

# NPO Ohio Parenting Time Rules Report 2020

## I. Introduction

### A. *About National Parents Organization*

[National Parents Organization](#) (NPO) advocates for children’s true best interests after parental separation or divorce. We are working to improve the lives of children and strengthen society by protecting every child’s right to the love and care of both parents after separation or divorce. We seek better lives for children by reforming the norms of separated parenting. One crucial facet of our work is family court reform that establishes equal rights and responsibilities for fathers and [www.sharedparenting.org](http://www.sharedparenting.org).

### B. *Description of project*

The Ohio Revised Code requires each Ohio court of common pleas to adopt “standard parenting time guidelines” for dividing children’s time between the parents when parents are living apart ([ORC 3109.51\(F\)\(2\)](#)). Courts are empowered to deviate from this guideline schedule based on a number of statutorily-specified factors. These guidelines serve as a baseline for establishing a parenting time schedule and, in most cases, are explicitly specified as a default schedule, to be imposed when parents cannot agree on a different schedule.

In 2018, NPO undertook the first-ever study of the standard parenting time guidelines of each of Ohio’s 88 county courts of common pleas. This 2020 report updates the results of that previous study, highlighting the changes that some Ohio courts of common pleas have made to their guidelines.

NPO believes that the standard parenting time guidelines adopted by courts play a very significant role in determining the parenting practices of separated parents,<sup>1</sup> perhaps especially when parents come to the court without legal representation, which they frequently do in divorce and paternity cases. While parents can have reasonable confidence that courts will approve most schedules that are mutually agreed to by the parents, the default schedules influence parental choices;

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<sup>1</sup> Research shows that default options significantly influence individuals’ choices. See, for example, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, Penguin Books (2009).

furthermore, parental agreements are “made in the shadow” of these default schedules. NPO was motivated to undertake the 2018 study and, now, this 2020 study because Ohio counties’ standard parenting time rules strongly influence the actual schedules parents follow and those parenting arrangements are instrumental in determining the well-being of children of divorced and separated parents.

***It is important to emphasize that the Ohio Parenting Time Rule Project is not an evaluation of Ohio counties’ domestic relations courts’ actual patterns of awarding parenting time or the actual behavior of parents, which sometimes diverges from court orders.*** Courts do not compile records of the frequency with which any given parenting time schedule is ordered.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, there is no feasible way of determining how frequently courts in *any* county order a default (or any other) parenting time schedule. NPO’s Ohio Parenting Time Rule Project is an evaluation of the *default* parenting time rules that Ohio county courts provide.

### **C. Brief summary of results**

In the two years since the last *NPO Ohio Parenting Time Report*, there has been some significant progress. As we will detail below, eight Ohio counties have updated their local parenting time rules. All of these changes have been significant improvements, benefiting the families in these counties who are dealing with the difficulties of divorcing.

However, the overall picture is still both bleak and shocking. The vast majority of Ohio county courts of common pleas have not updated their rules in light of the best scientific research on child well-being when parents are living separately. For reasons explained below, the NPO study focuses on “ordinary parenting time”, which we define as non-vacation, non-holiday time, and examines only the schedules that apply to “local” parenting time, for parents living in what the court considers close proximity. With respect to this ordinary parenting time, NPO has determined that:

- Fifty-eight of Ohio’s 88 counties have a parenting schedule that allows the children only two overnights and 60 hours *or less* with one of their parents in a two-week period. This means that the children are with their non-residential parent less than 20% of the ordinary parenting time. None of these counties’ schedules provide for the children to be with the non-residential parent on a school night. (One other Ohio county provides a schedule only slightly enhanced from this outdated model, by adding one additional overnight with the non-residential parent in a two-week period. This still accords the children just 20% of ordinary parenting time with one of their parents.)
- Twelve Ohio counties provide default schedules that allow the children 4-5 overnights with the non-residential parent in a two-week period, and substantially more time with the non-residential parent, between 25% and 30% of the time.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a significant problem. NPO strongly recommends that Ohio courts handling child custody cases be required, by statute or Supreme Court rule, to maintain records of the division of parenting time, tracked by overnights or equivalent, for all cases of divorce involving minor children and for paternity cases, and to compile and publish these statistics annually, separating marital from non-marital cases and agreed judgments from court-imposed judgments.

- As of August 2020, six Ohio counties provide default schedules that allow the children equal, or nearly equal, time with each parent. This is twice the number of counties that did so in 2018.
- Eleven Ohio counties provide multiple schedules for children of the same age groups with none identified as the default schedule. Six of these counties include as options one or more schedules that allow the children equal time with each parent.

## II. Parenting Time and Child Well-being

Divorce or separation of parents is an [adverse childhood experience](#), which can, if not handled properly, contribute to long-term health and behavioral problems for children. There is a large and growing body of scientific evidence establishing that, when parents are living separately, the best strategy for minimizing the risk to children is to ensure that both parents are kept fully engaged in the children's lives, including being directly involved with the day-to-day child care responsibilities. (See the NPO website for citations and links to some of the most [recent, compelling research articles](#) on shared parenting. NPO has also made available, at no cost, videos from the most significant conference ever held on child-well-being and separated parenting. These videos of world-renowned researchers reporting on the most compelling contemporary research—research that clearly demonstrates the benefits of establishing presumptions of equal shared parenting<sup>3</sup>—are available at [www.sharedparenting.net](http://www.sharedparenting.net).)

What this research shows is that, while divorce is an adverse childhood experience, children of divorced parents who share physical custody to a very significant degree do not suffer long-term adverse effects. In fact, on all measures of child well-being, they score about as well as children of parents living together. And they score *much higher* than children raised in sole physical custody arrangements. *The adverse effects of divorce for child well-being are caused largely not by parental separation but by parental deprivation.*

This research confirms what common sense has always declared: *both* parents matter! We harm our children by placing one parent in a secondary, and marginalized, role.

With respect to the value of shared physical custody, two sorts of cases deserve special discussion. Those unfamiliar with the research often concede that shared physical custody is best in many cases; but they believe it is not appropriate for infants and toddlers, and they believe it is not appropriate when parents are in conflict, including simply about whether to engage in shared parenting.

- ***Shared Physical Custody of Infants and Toddlers:*** Recent research endorses the value even to infants and toddlers of spending significant time with each parent, including overnights.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Fabricius, William V. "[Equal Parenting Time: The Case for a Legal Presumption](#)," *The Oxford Handbook of Children and the Law*, ed. by James G. Dwyer, Oxford University Press, 2020 (DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190694395.013.22)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Warshak, R. "[Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children: A Consensus Report](#)," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20(2014) No. 1, 46 – 67; and, Fabricius, William V. and Go Woon Suh, "[Should Infants and toddlers Have Frequent Overnight Parenting Time with Fathers? The Policy Debate and New Data](#)," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(2017) No. 1, 68 – 84.

Infants, toddlers, and very young children perceive time differently than do older children and need more frequent times with each parent in order to develop a strong bond. This means that it is desirable for the parenting schedule to provide shorter and more frequent times with each parent. It does *not* mean that children should be in the care of one parent significantly less than the other.

- **Shared Physical Custody in Parental Conflict Cases:** Many who are unfamiliar with recent research acknowledge that shared physical custody is beneficial to children when parents are able to cooperate closely and co-parent in harmony, but believe it is inappropriate when parents are in conflict. Furthermore, failure to agree on shared physical custody is often taken as dispositive evidence that parents can't co-parent their children. Contemporary research undermines this view.<sup>5</sup> In fact, even when parents are in (non-violent) high-conflict relationships, shared physical custody is beneficial to children.

### III. Methodology and Limitations

#### A. Scope

NPO's review of Ohio counties' parenting time rules was restricted to what we call 'ordinary parenting time', which we define as non-vacation, non-holiday time. There are two reasons for this. First, including vacation and holiday time renders the analysis significantly more complex. But, much more importantly, the value of parenting time is not measured merely in hours or overnights. What is important in order for children to have a full parent/child relationship with both parents is for both parents to be engaged in the ordinary tasks of child rearing: providing meals, ensuring that homework is done, getting children ready for school, being involved in the children's routine activities. Holidays and vacations are, by definition, exceptions to the ordinary rhythms of family life. To the degree that a child's time with a parent is restricted to these times, the parent is not fully engaged in the child rearing activities. Accordingly, NPO focused this study on ordinary parenting time.

Because the feasibility of parents sharing equally in the physical custody of their children depends on the distance between the parents' households, this study is restricted to an examination of the county court's rules that apply for parents living in close proximity, which is determined differently by different counties.

#### B. Counties Age-Specific Parenting Time Schedules

Some Ohio counties employ parenting time guidelines that are age-specific, offering different schedules for children of different ages; others do no. To compare the parenting time rules of

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<sup>5</sup> See the meta-analyses, based on scores of studies, provided by Dr. Linda Nielsen in these two articles: Nielsen, Linda. "[Joint Versus Sole Physical Custody: Outcomes for Children Independent of Family Income of Parental Conflict](#)," *Journal of Child Custody* DOI: 10.1080/15379418.2017.1422414; and, Nielsen, Linda. "[Re-Examining the Research on Parental Conflict, Coparenting, and Custody Arrangements](#)," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 23(2017)2, 211-231. See also Dr. Nielsen's presentation at the *2017 International Conference on Shared Parenting* available at [www.sharedparenting.net/videos/dr-linda-neilsen/](http://www.sharedparenting.net/videos/dr-linda-neilsen/).

counties with age-specific schedules with those counties with schedules that are not age-specific, NPO chose the age category that covered the broadest range of ages. In each case, we have indicated the age category that was used in evaluating the parenting time rule.

### **C. Gathering Data**

NPO collected current local parenting time rules from each of Ohio's 88 counties. Often, these were available on the county court's website. For those counties that did not post their local rules on the Internet, NPO acquired copies from [the Ohio Supreme Court's page of local rules](#) or requested, and received, copies by email.

### **D. Data validation**

The data collected were verified by two NPO researchers, working independently, and reconciling any discrepancies in their analyses. After the data were verified internally, NPO shared the data with the Ohio Judicial Conference. At NPO's request, the Ohio Judicial Conference shared the data with all Ohio county courts that handle domestic relations cases. NPO requested that these courts review the data to ensure the accuracy of the data on which NPO's evaluation would be made. Just three county courts responded to this request.

NPO is committed to ensuring the accuracy of the data on which its analysis and grading are based. Reports of errors or material changes in courts' local parenting time rules should be sent by email to the report's lead author, [Donald C. Hubin](#), Ph.D. The [online interactive map](#) associated with this report has been and will continue to be updated in a timely fashion as we learn of changes to courts parenting time schedules.

### **E. Criteria for Evaluation**

**Time and Overnights:** The focus of NPO is on improving child well-being by promoting the true sharing of parental rights and responsibilities when parents live apart. Accordingly, the primary factors on which NPO's evaluation is based are the time and number of overnights that children were accorded with the non-residential parent in a two-week period. The period of two weeks was chosen because it provides an accurate, representative sample of the division of parenting time and overnights during ordinary parenting time.

**Parental Equality - Language and Concepts:** In addition, NPO seeks to promote parental equality. Accordingly, our evaluation takes into account whether the parenting time rule uses language that denigrates one parent's status with respect to the children. Except in unusual cases, parents do not visit with their children and language that describes a parent's time with a child as 'visitation' is offensive and demeaning. It encourages the mistaken perception that one parent is the *real* parent and the other has a second-class status as a parent. Our courts should know better than to characterize post-separation parenting in this way—and they should have learned this decades ago. Nevertheless, 33 of Ohio's 88 counties' parenting time rules still contained significant references to one parent's time with the child as 'visitation'. We note, though, that since the 2018 Report, six

Ohio counties that then referred to time in the care of the non-residential parent as ‘visitation’ have largely purged their rules of this anachronistic language.<sup>6</sup>

More than a handful of county courts demonstrate that they have not really understood the research that led many states, including Ohio, to remove talk of ‘visitation’ when discussing time the child is in the care of a parent. Numerous local rules have statements such as:

- “Parenting time is a time for children to do things with the parent they do not reside with”;
- “Companionship is a time for children to be with the non-residential parent”; or,
- “Parenting time is an opportunity for the nonresidential parent to spend time with and be involved in the activities of the children”.

This avoids the use of ‘visitation’ language but does not engage in the conceptual change that the research supports. If one thinks the problem is only with the *word* ‘visitation’, it is easy to think of the change as a pointless nod to political correctness. In fact, the research is urging us to change the way we *think*—not simply the way we *talk*—about time children spend in the care of a parent.

Children have “parenting time” with *each* of their parents, not with only one. The contrast is not between *custody* and *parenting time* (understood as a euphemism for ‘visitation’). The only contrast is between the parenting time of one parent and the parenting time of the other parent. Whether or not these periods are equal in length, they should be recognized by the law as being equal in the nature of the relationship and the parenting taking place.

**Age Sensitivity:** Research confirms the commonsense judgment that age-sensitive parenting schedules are appropriate. Infants and toddlers need more frequent time with each parent in order to bond with the parent. As children get older, their relationship with each parent can sustain longer periods apart. In light of the research supporting age-sensitive parenting schedules, NPO considers it a positive factor when a county’s parenting time rule is *appropriately* age sensitive.<sup>7</sup>

Forty-two of Ohio’s 88 counties’ standard parenting time schedules are age specific—providing different schedules for children of different ages. The age categories vary widely among these 42 counties. Several of these schedules are *minimally* age sensitive, with very crude age categories.<sup>8</sup> This is not the sort of age-sensitivity that is supported by research on child well-being. Furthermore, being appropriately age sensitive does not mean depriving young children of significant time with each of their parents. Doing so is not supported by research on outcomes for children; the research

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<sup>6</sup> These counties are: Adams, Carroll, Holmes, Seneca, Stark, and Van Wert.

<sup>7</sup> Again, see, for example, Warshak, R. “[Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children: A Consensus Report](#),” *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20(2014) No. 1, 46 – 67; and, Fabricius, William V. and Go Woon Suh, “[Should Infants and toddlers Have Frequent Overnight Parenting Time with Fathers? The Policy Debate and New Data](#),” *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(2017) No. 1, 68 – 84.

<sup>8</sup> For example: Franklin County (birth - 18 months, 18 months - 18 years); Hancock County (birth - 14 years, 14 years - 18 years); Harrison County (birth - 6 months, 6 months - 18 years); Highland County (birth - 1 year, 1 year - 18 years); Knox (birth - 2 years, 2 years - 18 years); Pickaway County (birth - 12 months, 12 months - 18 years); Shelby County (birth - 12 years, 13 years - 18 years); Washington County (birth - 2 months, 2 months - 1 year, 1 year - 18 years).

supports shorter gaps between the child being with each parent, not less time or less frequent time with one of the parents.

**Parental Equality - Transportation:** NPO believes that both parents have a responsibility to facilitate their children's opportunity to enjoy time with each parent. While it might be reasonable to have a parent provide all transportation for short, midweek parenting time in those cases where that parent does not exercise this time at his or her own home, it is inappropriate to impose on only one parent *all* of the responsibility for the exercise of parenting time.

Fifty-seven of the counties' local rules specify that the transportation of the children as they move between their homes with each of their parents is to be shared equally (up from 54 in 2018). Eleven counties' rules specify that transportation is to be shared equally except for short evening periods, when the non-residential parent is responsible for picking the children up and returning them (up from 8 in 2018). Ten county rules do not explicitly specify which parent is responsible for transportation (down from 12 in 2018). Unfortunately, 10 counties have rules specifying that the non-residential parent is responsible for *all* of the transportation to allow the children to benefit from the care and companionship of each of the parents.<sup>9</sup> This does, however, represent an improvement over 2018 when 14 counties considered the transportation to facilitate parenting time with the nonresidential parent to be solely the responsibility of that parent.<sup>10</sup>

**Parental Guidance:** The Supreme Court of Ohio has published a useful guide to help divorcing parents construct a parenting time schedule that will work for their family, [Planning for Parenting Time: Ohio's Guide for Parents Living Apart](#). While it is no substitute for enacting a good parenting time rule, NPO considers it a desirable feature of a county's rule to include a reference to or significant text from this pamphlet in order to assist parents in creating their own parenting schedule. NPO found nine county rules that included references and/or links to or significant selections from this helpful pamphlet.

The Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas local rules do not provide parents with a link to the Supreme Court's pamphlet. Fortunately, for parents in that county, the Montgomery County Child Support Enforcement Agency *does* provide links to that document, as well as information on a free program, [Parenting Time Opportunities for Children](#), which helps separated parents successfully co-parent their children. This is a model for other county child support enforcement agencies and it is especially valuable in those counties where the local court doesn't provide such guidance or doesn't take steps to encourage and support the equal sharing of parental responsibilities.

**Explicit Gender Bias:** When NPO reviewed the Ohio parenting time rules in 2018, one county, Van Wert, was found to have explicit gendered language in its rule. As a result of NPO's report and the

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<sup>9</sup> These counties are: Licking, Meigs, Montgomery, Morgan, Noble, Ottawa, Sandusky, Shelby, Washington, and Wyandot.

<sup>10</sup> The 2018 report erroneously omitted Morgan County from those that imposed all transportation responsibilities on the non-residential parent and, so, incorrectly indicated that only 13 counties had this flaw in their rules. The correct number of counties imposing all transportation responsibilities on the nonresidential parent in 2018 was 14. The counties that have corrected this problem are: Adams, Carroll, Holmes, and Miami.

press coverage it received, this was brought to the attention of the Van Wert Court of Common Pleas. That court deserves credit for quickly updating its local parenting time rule not only to remove the inappropriate gendered language but, more substantively, to offer parents four options for parenting time, two of which afford the children equal time with each of their parent.

## Counties with Multiple Schedules and No Default

Eleven Ohio counties<sup>11</sup> have parenting time rules with multiple schedules for children of the same ages, none of which is indicated as the default for children of a given age (up from seven in 2018). NPO has declined to provide an overall grade for these county's parenting time rules. To understand why, one must recall the nature of NPO's Ohio Parenting Time Rules Project.

[As was indicated earlier](#), the Ohio Parenting Time Rules Project is *not* an evaluation of the parenting schedules that are actually ordered by courts. Ohio courts do not collect and publish aggregate information on *actual* parenting time orders. Because this project evaluates the *default* parenting time schedule and these eleven counties do not have such a default schedule, a grade for these counties' local parenting time rules would be meaningless and potentially misleading.

In a number of counties with multiple schedules, the quality of the schedules varies widely—some providing equal or nearly equal parenting time and some providing only the old standard “every other weekend and one evening a week” model. As a guide to readers, NPO has, when possible, indicated a grade that each of the schedules in these eleven counties would receive if it were a default schedule.<sup>12</sup> While six of these multi-schedule counties include at least one equal parenting time schedule, five do not.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> These counties (with the number of schedules they provide for children in the same age category) are Adams (2), Belmont (3), Fayette (2), Franklin (4), Highland (2), Knox (2), Mahoning (4), Miami (4), Stark (3), Van Wert (4), and Warren (2).

<sup>12</sup> In several cases, it is impossible to assign such a grade. For example, Mahoning County's first option is a “make your own schedule” option. This unique approach to providing a parenting time rule—and especially the decision to list this option first—might well be a desirable strategy to encourage parents to reflect on what will work in their individual case. But, of course, it is impossible to evaluate this option on the time and overnight criteria that is the primary basis of NPO's evaluation.

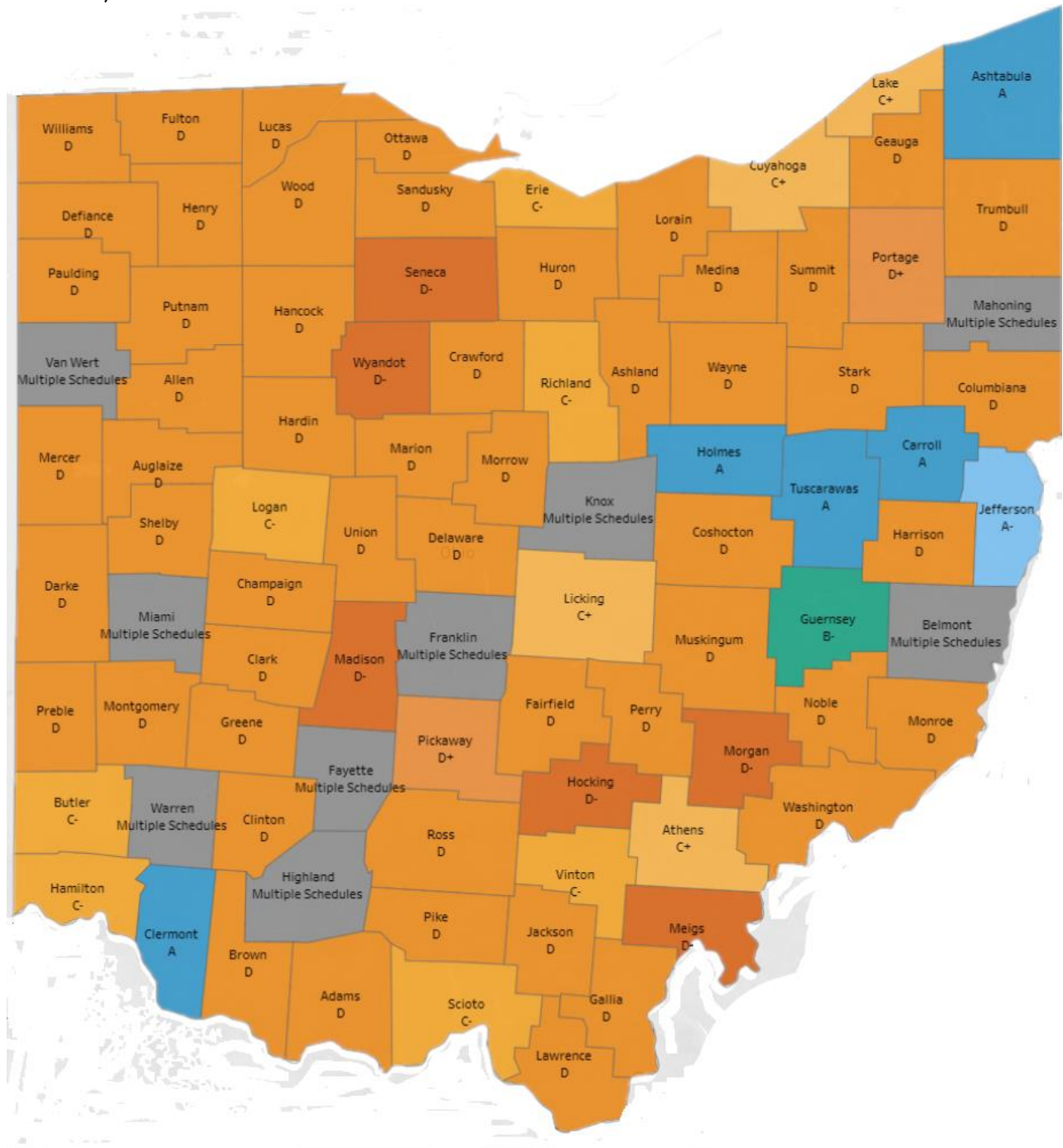
<sup>13</sup> The counties that include at least one equal parenting schedule are: Adams, Franklin, Mahoning, Miami, Stark, and Van Wert. The multi-schedule counties that do not include an equal parenting time schedule, followed by the grades their optional schedules would receive, are: Belmont (D, C-), Fayette (D-, D-), Highland (D, C), Knox (C+, C+), and Warren (D, C+).



## IV. Results

### A. Map with Grades

This map is a link to a web-based interactive map with details on the elements of each county's parenting time rules that are relevant to NPO's evaluation and grading. If the link opens with a map that doesn't show the names of all of the counties, please enlarge the map in the display window. (The [online version of this map](#) will be updated as NPO becomes aware of changes in local parenting time rules.)



**B. Grades**

Below are all of the counties listed by the grade NPO assigned to their local parenting time rule. Changes from the 2018 Report are **highlighted in blue** followed by the 2018 grade in parentheses. **All changes since 2018 are improvements!**

<b>A</b>	Ashtabula Carroll (D-)	Clermont (C+)	Holmes (D)	Tuscarawas
<b>A-</b>	Jefferson			
<b>B+</b>	(none)			
<b>B</b>	(none)			
<b>B-</b>	Guernsey			
<b>C+</b>	Athens Cuyahoga	Lake Licking		
<b>C</b>	(none)			
<b>C-</b>	Butler Erie	Hamilton Logan	Richland Seneca (D-) Scioto	Vinton
<b>D+</b>	Pickaway	Portage		

<p><b>D</b></p>	<p>Allen Ashland Auglaize Brown Champaign Clark Clinton Columbiana Coshocton Crawford Darke Defiance Delaware</p>	<p>Fairfield Fulton Gallia Geauga Greene Hancock Hardin Harrison Henry Huron Jackson Lawrence Lorain</p>	<p>Lucas Marion Medina Mercer Monroe Montgomery Morrow Muskingum Noble Ottawa Paulding Perry Pike</p>	<p>Preble Putnam Ross Sandusky Shelby Summit Trumbull Union Washington Wayne Williams Wood</p>
<p><b>D-</b></p>	<p>Hocking Madison</p>	<p>Meigs Morgan</p>	<p>Wyandot</p>	
<p><b>F</b></p>	<p>(none)</p>			
<p><b>Counties with Multiple Schedules for the Same Age Group, No Default</b></p>				
<p><b>Adams (D)</b> Belmont Fayette</p>	<p>Franklin Highland Knox</p>	<p><b>Mahoning</b> <b>Miami (D)</b> <b>Stark (D)</b></p>	<p><b>Van Wert (F)</b> Warren</p>	

### Grading of Individual Schedules in Counties with Multiple Schedules

Below we provide information about, and an NPO grade, to each of the schedules in those counties with multiple schedules for children in the same age group with none of those schedules indicated to be a default schedule. (Age groups used for analysis are **bolded**.)

	NPO Grade	Guide	Visitation Language?	Age Specific?	Age Categories	Hours/2Weeks	Overnights/2Weeks	Transportation
<b>Adams County</b>								
2/2/3 Schedule	A	No	Yes	Yes	b-3y, <b>3y-18y</b>	168	7	Shared equally
Every Other Weekend	C-	No	Yes	Yes	b-3y, <b>3y-18y</b>	70	3	Equally except mid-week
<b>Belmont County</b>								
Option 1	D	No	Yes	No	n/a	54	2	Shared equally
Option 2 (6y-12y)	C-	No	Yes	Yes	b-3m; 3m-3y; 3y-5y; <b>6y-12y</b> ; 13y-18y	80	4	Shared equally
Option 3 (6y-12y)	n/a	No	Yes	Yes	b-3m; 3m-3y; 3y-5y; <b>6y-12y</b> ; 13y-18y	n/a	n/a	
<b>Fayette County</b>								
Option One	D-	No	Yes	No	n/a	48	2	Shared equally
Option Two	D	No	Yes	No	n/a	56	2	Shared equally
<b>Franklin County</b>								
Plan A	A	No	No	Yes	b-18m; <b>18m-18y</b>	168	7	Shared equally
Plan B	A	No	No	Yes	b-18m; <b>18m-18y</b>	168	7	Shared equally
Plan C	C+	No	No	Yes	b-18m; <b>18m-18y</b>	100	5	Equally except mid-week
Plan D	D	No	No	Yes	b-18m; <b>18m-18y</b>	54	2	Equally except mid-week

	NPO Grade	Guide	Visitation Language?	Age Specific?	Age Categories	Hours/2Weeks	Overnights/2Weeks	Transportation
<b>Highland County</b>								
Option One	D	No	Yes	Yes	b-1y; <b>1y-18y</b>	54	2	Shared equally
Option Two	C-	No	Yes	Yes	b-1y; <b>1y-18y</b>	78	3	Shared equally
<b>Knox County</b>								
Option One	C+	No	No	Yes	b-2y; <b>2y-18y</b>	93	5	Shared equally
Option Two	C+	No	No	Yes	b-2y; <b>2y-18y</b>	102	5	Shared equally
<b>Mahoning County</b>								
Option A	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-1y; 1y-3y; <b>3y-18y</b>	n/a	n/a	Shared equally
Option B	A	Yes	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-1y; 1y-3y; <b>3y-18y</b>	168	7	Shared equally
Option C	C-	Yes	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-1y; 1y-3y; <b>3y-18y</b>	168	7	Shared equally
Option D	C-	Yes	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-1y; 1y-3y; <b>3y-18y</b>	72	3	Shared equally
<b>Miami County</b>								
Option A	D	No	Minimal	No	n/a	54	2	Equally except mid-week
Option B	C+	No	Minimal	No	n/a	102	5	Equally except mid-week
Option C	A	No	Minimal	No	n/a	168	7	Shared Equally
Option D	A	No	Minimal	No	n/a	168	7	Shared Equally

	NPO Grade	Guide	Visitation Language?	Age Specific?	Age Categories	Hours/2Weeks	Overnights/2Weeks	Transportation
<b>Stark County</b>								
Schedule 1	A	No	Minimal	No	b-2y; 2y-13y; 13y-18y	168	7	Shared equally
Schedule 2	C-	No	Minimal	No	n/a	74	3	Shared equally
Schedule 3	C-	no	Minimal	No	n/a	74	3	Shared equally
<b>Van Wert County</b>								
Option A	A	Yes	Minimal	No	n/a	168	7	Shared equally
Option B	A	Yes	Minimal	No	n/a	168	7	Shared equally
Option C	B-	Yes	Minimal	No	n/a	120	5	Shared equally
Option D	D	Yes	Minimal	No	n/a	54	2	Shared equally
<b>Warren County</b>								
Basic I	D	No	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-12y; 13y-15y; 16y-18y	54	2	Shared equally
Basic II	C+	No	No	Yes	b-6m; 6m-12y; 13y-15y; 16y-18y	94	5	Shared equally

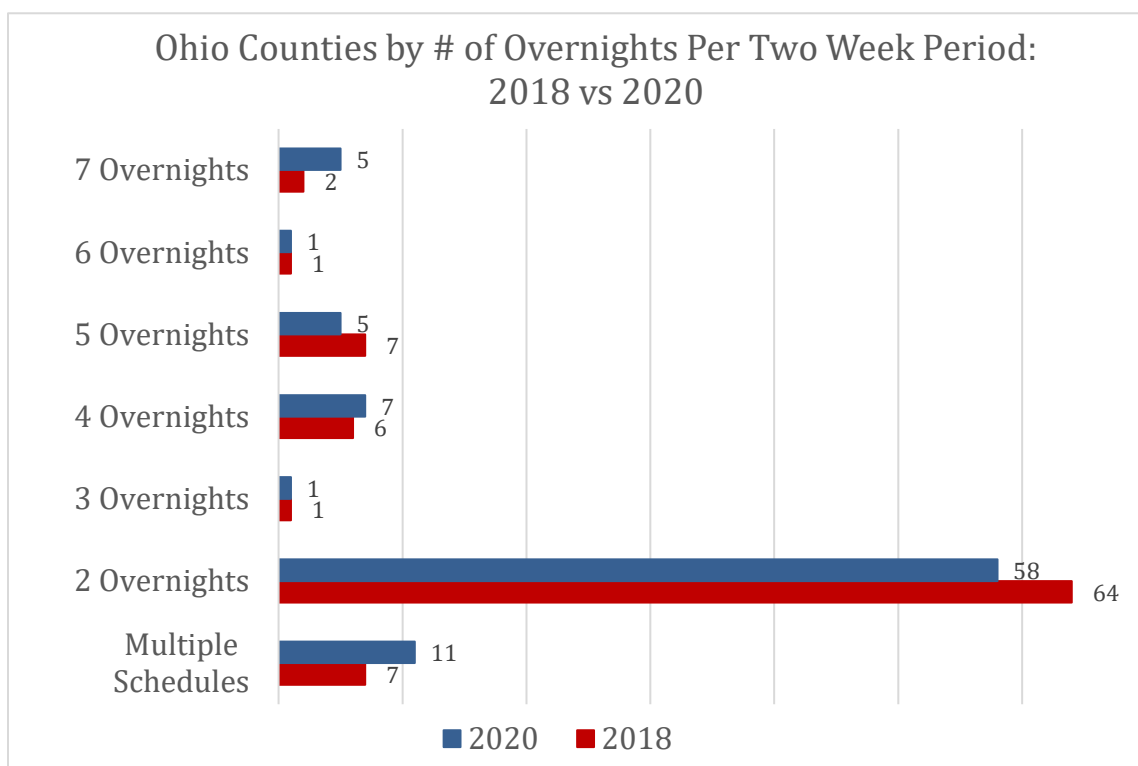
## V. Longitudinal Analysis

### Progress Since 2018: Court Rules

While the overwhelming majority of Ohio county courts of common pleas are still providing families with outdated parenting schedules that modern science clearly indicate are not in children’s best interest, there has been notable progress since the 2018 NPO Ohio Parenting Time Report. Every county court of common pleas that revised its local parenting time rule *improved* that rule—some dramatically. Carroll, Clermont, and Holmes Counties joined Ashtabula, Jefferson, and Tuscarawas in enacting default parenting time schedules that provide the children with equal, or nearly equal, access to both parents. NPO congratulates all of these counties for aligning their default parenting time schedules with the best scientific research concerning the well-being of children whose parents are living apart. (Seneca County improved its default parenting time schedule slightly, increasing the children’s time with the non-residential parent, resulting in the county receiving a ‘C-’ instead of the ‘D-’ it had previously received.)

Adams, Miami, Stark, and Van Wert counties updated their local rules to offer parents multiple options, at least one of which afforded the children equal time in the care of each parent. These changes, too, constitute improvements over the previous default schedules which had earned grades of ‘D’ or ‘F’. Of course, the value of offering multiple schedules is diminished if the court does not strongly encourage the parents, when possible, to select ones that provide substantially equal parenting time and no data are available to indicate how frequently families in these multi-schedule counties are subject to one of the equal parenting time schedules.

While 16 counties provide slightly enhanced (8 counties) or substantially enhanced (8 counties) default schedules, it is still the case that 58 of Ohio’s 88 counties have default parenting time schedules that fit the outdated “every other weekend and one evening a week” model, or are even worse. This affords the children practically no ordinary parenting time with one of their parents.



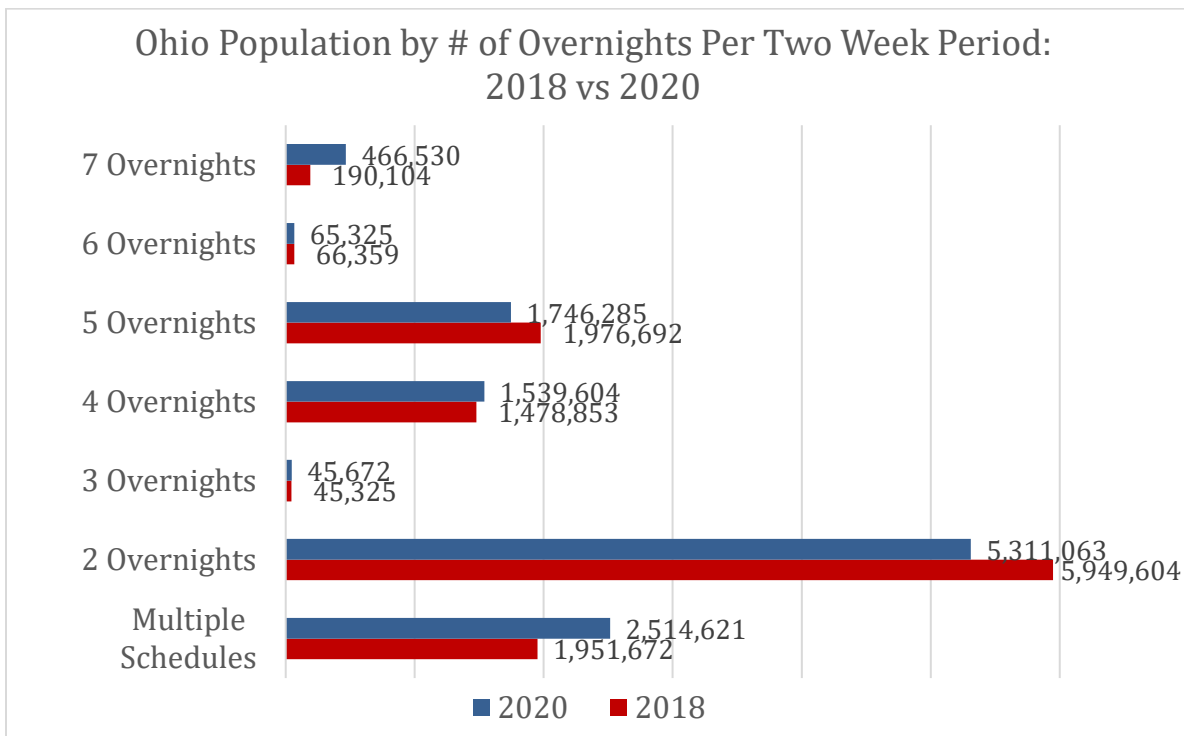
**Progress Since 2018: Population Affected**

Counting the number of counties imposing various default parenting time schedules and the number of counties that have updated and improved their schedules provides important information about how Ohio’s 88 county courts of common pleas address this issue. It tells us how many of them are adjusting their default schedules in light of the recent research on the well-being of children whose parents are living separately. It does not, however, provide a picture of how many Ohio families are subject to each of the different default parenting schedules. To address this question, NPO used the latest (July 1, 2019) [population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau](#).

Of the approximately 11.7 million Ohio residents, approximately 9 million live in counties with a single default parenting time schedule.<sup>14</sup> Of this number, over 5.3 million are subject to default parenting schedule that accords children only two overnights and 60 or fewer hours in a two-week period with one of their parents. This means that almost 50% of Ohio’s families are, by default, subject to a parenting time schedule that is outdated, contraindicated by scientific evidence, and unjustifiably denies them a full parent/child relationship. Children in these families are, by default, denied any significant amount of ordinary parenting time with one of their parents.

At the other end of the scale, only about 4% of Ohio families—about 466,000 people—are living in counties that presumptively afford the children an approximately equal number of overnights and amount of time with each of their parents.

However, it is gratifying to note that, since NPO published the 2018 report, there has been significant progress for many Ohioans. The number of Ohio citizens who are subject to the old “every other weekend and one evening a week” schedule dropped by more than 638,000, a decline of 5.6%. And the number of Ohioans who enjoy the presumption of equal parenting has more than doubled, from approximately 190,000 to approximately 466,000. **The number of Ohioans who gained a presumption of equal parenting time since the publication of the 2018 NPO Ohio Parenting Time Report is well more than a quarter of a million!** For these families, this is a great success.



<sup>14</sup> Precise number are as follows, based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 estimates: Ohio population, 11,689,100; Ohio population living in counties with a single default parenting time schedule, 9,174,479; population subject to default parenting time schedule of two overnights and less than 60 hours in a two week period, 5,311,063; population enjoying a presumptive parenting time schedule of equal parenting time and overnights, 466,530.



## VI. Conclusions

In 2018, National Parents Organization reported that most Ohio courts were failing our children. That is *still* true. They are doing so by not providing a default schedule—and most not even providing an optional schedule—that affords the children equal or almost equal time with each of their parents.

Ohio law directs courts to choose a parenting time schedule that will be in the best interest of the children (ORC 3109.051). Research on child well-being when parents live apart clearly establishes that, in the vast majority of cases, children do best when they enjoy at least 35% of their time and overnights with each parent. And, the more closely parenting time approaches equality, the better children generally do. If Ohio courts are truly aiming to promote children's best interest, they should be encouraging equal shared parenting by setting default parenting schedules that provide the children with substantially equal time with each parent. At a minimum, they should definitely *not* be providing outdated default schedules that sideline one parent and overburden the other.

In light of the best scientific research on child well-being, and given the role that default schedules play in determining actual parenting schedules, National Parents Organization concludes that the overwhelming majority of Ohio courts still have a very long way to go in order to achieve the goal of promoting children's best interest. There has been progress in several counties—in a handful of cases, *dramatic* progress. Unfortunately, it is still the case that almost two-thirds of Ohio courts have default parenting schedules that deprive the children of a full parent-child relationship with one parent. We now know that this approach to separated parenting is very seldom in the best interest of children.

NPO notes with satisfaction and optimism that ***every Ohio county court of common pleas that has revised its local parenting time rule has improved the rule***—almost always to one that provides a presumption of equal parenting time or one that offers multiple schedules, at least one of which provides for equal parenting time.

If other Ohio courts would undertake a serious review of their parenting time rules in light of the best research on child well-being, we believe they too would update their rules to align with that research and modern parenting practices. For the sake of Ohio's children, we urge Ohio courts to do this!

## VII. About the Authors

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