

Recommended Parental Communication Guidelines

1. Parents should abide by the following Communication Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to assist each parent in governing the tone and content of his/her own communication; however, in the event either parent believes the other has violated the guidelines in any way contact our office.

a. Email. The parents should use email as their primary form of non-emergency communication.

b. Child-Focused. All communications between the parents should be child-focused. The general purpose of parenting communications shall be to inform the other parent or to inquire of the other parent regarding a matter directly related to the children.

c. Future-Oriented. Messages should relate to future events or actions needed, decisions to be made, or specific information to be provided. Messages shall not rehash past events (other than to notify a parent regarding something that has occurred related to the child, such as a medical event). Try to message at least 48 hours before a response is needed.

d. Responses. Messages should be responded to within 48 hours of receipt, even if such response is simply to acknowledge receipt of an email that provides information without requesting input or other information. If a message is urgent or time-sensitive, this should be noted in the subject line of the message, so the other parent is aware that they are being asked to respond in a shorter time frame. If a parent requests input or information that the other parent believes will require more than 48 hours to respond, the other parent shall notify the first parent within the 48-hour window that they will need additional time and an estimate of when the response will be sent.

e. Respect. All language is to be respectful. That includes no name-calling, no criticisms or critical comments, no abusive language, no sarcasm/snarky comments, no disparaging remarks, no threats and no curse words. Write all messages as if third parties (e.g., Judge) are reading them, because they may.

f. Spouses or Significant Others. Spouses or significant others should not be involved in messages at all. They should not send messages and they should not be copied on messages which are sent to the other parent.

g. Communication to Third Parties. Emails and other communications to third parties regarding the children (e.g., teachers, medical providers, counseling providers, extracurricular activity leaders/coaches, etc.) should abide by the provisions of the “Respect” provision set forth above, whether or not the other parent is copied on the email. This means that neither parent shall make statements about the other parent that are abusive, critical, sarcastic or otherwise intended to portray the parent in a negative light. All such communications should remain child-focused.

h. Financial Issues. Do not address financial issues in messages that involve child-related care issues. This needs to be handled separately. Confusing the care of the children and the financial issues impedes the focus of the daily care of children.

i. Text Messages. Text messages should be limited to urgent use only. They are to be used for emergencies and last-minute schedule changes due to external elements causing changes, like traffic, an event running later than expected, etc. Text may also be used for the limited purpose of a parent notifying the other of his/her arrival for a curbside parenting exchange. Other use may promote ineffective communication that is not thought out and will create further confusion or conflict.

j. No Communication Through Children. Neither parent shall communicate with the other parent during the time that a parent is video chatting or speaking to the children. This includes communication directly to the other parent as well as communication through the children (e.g., “Tell Mom...” or “Ask Dad...”). If a parent has an issue to address with the other parent, this shall be communicated through email.

k. Do Not Share Communications Between Parents with Children. Neither parent may show the children any manner of communication between the parents, nor shall they allow any third party to do so.