“Custody and Placement Challenges Facing Parents During Coronavirus: Important Role for the Brief Legal Advice Clinic”

Kathy Charlton
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Challenges

• 1. School
• 2. Placement/Visitation Schedules and Logistics
• 3. Vacations and Holidays
• 4. Psychological Effects of COVID-19 on Children
• 5. Adult Children in College
• 6. Practical Advice for Our Parent Clients
Rules and Norms

• Will parents agree to follow CDC or other local, state or national advice?
• Will parents agree upon a set of rules to apply to the children in both households?
• Vaccinations—regular flu vaccine and the expected Coronavirus vaccine.

School

• In-person or virtual or combo? Phased plan?
• Public v. private?
• COVID 19 outbreak at the school? What constitutes an outbreak?
• One or both parents working from home? Who is responsible for virtual learning?
• Learning pods with other families?
• School changes from virtual to in-person or the reverse because of an outbreak. What then?
Placement/Visitation Schedules and Logistics

• Modifications necessary to existing schedule?
• Hypotheticals
• Grandparents as care providers?
• Children’s interaction with other children for birthday parties, sleepovers, outings, contests, traveling sports teams?

Vacations and Holidays

• Modify existing plans or cancel them?
• Mode of transportation?
• Avoid “hot spots” or places with quarantine requirements like Chicago?
• Where to stay?
• Quarantine upon return?
• Upcoming holidays---plan now
Psychological Effects of COVID 19 on Children

- Parent more stressed—verbal and physical abuse of children and witnessed by children
- Therapy for children—ongoing or new
- GAL interviews
- Helping children cope with loss of family and friends
- How to respond to their questions and fears

Adult Children in College

- What role for parents, if any, in encouraging CDC compliant behavior?
- One or both parents pay or contribute to tuition, room and board—role in whether the adult child continues or takes a year off?
- What if the college closes the child’s dorm? Where does the adult child live?
Practical Advice for Our Clients

• Encourage them to follow court orders—self help is still inappropriate.
• Recommend parents work with the other parent to make changes to the placement schedule.
• Patience, understanding and flexibility vital.
• Start talking now about the upcoming holiday season.
• Model for their children sound decision making in a difficult time for everyone.

Thank you!

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• Kathy Charlton
• 414-221-6493
• kcharlton@hq-law.com