

Annette T. Burns, Attorney at Law

CoVID and Co-Parenting: Stick With the Plan, Be Flexible When You Can

by Annette Burns on March 17, 2020

There are no easy answers to some questions:

*My co-parent isn't keeping our kids away from other kids during his parenting time. We live with my elderly parents and the kids are going to come back and expose my parents.

*My co-parent just got back to the United States from another country, and wants to start her parenting time. I think she should have to quarantine for 14 days first.

*My co-parent and I are both off work and I want to take care of my kids half the time, but she won't let me until it's officially my parenting time over the weekend. Why can't we share the time they have off school?

*My co-parent still thinks he's going to take the kids on vacation, out of state. I'm afraid if they leave the area, they can't come back for awhile.

*My co-parent isn't doing any homework/ school work with the kids even though we're supposed to be home-schooling until classes start again. The kids are falling way behind.

*I have supervised visitation ordered, but all the supervision providers' offices have closed and I can't find a supervisor.

There are no easy answers to these questions, but you should know that you're not the only one having these issues. There may have never been a time, during our lifetimes, when separated/ divorced parents have been left so on their own to work out completely new situations. Lawyers don't have answers; the courts don't have answers, and they also aren't going to be able to get around to resolving these types of parenting disputes for months. [Court systems in general are shutting down for all but true 'emergency' matters, and none of the situations listed above would be considered emergencies.]

What co-parents can do is think and try to make responsible decisions. For some of the situations listed above, the dispute is a difference in parenting: while you and I and the next 20 people in the world might not consider letting our children be around lots of people right now, it's not against the law, and it's a parenting decision. Some of the situations (the parenting time and vacation scenarios) involve something that's covered by a court order or Parenting Plan, but one parent thinks the Plan shouldn't apply because things are different now. The situation regarding supervised parenting time is a court order, but there are no facilities available to implement that order.

No one's going to disagree: things ARE different now. But relying on the existing Plan or court order is the only certainty you — and your children — have right now. Unless both parents agree they want to change things, modifications of parenting time and Plan provisions aren't practical right now. Stick with the Plan, but be flexible when you can.

In order to consider solutions to problems you're having with co-parenting, consider [these Guidelines](#) which were developed by a joint effort of [AFCC](#), [AAML](#), and [NCJFCJ](#). The Guidelines have common themes: Think. Communicate. Try to Understand. More than likely, there are no right answers to the questions you have. You should talk these problems through with your lawyer and other trusted advisors, and should try to talk them

through with your co-parent. It's almost a certainty that you're going to have to come up with compromises with your co-parent, using your Parenting Plan as a starting point.

AFCC is compiling other resources to help parents, and they will be posted and updated at [AFCC COVID-19 Resources](#)

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