

**NEWAYGO COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT SERVICES
FRIEND OF THE COURT DIVISION**

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**SUPERVISED
PARENTING TIME
POLICY**

Adopted:

STATE OF MICHIGAN 27 TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT NEWAYGO COUNTY	SUPERVISED PARENTING TIME POLICY	FOC POLICY NO: 04-2002 ADOPTED:
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POLICY

In some cases, concern arises about the safety or well being of children during parenting time (visitation). In these cases, supervised parenting time can assist in managing contact between parents and their children. Given the fact that parenting time with a non-custodial parent is favorable to the court, supervised parenting time should only occur when all other methods of ensuring a child’s well-being during parenting time have been considered. The primary purpose of supervised parenting time is to provide for the safety of the children. The welfare of the child(ren) is the main concern in determining the manner in which supervision is provided.

There are three generally accepted means of providing supervised parenting time. The particular method selected for supervised parenting time varies with the reason for the supervision. For example, if the supervised parenting time is ordered to assist in establishing a relationship between a parent who has been absent from a child’s life, the supervised plan will be quite different than if the supervised parenting time is ordered due to physical or sexual abuse of the child(ren). The type of supervised parenting time selected should reflect the goals to be accomplished.

PROCEDURE

- I. Agency Parenting Time
 - a. Agency parenting time is parenting time which occurs in a supervised setting to ensure protection of the child(ren). An agency may be used in cases with a history of substance abuse, child abuse or domestic abuse. Common examples of agencies that may provide supervised parenting time include: Friend of the Court, family and children’s services, counseling centers, substance abuse or other treatment centers and programs available through domestic violence agencies.
 - b. Parenting time at an agency occurs only when no other means of protecting a child may be appropriate. Agency parenting time may be used in conjunction with therapy or parenting skills training designed to provide the parent with skills necessary to move into unsupervised visits or custody.
 - c. The agency involved should employ qualified individuals who are capable of enforcing rules designed to ensure the safety of the child(ren). The following are the rules and guidelines adopted by the 27th Circuit Court for agency supervised parenting time:
 - i. Any and all physical contact between the child and the parent must be initiated by the child, unless otherwise approved by the agency.
 - ii. Whispering (or otherwise speaking in low tones with the intent of concealing the conversation) and note passing must not occur between the parent and child during supervised parenting time.

- iii. The parent must not initiate discussion with the child(ren) concerning any alleged abuse or use manipulative techniques to extract any information from the child(ren).
- iv. Discussion regarding adult problems such as court proceedings or parental disagreements are not permitted in front of the child(ren).
- v. If the parent wants to give a gift to the child(ren), the parent must discuss with the supervisor in advance.
- vi. The language used during the parenting time must be a language in which the supervisor is fluent.
- vii. There should be no discussion, derogatory comments, or questioning of the child(ren) concerning the other parent, the other parent's relationships or the other parent's activities.
- viii. No discussion concerning future living arrangements or changes in custody or parenting time should occur except as determined in advance between the parent and the agency.
- ix. The child(ren) shall not be used to send any messages to the other parent or family member or for the purpose of delivering any communication or document.
- x. The child(ren) shall not be questioned concerning where the child(ren) live(s) or go to school.
- xi. All directives and requests from staff shall be followed.
- xii. All parenting time shall occur only in areas designated for that purpose.
- xiii. No one other than the parent should be present at the center or in any area that is in direct view of the center unless arranged in advance as part of the therapy.
- xiv. No drugs or alcohol shall be brought to the agency, nor shall a parent appear at the agency under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

II. Third Party Supervision

- a. Third Party supervised parenting time is parenting time supervised by a friend, relative or other individual selected by the court. Third party supervision may be recommended in cases where circumstances indicate that monitoring is warranted, but agency intervention is not required, such as inadequate living arrangements, recent history of drug or alcohol abuse, or for a period of time in an effort to reacquaint the child(ren) and the non-custodial parent.
 - i. Third party supervision should occur mainly when it is accompanied by a plan for full restoration of an unsupervised plan within a certain period of time, or under specific conditions. If circumstances indicate the need for long term supervision, therapy or agency supervision may be more appropriate.
 - ii. The third party should be chosen by mutual agreement of the parties, shall be of an appropriate age and possess the necessary skills to supervise parenting time. The proposed supervisor must consent to be a supervisor. In the event the parties cannot agree on a supervisor, the parties shall submit names to each other and the Friend of the Court. The parties shall list reasons for their choices and against the choices of the other party. The Friend of the Court will then choose the supervisor.

- iii. The focus of third party parenting time is protection not therapy. The supervision should be adequate to safeguard the child(ren) from any harm that may occur because of a specific concern that has given rise to the supervision. Depending on the reason for the supervision, the supervision could be minimal, such as a requirement that the supervision take place only at a designated location, or the supervision could be more extensive, such as a requirement that the parenting time occur in the immediate presence of the third party supervisor or that the parenting time occur in the constant visual presence of the supervisor.

III. Therapeutic Parenting Time

- a. Therapeutic parenting time is the process of attaining a predetermined parenting time goal through the assistance of therapy. Examples include when a parent and child(ren) have not had contact for an extended period of time, either voluntarily or involuntarily, when facilitation of communication between a parent and child(ren) is necessary, or issues in the relationship between the parent and child(ren) need resolution.

OMISSIONS AND OVERSIGHTS

In the event a matter or situation arises that is not otherwise provided for in this policy, the office of the Newaygo County Friend of the Court shall have authority to render an opinion. The personnel of the Friend of the Court office, in reaching an opinion, shall rely on the Michigan Parenting Time Guideline, as published by the Michigan Supreme Court, and/or, the usual past practices of the Newaygo County Circuit Court.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED

DATE: _____

Honorable Terrence R. Thomas
Chief Circuit Judge of the 27th Circuit Court

DATE: _____

Honorable Anthony A. Monton
Circuit Judge of the 27th Circuit Court

DATE: _____

Honorable Graydon W. Dimkoff
Newaygo County Probate Judge, *assigned to the
Newaygo County Circuit Court Family Division*