

COVID-19 Interim Plan

Top 10 Tips to Survive COVID-19

Changes to your parenting plan

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on our daily lives and schedules. Schools have been closed, activities cancelled, or you may be stuck in self-isolation or quarantine. Your established parenting plan may no longer be feasible or appropriate.

This is a new horizon in family law. There are no official rules and regulations on how to amend parenting schedules during a pandemic. The courts in many provinces are only hearing urgent matters, and have indicated that most parenting disputes will not be considered urgent. This can cause increased conflict between spouses who can't agree on a course of action. First, keep in mind that if you have a formal parenting agreement, or a parenting order, there is an expectation that these schedules will be followed as long as it remains safe to do so. Each parent has an obligation to ensure that their homes and their activities with the children are clean and keep the children safe.

You should consider the directions of health officials in the country, specifically as they respect to travel advisories and self-isolation policies. If you are concerned about letting your children travel to your ex-spouse's home, you may want to connect with your family doctor to assess the level of risk.

Your children will be home during the day with schools and daycares closed. This means that you will need to find another source of child care, or you, as parents will have to rearrange your lives to care for your children during the day.

- If both parents are employed are one or both of you able to work from home or take time off to care for the children?
- If one party is a homemaker, do they need extra support from the other parent to help with having the children at home all day?

Sometimes parenting schedules are based on the parent's work schedule. Many people have found their workhours reduced, or they have been laid off entirely. If one party is working less hours, will you change the parenting schedule to allow that person time with the children that they would not ordinarily have?

If you or your children are self-isolating or in quarantine, they may not be able to move between houses like they would normally. We know that it is difficult to be apart from your children. Modern technologies have given us a variety of ways of feel connected, even if we cannot be in the same house.

For the short-term consider:

- If you have younger children who are normally going back and forth in a regular basis, consider moving that to one week on and one week off, or perhaps even two weeks. While this may seem harsh, your number one priority right now is your children's health.
- If your children are older, then moving it to two weeks on and off or picking one home for isolation, until this passes, is likely the safest.

Set it out in writing so you have committed to a schedule and then, when in question, you can refer back here:

Consider weekdays, evenings, study, eating, exercise, and personal time.

What is your parenting schedule going to be?

Once you have the schedule completed and you are both on the same page ... post this on the fridge or somewhere where it is easily accessible.

Also remember that things are changing rapidly to commit that you will have to review this weekly or every second week to consider updates or changes.

These are some ideas to help you stay connected with your children, if your normal parenting time with them has been interrupted:

- Schedule regular or daily phone calls or video calls with skype, facetime, zoom, or any other program.
- Find a game that you can play together online or through video chat
- Watch a movie together remotely – either watch the movie at the same time, or use a program like "Netflix Party"
- Write letters or emails to each other
- Help them with their school work remotely



How will you stay connected if your regular parenting time has been disrupted? Will you have regular phone/skype/facetime/zoom calls? What other activities will you do with the children?

If your children are stuck in quarantine with your ex-spouse, you may want to help with delivering groceries or other needed supplies.

Set up a plan:

Support Payments

The COVID-19 Pandemic is wreaking havoc on the world’s economy. Many people have found their hours reduced or have been laid off completely. Without an income, it may not be possible to make spousal or child support payments. This is no one’s fault, but it is an undeniable consequence of the current situation.

We cannot advise you to disregard your court ordered support payments, but you may make agreements between yourselves for a new temporary arrangement. If you are unable to agree on a change in support, and you cannot come to a new agreement, your only option will be to file an application in court to vary the order or agreement. In this case, please check with your local courthouse to determine whether family applications are being heard.

This is a time to revise each of your household budgets and determine whether anything needs to be tightened. You may need to re-evaluate the children’s sec. 7 expenses.



If you are attempting to come up with a financial plan with your ex-spouse to get through these difficult times, here are some things to consider:

- Has each person created a new monthly budget to determine any shortfalls?
- Are there any expenses that can be tightened or cut on a temporary basis (ex. entertainment subscriptions, eating out, gas)?
- Are there any expenses that could be combined between the two households? (ex. sharing a Netflix account)
- Does money need to be transferred between households to help each spouse meet their expenses?
- Have you searched for and applied for any appropriate government supports?

Commit to a short-term plan. This is not a legal document so there is no reason you cannot go back to the terms of your agreement post COVID-19.

This is going to be a difficult time. Be Flexible. Work together.