



Information for families with a custody and access order or agreement during the COVID-19 pandemic

- If you have a court order or agreement dealing with custody and access, all parties are still expected to follow that order or agreement. The current COVID-19 situation does not change the court order or agreement, nor is it a reason to deny parenting time. Only a new court order or agreement can change that.
- In stressful times like these, children can benefit from seeing both parents.
- The COVID-19 situation does NOT prohibit parents from leaving home to pick up or drop off their children to or from the other party in compliance with custody and access orders and agreements.
- As each parent exercises their parenting time, they are reminded that they are to also comply with the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines and orders respecting hand washing, social distancing and self-isolation.
- When the court made the existing parenting order, it assumed each parent would act in the best interests of the children. In the current situation, parents are encouraged to discuss appropriate and responsible care of their children. If, in the best interests of the children, parties can reach an agreement to adjust/suspend a parenting order or previous agreement. A new agreement may include increased telephone and video communication and increased future parenting time to make up for time lost during the COVID-19 situation.
- If a parent wishes to change the existing court order or agreement but is unable to reach an agreement with the other parent then they should obtain legal advice as how to proceed. Private practice family law lawyers can provide advice or you may wish to contact Legal Aid 1-800-563-9911 or Public Legal Information Association of NL (PLIAN) 1-888-660-7700
- If you would like to discuss your matter with Family Justice Services, please call the main office nearest you, where we shall endeavor to return your call within 48 hours during regular office hours, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.

Avalon Region: 709-729-1183

Central Region: 709-256-1205

Western and Labrador Region: 709-634-4174

See Helpful Resources on the following page.

Helpful Resources

- **Public Legal Information Association of NL** (PLIAN) provides useful information for families such as Covid-19 impact on Courts; handling legal matters during Covid-19 and getting a lawyer during Covid-19 to name but a few services. PLIAN can be contacted at: 1-888-660-7788 or by emailing: info@publiclegalinfo.com

The PLIAN website can be accessed at: <https://publiclegalinfo.com/covid-19-legal-information/>

- **Support Enforcement Program** (SEP) Division performs a number of services related to the collection and distribution of court-ordered funds for support, maintenance or alimony. There is also useful information for Recipients and also for Payors who have lost their job due to Covid-19. If you need to contact the Support Enforcement Agency, they ask that you email them at: seps@gov.nl.ca or direct message through the secure web portal at: <https://sea-remote.justice.gov.nl.ca>

The SEP website can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/jps/childsupport/support-enforcement/>

- **Legal Aid** (LA) are only accepting applications at this time for urgent criminal, family or child protection matters. Legal Aid offices are closed to the public so there will be no in-person appointments at this time. If you require urgent assistance please call 1-800-563-9911 for further direction.

The LA website can be accessed at: <https://www.legalaid.nl.ca/index.html>

- **Bridge the gApp** is an online resource designed to support mental wellness for adult and youth.

The website can be accessed at: <https://www.bridgethegapp.ca/>

- **Family Justice Services** (FJS) online course Living Apart Parenting Together helps parents make careful and informed decisions about their separation and any conflicts that may arise from it. It helps parents make decisions which will take into account the best interests of their children.

The online session can be accessed at: <https://www.supreme.courtcourses.ca/>

