



FAMILY LAW INFORMATION DURING COVID-19

Many parents feel worried and confused about what COVID-19 (coronavirus) means for their children and parenting arrangements.

CatholicCare
Diocese of Broken Bay

THERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. If you have court orders, you must continue to follow them unless you have a reasonable excuse not to.
2. Everyone must follow laws and public health guidelines.
3. You should try to work through any changes with the other parent and come up with an agreement, if that is safe for you and the children.

Most parents want to do the right thing and they know the children's relationship with the other parent is important and valuable, but they also want to follow the advice we are all receiving from the government and medical experts to stay home and avoid certain activities. How can you do both without ending up in a family law dispute?

- Follow government guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading the virus from one household to the next. Let the other parent know what you are doing in your home so they can take similar steps themselves. If arrangements become unclear or cannot be met because of quarantine, travel restrictions, because schools close, or another reason, use common sense to find solutions to challenges.
- Find an alternate neutral location for changeover such as a petrol station, local oval/sports ground or perhaps a police station if there are significant safety concerns. Make sure physical distancing practices can be maintained whichever option you decide upon.
- If it is safe to do so, communicate with the other parent about your concerns and what you plan to do if someone in your household, including yourself or your child, develops flu like symptoms or is mandated to isolate themselves for a period of time.
- Work out ways for the other parent to stay in contact with the children via Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facetime or more regular phone calls.

- Talk to your children about keeping their school work together so they can easily transport it from one home to the other without missing anything vital. As parents, you may need to ensure both households have access to school portals and information, as well as any supporting technology or internet access.
- Help your kids to develop a daily routine to get their school tasks and homework completed, as well as other fun activities.
- Find ways to communicate with each other which ensure your children are protected from possible parental conflict, unresolved and difficult discussions or hearing adult information.
- Role model to your children how you are working together as a team. Use language such as "Mum and I have decided ..." or "Dad and I had a chat and have come up with this plan ...". Showing children that you are working together helps make them feel safe. Using collective language can still be helpful for children to hear eg. "We [parents] are working on that and as soon as we have a plan, we'll let you know."
- People may lose jobs or experience a reduction in their income. This may impact what can be paid by way of child support or the contribution to other expenses. Try to be understanding of the situation the other parent is in – financial worry will probably exist in both households. The message and legacy of these days should be, as far as possible, that both parents and households worked together to find a solution that was as good as possible for the children.
- If you are finding it difficult to work out alternate arrangements together, we can provide Family Dispute Resolution (Mediation) over the phone or through video conferencing to negotiate solutions that will work for you and your children during this time.



CALL US:

Call for a confidential discussion today with our Mediators or access support from our Family Law Counsellors today.

We service Northern Sydney, Northern Beaches and Central Coast.
P: 9488 2400 for Northern Sydney & Northern Beaches
P: (02) 4356 2600 for Central Coast