

NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts



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Statewide Guidelines for Parenting Time of Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic

PHOENIX – At least one party in family court cases is self-represented in 80 to 90 percent of superior court cases in Arizona. The COVID-19 pandemic has created or could create challenges with the regular exchange of children for parenting time and visitation. School closures and spring break have already been disrupted by the pandemic and its effects could continue into holidays, summer vacation plans, and beyond.

Statewide guidelines were created to encourage families to follow their existing parenting time and visitation plans as closely as possible to give children a sense of consistency and stability while being mindful of the community's health and safety. The guidelines are meant to help families adjust to the work and school changes created by the pandemic and to reduce the demands on the court during this time of reduced staff and social distancing, understanding that the needs of each family are different.

When families do not follow the court ordered plan and cannot agree to temporary changes to their plan, the court will be available to make decisions in the best interests of the children, including entering new orders in emergency situations if needed. However, Arizona's courts strongly encourage families to first work together to resolve issues. Arranging parenting time and visitation or adjusting the locations for exchanges could be challenging in the days and weeks to come. Finally, in cases where a parent, child, custodian, or family member must self-quarantine or where access is restricted, families should try to arrange more visits by phone or video calls.

Parenting time and visitation do not stop under the governor's current stay-home order and the court's orders remain in effect. Individuals subject to an order of protection must follow those orders' restrictions when considering changes to parenting time and visitation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, families are encouraged to follow the statewide guidelines at

<https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/216/Pandemic/COVID19ParentingPlans.pdf>.

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