

COVID-19 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Parenting Arrangements During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented and serious health emergency. More than ever, parents must be focused on what their children need. Children may be stressed and anxious, and require love and support from both parents.

Parents who are separated or divorced should be prepared to be creative, flexible and use good judgment when making arrangements for their children. Plans should consider changing needs, including the closure of schools and the suspension of child care services for many families, job requirements, physical distancing, self-isolation and other COVID-19 safety measures.

Families should continue to follow court orders and agreements about parenting arrangements unless there is a clear risk to the child. Unless both parents agree otherwise, maintain the current schedule to support an ongoing routine and reduce further conflict and uncertainty for children.

Parents are encouraged to regularly check-in with children and have age-appropriate conversations about the virus and how it affects the family. If children need a safe place to talk, they are encouraged to contact [Kids Help Phone](#), a free 24/7 national support service offering professional counselling, information, referrals, and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French.

At this time, the courts are available for **emergent issues only**. Parents must communicate and work together to address most concerns related to their parenting arrangements. Parents should:

- Ensure arrangements for time sharing/contact with their children are consistent with [COVID-19 safety measures](#).
- Work together to comply with public health guidelines and model healthy behaviour for their children, such as proper handwashing, disinfecting surfaces and other objects that are frequently touched, and [physical distancing](#).

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- Provide honest information to the other parent about any suspected or confirmed exposure to the virus, and steps each of you will take to protect the child from exposure. If one parent requires self-isolation (e.g. due to recent travel, being in contact of a case), it is important that the children remain with the other parent until the self-isolation period is complete.
- Immediately inform the other parent if the child is exhibiting any possible symptoms of the virus.
- Understand that time-sharing arrangements may need to be altered in the best interests of the child, or if the child or anyone in the household develops cold or flu-like symptoms. Parents should be flexible and supportive.
- Reassure children that make-up time will be offered when things return to normal, to balance out time that could not be spent with their other parent. If necessary, work together to track make-up time.
- Use other means to keep in contact with children including phone calls, texting, WhatsApp, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Skype, or other videoconferencing tools.