

Shared Parenting and Child Abuse and Neglect: An Ohio Study

National Parents Organization has conducted research correlating county court parenting time rules with data on child abuse and neglect. The results show a strong connection between parenting time rules and child maltreatment statistics with those counties that promote more equal shared parenting showing significantly lower, and declining, rates of child abuse and neglect.

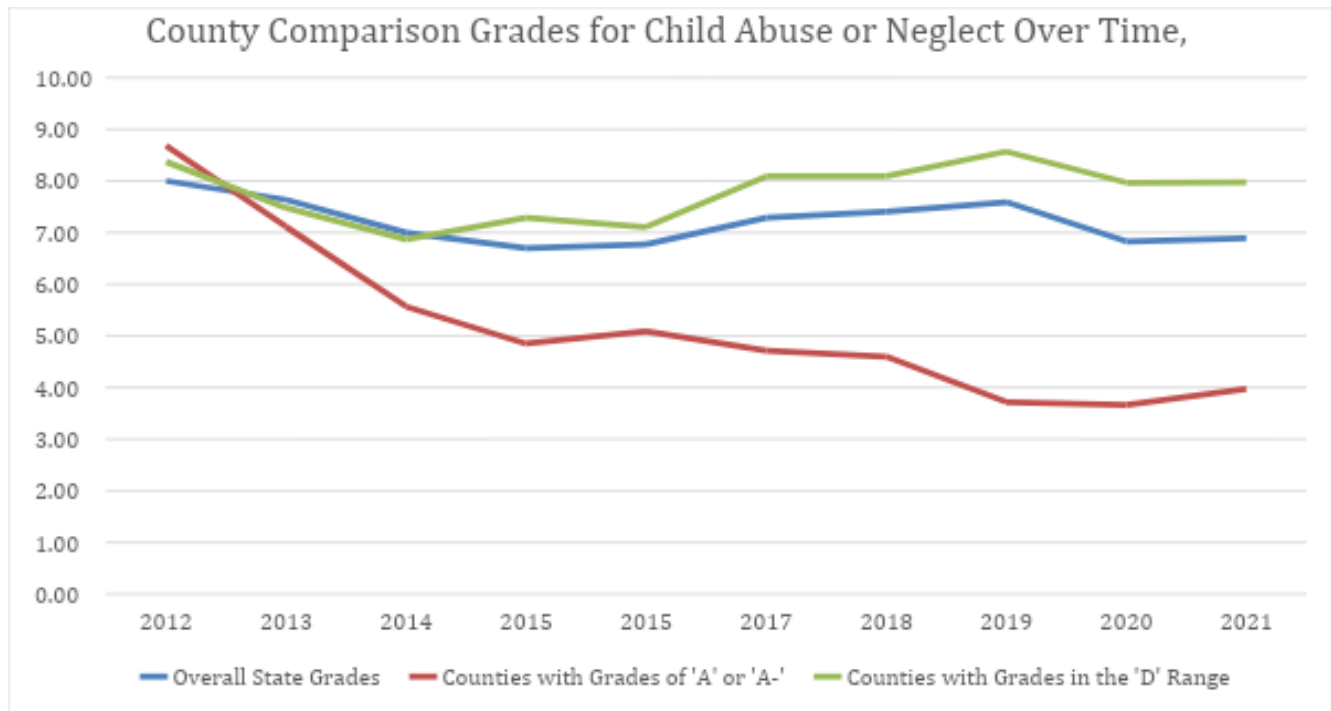
The Ohio Revised Code requires each Ohio court of common pleas to adopt “standard parenting time guidelines” for dividing children’s time between the parents when parents are living apart ([ORC 3109.51\(F\)\(2\)](#)).

In 2018 and again in 2020, NPO undertook a study of the local parenting time rules of each of Ohio’s 88 counties. The [2020 NPO Ohio Parenting Time Report](#) uncovered radical variations in these local rules. Some guidelines provided children with equal or nearly equal time with each parent; but the overwhelming majority (58 counties) had guidelines marginalizing one parent in the children’s lives, allowing the children only every-other-weekend-and-one-evening-a-week time with one parent, or less. NPO’s report graded the counties based on their parenting time rules with those providing for equal or nearly equal parenting time receiving ‘A’s or ‘A-’s and those providing the outdated every-other-weekend-and-one- evening-a-week schedules grades in the ‘D’ range.

In 2022, NPO undertook a study correlating the grades counties received in the 2020 report with data from the [Annie E. Casey’s Kids Count project](#). The results of that research show a very strong correlation between the county’s local parenting time rule—and, so, the parenting time arrangement that is more likely to be prevalent—with the lowering of the incidence of child maltreatment. **Those counties with equal or nearly equal parenting time rules have consistently shown lower, and declining, rates of child abuse and neglect.**

There could be multiple explanations for this consistent correlation and further research is needed to determine the causes. It could be that by reducing parental legal conflict over parenting time, courts are able to attend more closely to those cases that present significant risks of child maltreatment, stemming some of the harm to children. It could be, also, that lowering the conflict between the parents over parenting time reduces antagonism that spills over to the children. And, of course, part of the explanation could be that, where two parents are equally engaged in rearing their children, neither is as likely to feel overburdened and stressed out by child care responsibilities and both can serve as a watchful eye over the children’s well-being.

Whatever the mechanism, the study shows a stunning correlation between the incidence of child maltreatment and a county’s local parenting time rule. NPO strongly supports Ohio county courts adopting local parenting time rules that allow children equal time with each of their fit and loving parents in the absence of evidence of abuse or neglect.



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall State Grades	8.00	7.64	7.00	6.70	6.77	7.29	7.40	7.59	6.83	6.89
Counties with Grades of 'A' or 'A-'	8.68	7.11	5.57	4.85	5.09	4.71	4.60	3.72	3.66	3.98
Counties with Grades in the 'D' Range	8.37	7.48	6.87	7.29	7.11	8.09	8.09	8.57	7.97	7.97

Data Sources and Other Information:

According to the [Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count project](#), the abuse and neglect statistics represent “the number of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect, including emotional maltreatment, neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. The rate is the number of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children in the population.” Data supplied by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Counties receiving grades of ‘A’ or ‘A-’ in the 2020 NPO Ohio Parenting Time Report: Ashtabula, Carroll, Clermont, Holmes, Jefferson, and Tuscarawas.

Counties receiving grades in the ‘D’ range were: Allen, Ashland, Auglaize, Brown, Champaign, Clark, Clinton, Columbiana, Coshocton, Crawford, Darke, Defiance, Delaware, Fairfield, Fulton, Gallia, Geauga, Greene, Hancock, Hardin, Harrison, Henry, Hocking, Huron, Jackson, Lawrence, Lorain, Lucas, Madison, Marion, Medina, Meigs, Mercer, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Morrow, Muskingum, Noble, Ottawa, Paulding, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Portage, Preble, Putnam, Ross, Sandusky, Shelby, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Union, Washington, Wayne, Williams, Wood, and Wyandott.