

Guidance for Parents about Parenting Plans during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Alaska's presiding judges issued an order giving parents some general guidance on how to co-parent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions and answers discuss this guidance. You can read the order: [First Updated Presiding Judge's Statewide Administrative Order Governing Relaxation and Suspension of Various Court Rules Based on the Covid-19 Pandemic \(April 3, 2020\)](#).

[Can my co-parent and I change the schedule if we agree?](#)

[What if my co-parent and I don't agree on what to do?](#)

[Does our schedule change because school is not in session?](#)

[When does "school end for the year" or "summer break" start?](#)

[What should we do if the other parent or I are under quarantine or someone gets COVID-19?](#)

[Can I take my child out of state?](#)

[Can I keep my child home if the other parent isn't safe?](#)

[How can I spend time with my child if it is supposed to be only in public place like a library or a fast-food restaurant and they are closed now?](#)

[Can my co-parent and I change the schedule if we agree?](#)

Yes. Parents are encouraged to work together to solve problems with your parenting plan order. Parents should write down agreements in an email or text to avoid confusion later. If you are changing the number of overnights a child spends with each parent, and the time will not be made up later, you should file the change with the court because child support might change too. You can fill out and file the "[Interim Parenting Plan Agreement & Order for Custody and Visitation During COVID-19 Period](#)."

[What if my co-parent and I don't agree on what to do?](#)

Parents may not make changes in the parenting plan schedule without the other parent's agreement or an order from the court.

Usually if you and your co-parent don't agree, you can [file a motion](#) and ask the court to decide. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, courts are only holding motion hearings in emergency situations, so you may not get a decision for a long time.

Mediation may be available at no cost to help you and the other parent communicate and reach an agreement. Read about [Mediation](#) or call the Family Law Self-Help Center Helpline: (907) 264-0851 or (866) 279-0851.

Does our schedule change because school is not in session?

No. Parents should continue with the school-year schedule, unless they can agree on a new parenting plan.

When does “school end for the year” or “summer break” start?

The same day it would have if there was no COVID-19 pandemic, unless your school extends the school year. Then it ends when your school stops having on-line learning for the school year.

What should we do if the other parent or I are under quarantine or someone gets COVID-19?

The court expects parents to continue to follow their regular parenting plan schedule.

Unless the parents reach a different agreement, if a parent must quarantine when the children are with the other parent, then the children should remain with the non-quarantined parent until the quarantined parent is released from the quarantine. The formerly quarantined parent is entitled to a day-for-day make up period for each day he or she missed with the children because of being in quarantine.

If a parent is self-quarantined with the children, the parties should follow the existing schedule unless they agree to a new schedule.

If a parent or child gets COVID-19, parents should always keep the child’s best interest in mind when figuring out if a different parenting arrangement may make sense during that time. The parents should follow the advice of their health care providers in deciding what parenting arrangement is best or makes sense. Parents may not make changes in the parenting plan schedule without the other parent’s agreement (which can be based on a health care provider’s recommendation), or an order from the court. When you are trying to decide whether or not to agree with the other parent, remember that when you do have a hearing before a judge at a later time, you may have to explain why your decision was in your child’s best interest.

If you and the other parent cannot agree, you can [file a motion](#) and ask the court to decide. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, courts are only holding motion hearings in emergency situations, so you may not get a decision for a long time.

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Can I take my child out of state?

The guidance in the judges' statewide order says parents should avoid taking children outside of Alaska. Both parents need to think really carefully whether it is a good idea for children to travel by airplane right now, either in or out of state, because of health concerns and the likely need to quarantine for 2 weeks upon arrival in the new state and when returning to Alaska. It is too early to predict if it will be safe to travel by the time the school year ends.

Can I keep my child home if the other parent isn't safe?

Parents may not make changes in the parenting plan schedule without the other parent's agreement or an order from the court.

If you want a change, you can ask the other parent. If you both agree to the change, write down your agreements in an email or text to avoid confusion later. If you are changing the number of overnights a child spends with each parent, and the time will not be made up later, you should file the change with the court because child support might change too. You can fill out and file the "[Interim Parenting Plan Agreement & Order for Custody and Visitation During COVID-19 Period.](#)"

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How can I spend time with my child if it is supposed to be only in public place like a library or a fast-food restaurant and they are closed now?

Try to be creative. Both parents need to remember that is best for children to keep their normal routine as much as possible. Can you agree on a different location? Are there outdoor locations where you can take a walk without playing on equipment or coming in contact with others? If you can't agree on a location, try to use or increase phone calls or contact through video chats like Facetime.