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**Temporary Adjustments to Court Ordered  
Parenting, Time-Sharing, and Child Support during COVID-19**

In the event you have a Court Ordered Parenting Plan, Time-Sharing arrangement and Child Support that you believe need to be temporarily adjusted during COVID-19, and if there is extreme tension in the home, here is some information for you to consider:

**Temporary Time-Sharing Issues:**

1. If your work schedule and stay-at-home times have changed, it may be in your child's best interest to temporarily adjust the schedule that is set forth in your executed Parenting Plan, as well as other terms of your Plan.
2. Focus on what is in the best interest of your child. This is a time to show the child that parents can work together during a crisis, which has multiple benefits.
3. Be flexible with one another, based on your particular circumstances, and work together to agree on temporary adjustments that are needed, including changing the overnights the child spends with each of you and the amount of phone contact with the other parent.

4. However, if one parent does not agree to amicably make your requested temporary changes to the Parenting Plan, the Plan should be followed precisely as it was written. COVID-19 is not grounds for either parent to make unilateral changes to the Parenting Plan. COVID-19 is also not grounds for either parent to withhold a child from the other parent.
5. If you truly believe that changes to your Parenting Plan are needed, for the safety and best interests of your child, and your Plan or Court Order requires Mediation prior to the filing of anything in Court, then Mediation can be arranged by remote electronic means. If your Plan is silent or allows a filing, a Motion can be filed which states your request. This can also be resolved by remote electronic means, as Courts are hearing matters during this time.
6. If temporary Time-Sharing during COVID-19 results in one parent having less time with the child, there can be missed makeup time that is built into the temporary Agreement, so that when COVID-19 passes from our community, the parent who had less time can be given additional vacation and other time with the child.
7. As to the child bringing items back and forth between both homes, it is best to limit that as much as possible. Instead, have items of clothing and the child's personal items at both homes, and leave backpacks at whichever home currently has them. Wipe off electronics before the child enters the home. It is optimum to have the child remove their shoes before entering your home as well.
8. To the extent that you make temporary changes to your Parenting Plan, please make sure to have a clear written communication between both of you that sets forth the details you are temporarily changing, as well as the expected expiration date for the temporary changes. This date and the terms of your Temporary Agreement can be adjusted as needed.
9. While no one hopes this is the case, please communicate with the other parent now, to have an agreement on who is mutually acceptable to care for your child if one or both of you becomes ill or is required to quarantine due to COVID-19. That agreement should include back-up alternatives for care, if that becomes needed. When you are feeling sick or receive a diagnosis is not the time to have to add concerns about properly documenting for your child's care.

10. Rather than having a long thread of text or email communications that may also include other topics, it is best to have your final Temporary Agreement in one fresh email with the Subject very clear, such as: "Temporary Changes to Parenting Plan Due to COVID-19." The receiving parent should reply with their confirmation of approval. No other topics should be included in that email.
11. If you would prefer to have your Temporary Parenting Plan in the same format as the original that was filed with the Court, feel free to contact me and I will help you with that.

Temporary Child Support Issues:

1. Depending on how COVID-19 might have affected one parent's finances, and to the extent that one parent having the child during the weekday is creating extra financial need for that parent, a temporary adjustment to your Court Ordered child support arrangement will likely be appreciated by the parent temporarily needing extra funds.
2. An adjustment to Child Support can be made casually between the two of you, by mutual agreement as to the temporary modified amount.
3. Rather than having a long thread of text or email communications that may also include other topics, it is best to have your temporary revised agreed upon Child Support amount in one fresh email with the Subject very clear, such as: "Temporary Change to Child Support Due to COVID-19." The receiving parent should reply with their confirmation of approval. No other topics should be included in that email.
4. If you would prefer to have your Child Support amount calculated in the same format as the original Child Support Guidelines Worksheet that was filed with the Court, feel free to contact me and I will help you with that in a more simplified manner than the original process, as I will need essentially just current financial incomes and number of temporary overnights for each parent.

5. Please be aware that, without a mutual agreement for changes to Child Support that is needed due to decrease or loss of funds during COVID-19, filing a formal request for modification with the Court as quickly as possible is the best manner to protect the parent who cannot pay the full Court Ordered amount right now. The date of filing would be the effective date of any change, otherwise the paying parent would likely be responsible to take care of any arrearage that accrues. Feel free to contact me and I will help with that.
6. Note that if the Department of Revenue is handling the Child Support payments for your case, there will be no stimulus check given to a parent who is not current with their Court Ordered Child Support.

### Temporary Parenting Issues:

1. It is possible that one parent may have greater fears and concerns about COVID-19 than the other parent. This is the time for the parent with more anxiety to be treated with patience. For example, one parent may be entirely uncomfortable bringing the child into Publix while the other parent may not be as concerned; one parent may be meticulous about wearing gloves and a mask everywhere while the other parent believes that hand washing care is all that is needed; one parent may insist on taking shoes off before entering the home while the other parent believes that is an excessive measure.
2. Everyone needs to feel safe during the uncertainties surrounding COVID-19, and this is the time that extra caution may in fact be prudent. If one parent requests extra measures of caution and the other parent disagrees, it is recommended that the disagreeing parent defer to the requests that may feel unreasonable during normal times. This will go a long way to helping your child feel comfortable by having consistency with these issues.
3. Mental Health Professionals are recommending that news watching by parents be limited to no more than 30-60 minutes per day to reduce the anxiety that can be created by the constant stories of concern. Most of it is repetitive anyway, and time can be better spent.

4. It is also recommended to shield the child from the news so that the parent can filter the information the child hears and keep it age appropriate. Children need to be reassured that their parents know what to do and how to handle this crisis, and that it will be over and things will go back to normal soon. Summer is recommended as the target date to tell children that this COVID-19 will pass.
5. Mental Health Professionals also say that it is best that children are not hearing hours on end of anxious sounding interviews on the TV, including perhaps their parents' comments and phone conversations with friends and family about the news. Children need to feel secure, especially during this time, so that calming family programs, including sitcoms, animal shows, food shows, or comedies are recommended as more appropriate for children to watch on TV right now. Save action films and mysteries for another time.
6. Be a good role model for your child. Practice the hand-washing and social distancing recommendations and guidelines yourself. *Zoom.com* is available to connect friends and family to one another in a manner that is safe and is being well received. A 40-minute session is free, or a reasonably monthly fee provides more time.
7. Mental Health Professionals are encouraging parents to give their children structure and consistency during the day, such as they experienced at school. For example, getting up the same time every day and keeping a daily routine for meals, study time, TV time, and other activities such as walking with parents outside.
8. That also includes doing something every day that feels like a sense of accomplishment, and finding good moments in each day to appreciate, despite all that is going on.

#### Handling Extreme Tension in the Home:

1. Should there be an incident of Domestic Violence in the home during this time, 911 should be called and a Police Report should be requested.
2. The Courts are open to handling Domestic Violence cases, and a Police Report, which documents details of the situation is an essential element of that process.

3. For questions about this dynamic, or any other topic of concern, feel free to contact me, anytime, including nights and weekends.