

Best Practices: Co-Parenting During the COVID-19 Outbreak

1. **Diagnoses.** If you, a member of your household or your child are diagnosed with COVID-19 immediately advise the other parent. Do not hide this information.
2. **Legal Custody.** Communicate with your child(ren)'s parent and agree on uniform practices in both households. For example, parents could confer and agree the child(ren) will not have play dates or visit others (aside outdoor activities) at each home and would communicate with parents and extended family members via telephone / Facetime.
3. **Monitor & Inform.** Monitor your child(ren)'s health and symptoms in a daily journal and share with the other parent.
4. **Informing Your Child.** If you must convey information or diagnoses to your child that may alarm or upset your child, speak with the other parent to create a joint message before speaking with the child.
5. **Be The Parent.** Help the child(ren) through this time by continuing to address misinformation head on, answering their ongoing questions, explaining honestly what is going on in their world. Do not let routine discipline fall by the wayside. To the extent possible, keep routine and stability to help ground them in their world.
6. **Childcare.** Parents should confer about childcare needs based upon their respective work schedules and work to provide care themselves rather than bring in 3rd parties unless absolutely necessary.
7. **Parenting Time.** Use common sense, if a member of your household is known to have had contact with an infected person or the children were known to be infected in one household, communicate this to the other parent. Agree on where the children will remain during this time if it no longer makes sense to abide by the court ordered parenting time plan for safety reasons. It is unlikely courts will penalize parents for alternating their parenting time schedules as a result of safety measures taken to protect the children.
8. **Adaptation.** Be reasonable and be adaptable. These are hard and stressful times on everyone. The changes brought about because of public safety issues and concerns are temporary. Put your child's safety first and roll with it.
9. **A Record And Written Confirmation.** If parenting time is at variance with the court

ordered parenting time, keep your own record of how the arrangement came about, when it was agreed upon, and what the new arrangement is, and how long it is to last. Then, to avoid misunderstandings, confirm it in email to the other parent. This might avoid a real and current case of confusion, or a later claim that there was no agreement or a different one.

10. Medications. Make sure each household has an ample supply of any medications the child may need for the potential period of the altered circumstances.

11. Clothing & Household Items. If items are passed between households, disinfect all immediately at the parenting time exchange or prior to the same. Consider keeping clothing sets at each home to avoid exchanging items among households as much as possible.

12. E-Learning. Longterm e-learning practices are new for many parents. Be sure to stay on top of your children's daily work. Communicate with the other parent about the child's schooling. If one parent is better suited to address these responsibilities by virtue of their work schedule, consider allowing that parent to perform this function daily.

13. Travel. Consider canceling Spring Break plans, which may be involuntary as the situation unfolds.

14. Child Support. If you experience financial difficulty during this time as a result of job loss or temporary loss in income, a child support modification may be warranted. You would be well advised to contact counsel to discuss the same.

15. Court hearings. Most court appearances have been cancelled for at least 4 weeks and the foreseeable future. Your attorney will keep you advised of court closings and hearing procedures.

16. "Emergency" Matters. Understand that disputes and issues that might arise regarding your child are going to have to be resolved in some manner other than going to court. Rapid access to the court and the ability obtain a hearing will be severely diminished for some time. It may be necessary to have attorneys confer, mediate by video conference, or take other creative steps to arrive at an amicable resolution.

17. Questions. Inevitably as you navigate this path, questions will arise. Contact your attorney or your child's primary care physician in regard to the same.