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**Re: Coronavirus, Parenting Time, and Court**

To my valued clients:

I am writing you in order to address the ever-present concern over what to do in the midst of this pandemic as it relates to parental access and the status of your case. Over the last 24 hours, I have received several phone calls, text messages, and emails from clients who are either refusing, or being refused parenting time. Questions like, "Can he/she do that?", "Do I call the police?", and "What will the Judge say?" cannot be easily answered in these uncertain times. With that said, be assured that I am in continuous communication with updates from the Court in order to help ascertain the best way to handle each and every issue that may arise.

While I realize every case is unique, this information should help answer some of your questions. As of today, the Governor has ordered all schools closed until April 1, 2020.

**To the Custodial Parents:**

If you are a custodial parent, please recognize and acknowledge how frightening this must be for your child(ren). I urge you to set aside your differences and whatever issues you may have with the other parent and put the best interest of your child(ren) above all. This is a time when your child(ren) need reassurance from BOTH their parents. Isolating them from their other parent only breeds more fear. Unless your child(ren)'s doctor has recommended otherwise, I encourage and advise you to follow all existing Court Orders.

I implore you to ask yourself, "am I using this pandemic as an excuse to avoid dealing with my ex?" or "am I seeing this as an opportunity to hurt this person?". Only you will know the truth behind your decision. I strongly urge you to put aside any petty notions you may have and focus on the larger picture. This is a true crisis and family must come first. Like it or not, your child(ren) have two parents and Courts will look negatively on a parent during such a crisis if they act in such a manner.

If you are truly concerned over the health and safety of your child(ren) as it relates to this virus, by all means, seek medical advice, not legal advice. If you and your child(ren)'s doctor decide that the risk of leaving the home is too great, then please consider setting up unfettered video chat/telephone access with the non-custodial parent.

Discuss this with them. Keep the lines of communication as open as possible. It is the least you can do to ensure that your child(ren)'s life maintains some semblance of normalcy.

### **To the Non-Custodial Parents:**

Now, if you are the non-custodial parent, what do you do if the custodial parent refuses to give you parental access? I would suggest you communicate your concerns with the custodial parent in writing. If your requests for parenting time are denied, request unfettered video chats, FaceTime, Skype, and telephone access. Reassure your child(ren) that they are safe and that you love and want to see them, but you are being cautious. DO NOT blame the custodial parent for your lack of access. Remember, this is not about you – this is about your child(ren).

You can make an incident report with the local police to document a violation of your Court Ordered parenting time, and when the Courts resume their regular calendar, an application may be made for make-up parenting time. Additionally, I urge you to keep a log/diary as to all instances in which your Court Ordered parenting time was denied by the custodial parent. As previously stated, Courts are handling these situations on a case-by-case basis only if an emergency exists. If you are being denied access, let us know so we may file an emergency application on your behalf.

### **What to do if you suspect your child is in actual, imminent danger:**

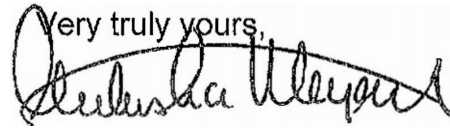
Whether you are the custodial parent or non-custodial parent, if you feel that your child is in actual, imminent danger as a result of their isolation with the other parent, by all means, contact Child Protective Services and your local Police, immediately. However, use your best judgment, as these resources are being inundated and are needed to address the truest emergencies.

### **Upcoming Court Dates:**

As of right now, all non-essential cases are being adjourned to May and June 2020. If you are receiving this correspondence, your case is a "non-essential" case in the eyes of the Court. Take no offense. The Court must deal solely with child abuse and neglect matters, along with emergency orders of protection. If you have a Court date in March or April, you will hear from my office regarding the status of your matter. Once I receive further information, I will let you know. As always, feel free to call me.

This is a time in our history where we are being called to come together in furtherance of protecting our children, both physically and psychologically. This is not an opportunity to further alienate and/or rally against the other parent. Rather use this as a chance to teach your children that when the world around them is thrown into chaos, they can always find comfort in BOTH parents. This is especially important when you are in the midst of a custody proceeding. It will show your ability to foster a relationship with the non-custodial parent and vice-versa.

Stay healthy and as always, please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions you may have.

Very truly yours,  


Natasha Meyers