

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION  
BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO**

**GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS LIVING IN DIFFERENT HOMES**

It is often extremely difficult for children to spend time with parents who live in different homes. As a parent, you can help your children cope with this situation by following the advice below.

1. **Never say bad things about the other parent in front of your child(ren).** Children believe they are made of equal parts of mom and dad. When mom and dad say bad things about each other, a child's self-esteem is harmed.
2. **Do not use your child as a messenger.** Children must not be put into the middle of a dispute by carrying messages between their parents. Find ways to communicate in an adult manner with the other parent without involving your child(ren).
3. **Reassure your child(ren) that they are loved and that your problems with the other parent are not their fault.** Children tend to blame themselves for mom and dad fighting.
4. **Encourage your child(ren) to see the other parent frequently.** Children need quality time with each parent to develop into healthy adults. Mom and dad need to make the exchanges pleasant and positive.
5. **Let your child be a child.** Do not discuss adult issues with your child. At every step during proceedings in Domestic Relations Court, remind yourself that your child(ren)'s interests, not yours, are paramount.
6. **Do not forget to be a parent!** Children often want to take care of mom and dad during difficult times. **Do not let them!** Instead, let peers, adult family members and mental health professionals help aid you in making your own choices about your life.
7. **If you have a drinking or drug problem, get help now!** You cannot care for your child(ren) if you are impaired in your ability to think or act.
8. **If you are ordered to pay child support, pay your child support!** Lack of financial support by a parent has a negative impact on children for their entire lives. Children should not be punished due to a dispute between the parents.

9. **If you are supposed to receive child support and the other parent is not paying, talk to the other parent, the CSEA, the court or your family, but not to your child(ren).** This is hard to do! However, if you tell your child(ren), you are reinforcing their sense of loss and abandonment, which erodes their confidence and stability.
10. **Do not uproot your child(ren), if possible.** Stability in residence, school life and friends help children get through stressful times.
11. **See your child(ren)!** Do not blame your child(ren) for your problems or punish them by not seeing them regularly. Frequent and consistent contact between parent and child is crucial for maintaining strong relationships.
12. **Domestic Relations Court cases are both legal and emotional.** Remember, your child has rights, too. Let children be children.

Part of this outline is from “Ten Tips for Divorcing Parents” by Mike McCurley, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 1997-2000 AAML.