

Public Health Tips for Parents on Sharing Child Custody and Co-Parenting during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic may create challenges for parents who are not living together and are co-parenting their children.

Try and Maintain Regular Structure and Parenting Routines during COVID-19 by:

- Showing flexibility and creativity to promote the physical and emotional wellbeing of children during these challenging times.
- Working together to help your child feel safe and reduce their stress and anxiety.
- Sticking to regular parenting time and custody schedules unless changes are necessary to ensure COVID-19 precautions such as isolation or quarantine are followed.
- Focusing on what is best for your child and not using the health crisis to prevent your child from having contact with the other parent.

Class Order

- There are times when people have to follow the [Class Order](#), which sets out legally binding requirements for [self-isolation](#). These requirements can apply to both children and their parents.
- Self-isolation has an important public health purpose, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.
- The Class Order requires everyone to whom it applies to stay home and, within the home, to stay separated from other people as much as possible and take other precautions to prevent transmission.
 - The following additional materials from Public Health Ontario may be helpful: [Self-isolation: Guide for caregivers, household members and close contacts](#)
 - [How To Care for A Child Who Needs To Self-Isolate](#)
 - [Multilingual COVID-19 Public Resources](#)

Self-isolating and Parenting under an Agreement or Court Order

- Self-isolation requirements can be challenging when children and their parents live in different homes and share parenting under an agreement or court order.
- Ideally, every person required to self-isolate will stay in one place, living with the fewest people possible, for the whole time they are required by the Class Order to self-isolate. This limits the number of people exposed to the risk of transmission and infection.
- A shared parenting arrangement may call for a child to move from one home to another while either the child or a parent is self-isolating, leading to more people being exposed to the self-isolating person than would otherwise be the case. In these circumstances, the parents may wish to adjust usual shared parenting arrangements. For example:
 - If the child is the one required to self-isolate, to allow the child to remain in one home until the self-isolation period is complete.
 - If a parent is required to self-isolate, to allow the child to remain in the home of the other parent (who is not self-isolating) until the self-isolation period is complete.
- If a parenting exchange does take place during a period when a child or parent is self-isolating, then both households will be potentially considered exposed and will have to self-isolate as required.

Shared Parenting Arrangements are Legal Matters

- Halton Region Public Health is not able to provide parents with legal advice on their family law obligations, including those established by an agreement or court order.
- If you think a parent with whom you share parenting responsibilities is not taking the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 you may wish to consider obtaining legal advice.
- The [Law Society of Ontario](#) has posted information specific to the challenges presented by COVID-19 that may be helpful to you in dealing with these legal matters.
- If you do not have a lawyer, the [Law Society of Ontario](#) website also includes information about its emergency family law referral service as well as contact information for [Legal Aid Ontario](#).

For more legal information or support:

- Legal Aid Ontario: 1-800-668-8258
- Law Society of Ontario: 1-855-947-5255
- Law Society Referral Service: 1-800-668-7380

