

Holiday Parenting Time

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The holidays can be a special time of year to spend with family and friends. It can also be a stressful time with so much to do. Dealing with holiday parenting schedules can cause additional stress and unwanted conflict between separated and divorced parents. Including a specific holiday schedule in your parenting plan can help both parents plan for the upcoming year, make special arrangements when necessary, and encourage cooperation when possible.

A holiday schedule should take precedence over regular weekend/weekday scheduled parenting time. The Court will seek to divide the holidays between the parties. Before considering how the holidays will be divided, a list of the specific holidays to be included in the holiday parenting schedule should be created. Some of the holidays that have been included in parenting plans include:

Easter	Father's Day	Halloween	Christmas Day
Mother's Day	Fourth of July	Thanksgiving	New Year's Eve
Memorial Day	Labor Day	Christmas Eve	New Year's Day

Some parenting plans also include the following holidays: Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln's birthday, President's Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, the child's birthday, the parent's birthday, and Black Friday.

A division of the holidays can come in many different forms. While there are some "standard" holiday schedules that can be used, they can also be customized to fit the specific situations of each family. Here are some examples to consider:

1. Alternate even/odd years for the entire holiday: Each parent has holiday parenting time on some specific holidays in even years and the other parent has parenting time on those specific holidays in odd years. Each parent has parenting time for the entire day during their respective year.

For example: In even years, Mother has Mother's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Day and Father has Easter, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Halloween, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

In odd years, Father has Father's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Day and Mother has Easter, Memorial Day, Mother's Day, Halloween, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

2. Divide each holiday: Each parent has holiday parenting time on every holiday for a portion of the day.

For example: Father shall have parenting time every holiday from 8:00a.m. until 2:00p.m. and Mother shall have parenting time every holiday from 2:00p.m. until 8:00p.m.

3. Assign each holiday to a parent: Each holiday is assigned to one parent to have every year for the entire day.

For example: Mother shall have holiday parenting time on Mother's Day, Labor Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve/Day every year and Father shall have

parenting time on Father's Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve every year.

4. If no holiday parenting time schedule is put in place, then the parties will simply follow the regular weekday/weekend parenting time schedule regardless of whether the day is a holiday or not.

For example: If Mother usually has parenting time on Tuesdays and a holiday falls on a Tuesday, she would still have parenting time. If Father has parenting time on alternating weekends and the holiday falls during his weekend, he would still have parenting time.

Holiday parenting time schedules are not one-size-fits-all. The examples above can also be combined and applied to each holiday differently depending on your situation. You may have cultural or religious affiliations where you observe holidays that are not included in the list above. You may live in a different state from the other parent. You also may have specific holiday traditions that you want your child(ren) to continue to enjoy each year. That is why it is always a good idea to discuss the holiday parenting schedule with an attorney to make sure the most appropriate schedule is put in place.