



CO-PARENTING, DIVORCE & CUSTODY:

How COVID-19 Will Impact Your Case

And Why Coronavirus May Ultimately Help
Move Your Life Forward

The impact of the Coronavirus in the United States has been swift and severe. It has quickly affected the way we live, the way we interact, the way we shop and it has even impacted our court system – so much so that if you have a custody or divorce issue you may have some concerns.

At Hepner & Pagan, LLP, we are powerful advocates who are eager to leverage our skills and experience to protect your rights and help you reach your legal goals.

These are certainly troubled times and we want to be there to help you take the actions necessary to protect yourself and your children. We strive to be compassionate counselors and promise to work hard to achieve long-term workable legal solutions that move you and your family forward.

Right now, with the current panic over the Coronavirus, many clients are wondering how they should respond.

They are asking questions like:

Co-Parenting

- Do I need to follow my parenting plan?
- Can I withhold my child during COVID-19 without consequences?
- Can my spouse take my kids near people exposed

to COVID-19?

- How do I co-parent with a spouse who doesn't agree with my parenting style?

Alternative Dispute

- Coronavirus is increasing the negative emotions in my relationship – how do I deal with that without the court's involvement?

Divorce

- How can we move our parenting disputes forward despite the courts being shut down?
- Is now the time to get a divorce?

These are all very valid concerns in this unprecedented time and we are going to address them in this book. We are here to help guide you through this uncertain period.

We understand that even though many of us are staying home, life doesn't stop. There are concerns that must be dealt with and the welfare of families must be protected.

We created this guide to help you more easily get the answers you need to navigate the Coronavirus Outbreak and its effects on divorce and child custody cases.



But First, Here Are Some Facts About Corona Virus:

*(Following information,
unless otherwise noted,
obtained from the CDC)*

What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a newly identified type of virus that has caused a recent outbreak of respiratory illnesses. Coronavirus was first discovered in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China.

What does COVID-19 stand for?

The 'CO' stands for 'corona,' the 'VI' stands for 'virus,' and the 'D' stands for disease. This disease was formerly known as the "2019 novel coronavirus" or "2019-nCoV". Now it is widely called COVID-19. There are actually many types of human

coronaviruses in existence, including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses.

What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

People with Coronavirus may experience: tiredness, a dry cough, fever and difficulty breathing (severe cases).

Who is affected by Coronavirus?

Anyone can catch Coronavirus but elderly individuals who struggled with previous health issues like hypertension are particularly at risk.

How does Coronavirus compare to the flu?

The CDC estimates that there were 39 to 56 million flu illnesses and 24,000 to 62,000 flu deaths from Oct. 1, 2019, to April 4, 2020. (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/preliminary-in-season-estimates.htm>).

By comparison, as of April 14, 2020, 591,064 people had tested positive for the Coronavirus in the United States with 24,600 deaths. (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/us/>). The Coronavirus numbers are expected to continue rising.

That means the court system could be impacted even more

than it has already been. There could be more closings, more delays, more uncertainty.

Hepner & Pagan, LLP, is here to help!



Corona Virus Custody & Divorce Tips

So without further ado, let's dive into our prescription for those facing family law issues.

**TIP
1**

Carefully Consider Each Parenting Action That You Take.

The simple truth is how you act now during the Corona virus Outbreak could highly impact if the court sees you as a responsible and cooperative co-parent in the future. That means if you have an existing custody order, you should, if at all possible, continue to follow it. Please keep in mind that failing to follow the order and withholding custody could lead to negative consequences in the future, including contempt of court.

If disagreements arise concerning the order, we recommend trying to get an informal agreement between you and your spouse to best protect your kids and keep everyone happy and healthy during the outbreak. This agreement could also detail who, if anyone, the kids are allowed to be around during the Coronavirus Pandemic if you are worried about your ex exposing the kids to COVID-19. Courts are only taking the most extreme cases right now, which means you and your ex are going to need to solve this by yourselves or with the help of an attorney.

Therefore, try your best to find a compromise that works for everyone - especially the children.

**TIP
2**

Focus on your household.

It's common in a divorce for there to be co-parenting disagreements, particularly in periods of high stress like we have today with the Coronavirus Pandemic.

When you're going through a divorce and you're parenting in two different households, you **MUST** understand you don't have a say over what is happening in the other parent's household as long as the child is safe, happy and healthy with the other parent.

Focus on your home and do the absolute best you can to provide them with a stable, normal and loving environment. If your spouse isn't letting you see your kids, don't try to immediately involve the authorities to enforce visitation rights.

Talk to one of our knowledgeable attorneys first to see if we can help you resolve the situation.



**TIP
3**

Consider Mediation, Co-Parenting & Other Alternative Dispute Methods.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has drastically increased the stress many people are feeling right now and that increased level of stress can easily lead to an increase in co-parenting disagreements. If you are having a disagreement with your ex, we recommend you explore mediation, co-parenting counselors and other alternative dispute options due to current court closings and delays in proceedings.

We now offer these services through virtual consultations so that you can reach out for help and find a mutually amicable solution for your family while keeping everyone safe. Here are some additional tips for dealing with stressful situations with an ex:

- When you're feeling emotionally elevated, walk away, they say it takes 20 minutes to calm down. You DO NOT have to try to solve an issue right then.
- Don't take things personally when people are angry, it's not always about you, it's about them or the COVID-19 situation.
- Most of us are "pre-wired" to be extremely upset

set by what our exes say. So when discussing an issue with an ex try to keep sentences short and be courteous.

- Do NOT text anything when communicating – you usually can't solve an issue or disagreement via writing and what you say can be used against you.
- If you need help calming down or resolving your situation, call our team to help advise you.

**TIP
4**

Articulate your Concerns to the Other Party.

Many issues that arise during a divorce are caused by a lack of communication about each party's expectations. You need to talk to see if each other's expectations can be reasonably met. Depending on how acrimonious the split, it may be difficult to try to talk to a former partner but remember this is for the sake of the kids. In difficult times like this we need to set aside disagreements and work together to keep family safe. If at all possible, talk to your ex and try to come to an agreement on what the kids will and won't be allowed to do.

In most areas of the country right now, it is recommended that kids stay home. They shouldn't be outside playing with

other kids. They shouldn't be visiting extended family members. They should remain in the safety of their homes.

If you and your ex are not able to come to an agreement, we are highly skilled and experienced in divorce dispute resolution and may be able to help you come to an agreement with your ex spouse or partner.

**TIP
5**

**Use This Time to Move Your
Divorce Forward**

If you're considering a divorce, you can still take steps forward during the COVID-19 crisis. For example, you can meet with your lawyer (virtually), work out issues through mediation and push forward on required financial and settlement paperwork.

We recommend using this time to narrow down your dispute with your spouse. Schedule a time to talk to your ex and work through as many things as possible. You should also consider working with a mediation lawyer during this time. We have found that it's possible to use mediation for many disputes, even in high conflict situations.

Mediation also has other benefits during the Coronavirus Outbreak. For one thing, mediations can be held even when the courthouse is closed so you may be able to get a faster resolution to the issue.



The Bottom Line ...

Whether you are looking for a simple uncontested divorce or are facing complex issues including child custody and support, the advice and guidance of a highly skilled attorney can make things much easier.

At Hepner & Pagan, LLP, we can help you navigate the complexities of divorce law during this unprecedented time in

American history. We will:

- Work closely with you to ensure your needs are met and your concerns addressed.
- Rely on our extensive experience in the areas of divorce law and child custody to help you get the best outcome.
- Diligently strive to protect your rights.



**The
Next
Step ...**

Right now, the Coronavirus is having a significant impact on the way things are getting done – including divorces and child custody agreements. Don't risk making mistakes or enduring unnecessary, costly delays – talk to an attorney at Hepner & Pagan, LLP.



Schedule a one-hour con- sultation **NOW** and **SAVE!**

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT:



408-429-8336



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If you call and book now, we will reduce our normal hourly consultation fee by more than \$130. Hurry, only limited appointments are being scheduled.

Don't worry, appointments can be completed by phone or video call – face to face interaction is not necessary.

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