

**DOS AND DON'TS**  
**KEEPING CHILDREN OUT OF THE MIDDLE IN A DIVORCE**

*Source: St. Clair County Probate Court pamphlet, Guidelines for Divorced and Separated Parents*

**I. Dos**

- A. Be discreet when you expose your children to any member of the opposite sex with whom you may be emotionally involved.
- B. Notify your spouse as soon as possible if you are unable to keep your parenting time schedule. It's unfair to keep your children waiting — and worse to disappoint them by not coming at all.
- C. Make your parenting time as pleasant as possible for your children by not questioning them regarding the activities of your spouse and by not making extravagant promises which you know you cannot or will not keep.
- D. Minimize the amount of time the children are in the care of strangers or relatives.
- E. Always work for the spiritual well-being, health, happiness and safety of your children.
- F. Make child support payments on time. It is unfair to the children for their support payments to be late.
- G. Treat each of your children equally.
- H. Do unto your children and your former spouse as you would have them do unto you if you were in the situation.

**II. Don'ts**

- A. Don't poison your child's mind against either the mother or father by discussing their shortcomings.
- B. Don't use your parenting time as an excuse to continue arguments with your spouse.

- C. Don't spend time with your children if you have been drinking.
- D. Don't deny parenting time because child support has not been received.
- E. Don't fail or refuse to pay child support because of parenting time problems.
- F. Don't make promises to the children you cannot or will not keep.
- G. Don't attempt to cut off the children's communication with their grandparents or other relatives or friends with whom they have a close relationship.
- H. Don't lose your temper or become involved in unpleasantness in the presence of the children

### **Children's Bill of Rights**

1. The right to be treated as important human beings, with unique feelings, ideas and desires, not as a source of argument between parents.
2. The right to a continuing relationship with both parents and the freedom to receive love from and express love for both.
3. The right to express love and affection for each parent without having to stifle that love because of fear of disapproval by the other parent.
4. The right to know that their parents' decision to divorce is not their responsibility and that they may primarily be with one parent and spend time with the other.
5. The right to continuing care and guidance from both parents.
6. The right to honest age appropriate answers to questions about the changing family relationships.
7. The right to know and appreciate what is good in each parent without one parent degrading the other.
8. The right to have a relaxed, secure relationship with both parents without being placed in a position to manipulate one parent against the other.
9. The right to have the custodial parent not undermine parenting time by suggesting tempting alternatives or by threatening to withhold parenting time as a punishment for the children's wrongdoing.
10. The right to be able to experience regular and consistent parenting time and the right to know the reason for canceled visits.