



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

John Nevin, Communications Director

Ph: 517-373-0129 Twitter: @MISupremeCourt FB: facebook.com/misupremecourt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supreme Court Announces Updated Michigan Parenting Time Guideline

New tool could benefit 36,000 children annually, increases accessibility for self-represented parents

LANSING, MI, March 3, 2021 – The Michigan Supreme Court today announced the release of its Friend of the Court Bureau’s (FOCB) updated [Michigan Parenting Time Guideline](#) to aid parents in setting up parenting time schedules. The Guideline reflects increased accessibility (e.g., use of plain language, visual representations of schedules and concepts) and acknowledgement that every family and every child has unique circumstances and needs.

The FOCB estimates that this tool could benefit at least 36,000 children annually in Michigan, whose families are affected by parenting time ordered in a new divorce, custody, paternity, or support case. Even more children are affected by modified parenting time orders on existing cases each year.

“Courts are resources for their communities,” said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack. “This valuable, commonsense tool reflects the needs of families today and empowers them to design a parenting time schedule that best works for them and keeps them connected.”

Some highlights of the [Guideline](#):

- 14 sample schedules;
- Focus on the developmental needs of children at different ages;
- Information on long-distance parenting time, as well as parenting time for incarcerated and institutionalized parents; and,
- Details about how to address domestic violence situations.

With the launch of this revision to the Michigan Parenting Time Guideline, Michigan joins other states, including Arizona and Oregon, in offering a tool accessible even to self-represented parents to help families create a parenting time schedule that will benefit their children.

“One of the biggest challenges my agency faces is supporting and helping families with difficulties surrounding coparenting and establishing parenting time orders. This new Guideline is a breath of fresh air. It will allow families, specifically noncustodial parents, feel like they are being more supported than in the past and that the child is the priority,” said Shon Hart, Executive Director, InvolvedDad, and public member of the Friend of the Court Bureau Advisory Committee.

The new [Guideline](#) reflects input from an advisory committee that was convened by the FOCB and included judges, family law attorneys, referees, and friends of the court (FOC) from across Michigan. The committee also received help from the Michigan State University Chance at Childhood Clinic to rewrite the Michigan Guideline.

“Borrowing from the success and experience of the best practices from around the country, the Guideline helps parents, friends of the court, practitioners and the courts develop individualized parenting plans that serve a child’s unique circumstances, developmental and individual needs,” said advisory committee member Shelley Kester, attorney, Wilson & Kester, PLLC; and Executive Committee member, State Bar of Michigan Family Law Section.

State law (MCL 552.519) requires the FOCB to provide Michigan FOC offices with guidelines for enforcing parenting time and to assist them in investigations, and training to equip FOCs in alternative dispute resolution between parties and to make recommendations to the court.

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