

Differences in Parenting Plans and Schedules

NON-ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

1. Specific days/times for schedule

Vagueness in schedule is more permissible [Example: parents have a call each week to discuss the schedule.]

Purpose: Eliminate the opportunity for coercion, need for contact, and possible abuse.

2. Flexibility in Schedule

This is often possible and may change in the best interest of the children [Example: Can we switch weekends so I can take the children to my family reunion? As long as it is not too frequent, it is not usually an issue.]

Purpose: Eliminate the opportunity for coercion and creating confusion in the other parent's life.

3. Lateness/Earliness at Parenting Time Exchanges

Usually it is alright as long as it does not become disruptive in a parent's life. Set standard of what is allowable.

Purpose: Eliminate possibility of abusive controlling and disrupting the Other parent's life. Create boundaries.

NON-ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Specific days/times for schedule

Vagueness in schedule is inappropriate and could be dangerous. Specific days and times are needed. Such terms as "liberal" or "reasonable" parenting time are unwise and need to be defined.

Flexibility in Schedule

No flexibility with standards and schedule well-defined. One Often leads to other larger and more frequent requests.

Lateness/Earliness at Parenting Time Exchanges

Permission to be late typically leads to an abuse of this rule. Define specific rules about how often the parent may be late, what is an acceptable amount of time, are what are consequences.

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

4. Communication

Need to define what are appropriate Topics. Where and when may they be Discussed. At the door, over the phone, In person, not in front of the children, or In a public location. Going beyond the Topic of the children into "small talk" or other topics is more allowable when abuse is not a factor.

Communication

What are appropriate topics and when and where may they be discussed. Frequent discussions will lead to an attempt persuade, and possible anger. A conversation that begins with the child's school will drift into inappropriate topics such as the other parent's new significant other, how frequently a baby-sitter is being used, child support, etc. Because boundaries all too often are not respected, the individual who has been abused needs to know what to expect and what she will do if the conversation becomes inappropriate. May choose to use a co-parent website such as Our Family Wizard.

Purpose: Set boundaries for co-parent relationship, and establish consequences if a violation occurs. [Example: end the conversation, get an Order for Protection, go back to court.

5. Phone Calls

It is appropriate to define reasons for a call, times for a call, and allow parents to establish frequency. Is it appropriate to give messages to the children through the other parent?

Phone Calls

The abuser now only has two occasions to abuse the other parent – on the phone and at the exchange for parenting time. Need to clearly define what time, how often, who the call is for, especially is an OFP is in place. What is the proper course of action if phone calls are inappropriate.

Purpose: Reduce amount of contact. Establish boundaries and expectations if violations occur.

NON-ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

6. Holidays

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Holidays

Usually need to be defined better than "alternate" holidays [Example: What if Mother's Day falls on Father's Weekend?] If flexibility or vagueness is necessary because of changing work schedules, may be more acceptable in a non-abusive relationship.

Clearly define all holidays and how they will be shared. Not appropriate to "share" each holiday. Clearly define times, dates, when children will be picked up, and when they will be returned.

Purpose: Establish boundaries and eliminate areas of future conflict.

7. **Balance of Power**

Less important in non-abusive situation as most parents have some level of respect for each other. [Example: Dad calls mom to ask if children can go to the circus next weekend even if it is her scheduled time. Mother has power to say yes or no]

Balance of Power

Very necessary to define because abuser feels he has the power and will assume it or attempt to coerce the other Parent.

8. **Alcohol/Drug Use**

Less frequently an issue, but when it is parents are usually able to reach an agreement about what is needed for each to trust that the children are safe.

Alcohol/Drug Use

Frequently an issue. If rules cannot be established on appropriate use before and during parent time, then the non-user must be clear about what action will be taken if alcohol/drug use is suspected.

Purpose: Provide safety and correct role modeling for the children, an eliminate a possible negative influence which may result in conflict at the time of the exchange.