parenting Time Schedules

Week On-Week Off



2-2-5-5




2-2-3







AAML's Child Centered Residential Schedules Appendix B


Plan	Description	Page Number	24 Months - 3 years	Preschool	Early School Age	Later School Age
1	Three periods of 4-6 hours spaced throughout the week. No overnights.		X	X		
2	One period of 4-6 hours and two non-consecutive overnights each week.		X	X	X	
3	Equal time sharing and child isn't away from either parent more than two consecutive overnights.		X	X	X	
4	Equal time sharing with two days/overnights with one parent followed by two days/overnights with the other parent followed by three days/overnights with the other parent, continuing over time.			X	X	X
5	Equal time sharing with two days/overnights with one parent followed by two days/overnights with the other parent, continuing over time.			X	X	X
6	One midweek dinner or overnight and three consecutive overnights every other weekend (Friday through Monday morning).				X	X
7	Five consecutive overnights in week one from Wednesday to Monday morning, followed by one optional midweek dinner or overnight in week two.				X	X
8	Four consecutive overnights in week one from Thursday to Monday morning, and two additional overnights in week two.				X	X
9	Equal time sharing with five consecutive overnights with one parent, followed by five consecutive overnights with the other parent. Then two consecutive overnights with one parent, followed by two consecutive overnights with the other parent.				X	X
10	Alternating weeks.					X

	<h2>Remember</h2>
	<p>“One size does not fit all”</p>
	<p>49</p>

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	<h2>Holidays, School Breaks, and Vacations</h2>			
	 <p>Value of structured and unstructured time</p>	 <p>Value of holiday traditions</p>	 <p>Necessity of clear structure to avoid conflict</p>	 <p>Impact on the regular schedule</p>
	<p>50</p>			


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	<h2>Holidays</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Define the holidays and their meaning and tradition within the family ➤ Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Alternate <input type="checkbox"/> Split <input type="checkbox"/> Double holidays <input type="checkbox"/> Fixed holidays ➤ Include start/stop days and times and transportation details
	51

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<p>David and Maria are divorcing after 10 years of marriage. They have two children, ages 7 and 9. The family celebrates traditional US holidays. What is the best option for David and Maria?</p> <p>A. The children will be with David on <u>(name of holiday)</u> from 9 am to 2 pm and with Maria from 2pm to 8 pm.</p> <p>B. The children will be with Maria on <u>(name of holiday)</u> in all even years, 9 am to 5 pm and with David in all odd years from 9 am to 5pm.</p> <p>C. The children will spend <u>(name of holiday)</u> with David each year and <u>(name of holiday)</u> with Maria each year.</p> <p>D. The children will celebrate <u>(name of holiday)</u> as it falls on the regular parenting time schedule.</p> <p>E. The best option takes into account the meaning and tradition of the holidays and is a good fit for the family and situation.</p> <p>Answer: E</p>
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	<h2>Summer Break and Vacations</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Define start and stop days and times of the summer parenting plan ➤ Will vacation parenting occur during summer parenting time or during specified vacation dates? ➤ Include notification details of specified vacation parenting dates
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	<h2>Transitions and Exchanges</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting child's transitions to other home ➤ Helping child understand the schedule ➤ Helping reduce sadness, anxiety, reluctance ➤ Exchanging belongings ➤ Cordial parent behavior at exchanges
	54

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	<h2 data-bbox="683 352 1260 394">Ensuring Peaceful Exchanges</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="699 443 1203 474">➤ Neutral location when conflict is high <li data-bbox="699 499 992 531">➤ Drop-offs vs Pick-ups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="737 556 1308 630">❑ Drop-ups generally preferred because they facilitate the transition <li data-bbox="737 655 1365 728">❑ Pick ups may be necessary for practical reasons or to increase timeliness <li data-bbox="699 753 1195 785">➤ Cordial parent behavior at exchanges
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<h2 data-bbox="250 1199 753 1234">Parent-Child Communication</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="233 1314 639 1346">➤ Phone/Video Calls/Text/Apps <li data-bbox="233 1371 399 1402">➤ Frequency <li data-bbox="233 1428 537 1459">➤ Who initiates the call <li data-bbox="233 1484 354 1516">➤ Timing <li data-bbox="233 1541 354 1572">➤ Length <li data-bbox="233 1598 358 1629">➤ Privacy <li data-bbox="233 1654 764 1686">➤ Parent control of devices in their home <li data-bbox="233 1711 857 1743">➤ Eating, sleeping, homework, discipline, chores 	
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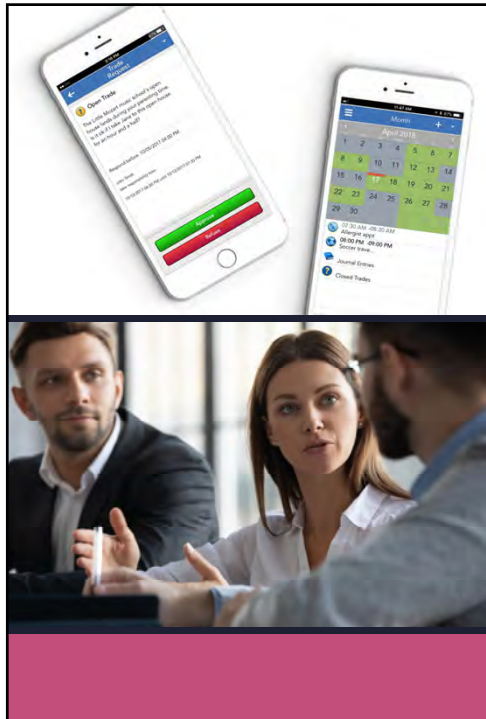
Provisions for parent-child communications that take place during non-parenting time should take into consideration:

- A. Age of the child
- B. Potential intrusiveness on other parent's parenting time
- C. Potential to foster and support parent-child relationships
- D. Potential to burden a child with a communication schedule
- E. Parental authority over a child's use of devices while in their care

Answer: All of the above

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Coparent Communication

- Coparent Communication Apps
- Consider features, costs, privacy and convenience
- Travel notification
 - When?
 - What information?
- Coparent business meetings (with or without a 3rd party)
 - Frequency, length location

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<p>Long Distance Parenting Plans</p>		
		<p>CLOSED DUE TO WEATHER</p>
	61	

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	<h2>Realities of Long-Distance Schedules</h2>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parenting time usually occurs in longer blocks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Break <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Break <input type="checkbox"/> Some other block of time (Fall break, Thanksgiving, etc.) ➤ More frequent parenting time possible in some cases ➤ Parenting time may occur in the child's primary community ➤ Virtual parenting time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Games, activities, shared shows/movies/tasks, helping with homework, projects, talking
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Step Up Parenting Plans

Considerations for Step-Up parenting. In L.Drozd, M. Saini, & N. Olesen (Eds). *Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied Research for the Family Courts* (2nd Ed., pp.535-555). New York: Oxford University Press.

See handout for a helpful, evidence informed rubric

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Chris and Terry have been divorced for four years in Ohio. They have shared parenting time of their three children ages 5, 7 and 9. There have been continuing conflicts between Chris and Terry. Chris is moving to California due to a job transfer for Chris's spouse. It has been decided that children will reside primarily with Terry in Ohio. Recommendations for a long-distance parenting plan would most likely include:

- A. Parenting time for Chris during the summer and breaks from school
- B. Parenting time for Chris in Ohio when Chris is able to be in Ohio
- C. Virtual parenting time
- D. Travel arrangements details
- E. Coparent communication details

Answer: A, B, C, D and E

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<h2>Final Tips</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Details, details, details ➤ Consider: How will this family live with this plan day-to-day? ➤ Does the parenting time schedule account for who is responsible for the child every minute of the year? 	
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	<h2>Resources</h2>
	<p>Association of Family and Conciliation Courts/AFCC: https://www.afccnet.org/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Guidelines • Webinars • Training Seminars • Conferences • Resources
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Other Webinars and Trainings

- APA Division 43 (and other divisions): <https://www.apadivisions.org/division-43>
- Concept Professional Training-Palo Alto University: <https://concept.paloaltou.edu/>
- The Steve Frankel Group, LLC: Online CE Courses for Mental Health Professionals: <https://www.sfrankelgroup.com/>

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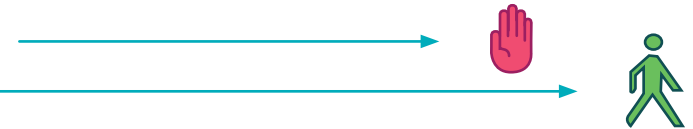
CONSIDERATIONS FOR STEP-UP PLANNING

WHEN AND HOW TO DETERMINE THE *RIGHT TIME*

	Fundamental Risks (in the past 6 months)	Corroboration?	Please Explain
1	Is there current intimate partner (domestic) violence in the home?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Is there a risk of abduction?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Is there current substance abuse by a parent or anyone living in the home?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Is there current child abuse, maltreatment, or neglect in the home?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Are there current unmanaged or untreated mental illness issues in the home?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Are there aspects of the child's world outside the family that raise safety concerns that would undercut a step-up plan?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	

If any of these considerations are present, a step-up is not appropriate at this time.

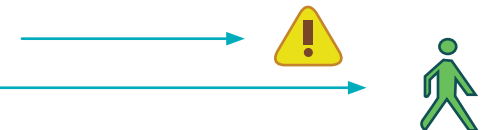
If none of these conditions are present, then continue to the next step.



	Stability or Change	Corroboration?	Please Explain
7	Have there been any changes in the child's world (e.g., school, family composition, significant family events, and parent availability as a result of work, health or other changes) within the past 4 months (2 months if the child is under age 3)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>	

If there are significant changes, that disrupt stability, a step-up may not be appropriate at this time.

If there are no, minimal, or insignificant changes, then continue to the next step.



	Initiation of Step-Up	One/Both Parents, Court, Other Professional, or Unknown?	Please Explain
1	Who is advocating for the step-up?		
2	Who is resisting the step-up?		

Action is Taken: Step-Up begins, and then one of the parents says it is not working

ASSESSING THE STEP-UP: AREAS TO EXPLORE, QUESTIONS TO ASK, AND RESOURCES NEEDED

Areas to Explore Questions to Ask	Corroboration?	Please Explain	Resources Needed
CHILD			
1 Is the child symptomatic (duration greater than 2 weeks): sleep or eating disruptions or dysregulation, social withdrawal, increased aggression, decreased concentration, school problems?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Pediatric consultation Mental health treatment (individual for child and/or family or parent-child)
2 Is child stressed by the frequency or spacing of the transitions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Co-parenting counseling Mediation Parenting coordination
3 Does child have a preference for a change? (consider relative to age developmental status).	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent-Child therapy Family therapy
PARENTS			
4 Is either parent symptomatic: depression, increased substance use, heightened fears/anxiety, cognitive disorganization, and/or increased impulsivity?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Individual mental health treatment
5 Is either parent engaging in substance abuse that interferes with sensitive and consistent parenting?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Substance abuse assessment & treatment Temporary step-down until treatment is established and progressing
6 Is either parent using the child as a confidante or support in an age-inappropriate manner: to keep them company, share secrets, provide information about the other parent?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Co-parenting counseling Individual mental health treatment for parent
7 Is the parent's disciplinary style overly harsh, rigid, and authoritarian?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching
8 Is either parent interfering with the child's participation in regular activities or not supporting homework during parenting time?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Mediation Parenting coordination
9 Are the parents' childrearing practices so divergent that the child is not receiving predictable, coherent care?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Co-parent counseling Mediation Parenting coordination

Areas to Explore Questions to Ask	Corroboration?	Please Explain	Resources Needed
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CO-PARENTS

10	Do the parents expose the child directly to their conflict: observing arguments, negative or denigrating comments made to the other parent?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Co-parent counseling High conflict parent group
11	Are parents unable to communicate effectively in a respectful, business-like manner about the child's activities, behaviors, health, and schooling? Eating, sleeping, and developmental gains are specific areas to be inquired about for infants and toddlers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Co-parent counseling High conflict parent group Mediation Parenting coordination
12	Is the parenting time schedule adhered to rigidly, with inadequate flexibility to allow for occasional changes, as needed by the child or either parent?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Co-parent counseling High conflict parent group Mediation Parenting coordination
13	Is either parent preventing or limiting the child's access to the other parent: parenting time is sabotaged; phoning/texting the other parent during parenting time is not allowed; parent is communicating with child so frequently during other parent's time that child has difficulty settling into the other parent's routines and caregiving?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Co-parent counseling High conflict parent group Mediation Parenting coordination Court involvement
14	Do parents make transitions difficult: not cordial to other parent; raise sensitive topics during transition times; create logistical roadblocks that hinder smooth transitions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Co-parent counseling Mediation Parenting coordination
15	Does either parent prohibit the child from discussing activities or experiences with the other parent: child's experience is ignored or closed down?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Co-parent counseling
16	Does either parent restrict the child's access to extended family members?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Parent coaching Co-parent counseling Mediation Parenting coordination

*If concerns are present and corroborated, then supportive resources must be put in place.
Modifications can be set out and tried while the resources are employed.*



The main consideration is whether the step-up is serving the child's growth and healthy development at the present time. If the child is showing a high level of stress that is interfering with school, behavioral, or emotional functioning, then step-down and make a plan to reassess in 4 months.



If concerns are not corroborated or do not reach a level of developmental concern, then the step-up should be continued and a time for reassessment set.



BOTTOM LINE

THE GOALS IN CONSIDERING THE STEP-UP ARE:

- A.** To consider the potential risks and potential benefits to the child foremost and the parents secondarily;
- B.** Put into place resources/supports that are needed to support the family in a successful step-up; and
- C.** To set a time frame to reassess or try the step-up again