

## DECISION OF PARENTING COORDINATOR

To: Linda Smith and Rich Jones

From: Parenting Coordinator

Date: December 6, 2006

**ISSUE:** If either parent takes the child away overnight, what information should be given to the other parent and what contact should the other parent have with the child.

### **Parents' Positions**

Rich states that he is a responsible parent and should be allowed to travel with Sarah (age 4) without having to report to Linda. He is concerned that Linda is trying to intrude on his time with Sarah by requesting contact information and extensive detail about their travel plans when in fact he can always be reached on his cell phone. He is not adverse to informing Linda that Sarah will be out of town, but does not want to provide more information, fearing that she will check up on him.

Linda contends that if Sarah is not going to be at her father's house, she has the right to know where she will be and to have contact with her. Linda believes that she should be aware of where Sarah is, if an accident occurred. In addition, she wants Sarah to be able to freely share information with her and not feel that she needs to keep secrets.

### **Decision**

After discussion with both parents and review of all court orders, the Parenting Coordinator (PC) establishes the following procedure for times when either parent takes Sarah away from home overnight:

A) If either parent is going to be away **overnight** with Sarah and is **within 60 miles** from his or her residence, the following rules will apply:

1. The parent who does not have Sarah will be informed in advance that they will be away from home overnight without the need to say where they will be.
2. The parent who has Sarah must provide a contact number where they can be reached in case of emergency. The parent must keep his or her cell phone on and charged, and/or provide an additional telephone number.
3. The parent who does not have Sarah will not make phone calls unless there is an emergency. If there is an emergency telephone call and a message is left, the

traveling parent will return the phone call within a reasonable time. (This would need to be defined by the nature of the emergency but within a four hour time period.) At the agreed upon time, the traveling parent will initiate the nightly telephone call for Sarah to speak with the other parent.

B) If either parent is going to be away with Sarah **for forty-eight hours or more**, or is away overnight in a place that is **more than 60 miles** from her or his residence the following rules will apply:

1. The parent who has Sarah will inform the other parent at least 48 hours before the trip that they will be away and will provide the other parent with the location of the place where they will be and travel itinerary if on train, plane, or bus. The itinerary will include airline, flight number, times of departure and arrival.
2. When the parent arrives at her or his destination, s/he will place a phone call to the other parent with information about their safe arrival.
3. On the next day, and every day thereafter, the traveling parent will place a telephone call to the other parent so that the other parent can talk to Sarah at the agreed upon time (currently 7:00 p.m). If no call is placed by 7:30 PM (or one-half hour after the designated time) the other parent will have the right to call.
4. The same procedure as set out in paragraph A2 above will be sufficient for a contact number.
5. The same restrictions about emergency phone calls will apply as well as the return of such phone calls.

**Rationale:**

Most parents want to know where their child is sleeping.

I have attempted to accommodate Linda's realistic need to know when Sarah is not going to be at Rich's home and generally where she will be. At the same time, I have attempted to accommodate Rich's fear that Linda will intrude on his time with Sarah. Thus, for a single overnight within 60 miles, it will be sufficient to say that Sarah will not be at home.

Since the parents speak to Sarah each evening, this practice will continue whether Sarah is sleeping at home or not. It will be the responsibility of the parent who has Sarah to periodically check messages as well as to leave the cell phone on.

When Sarah will be away at a greater distance or for a longer time, more information is necessary so that the other parent can communicate effectively with Sarah about her experiences, and to reduce anxiety. Therefore, there are provisions for more detailed geographical information.

Finally, it is always important that the other parent be given detailed information when a child will be flying or traveling on public transportation.