



We at Neighborhood Legal Services Program understand that this is a confusing and unnerving time and many of you have questions about co-parenting amidst COVID-19. Please see below for a list of FAQs to help guide you through your custody questions during the pandemic. If you have any questions that are not included in this list, please do not hesitate to contact your attorney at NLSP.

**Q: Do I still need to follow the custody order?**

A: Yes, you and your co-parent must stick to the custody order in place. Custody exchanges are included as essential travel in the Maryland, Virginia, and DC stay-at-home orders, which means that you must maintain your custody schedule. While it may not be easy, it may be helpful to maintain stability for your children to reduce stress. However, this is a hard time for everyone and you may need to exercise some flexibility. If you feel you need to alter your custody schedule for any reason, please consult with your NLSP attorney first.

**Q: What do I do if my exchange location is closed?**

A: If your exchange location has been closed, you may need to consider an alternate exchange location. For example, you might select a business classified as an “essential service” near the original exchange location and ask your co-parent if this new location works with them. Essential services include gas stations, pharmacies, grocery stores, convenience stores, banks, and laundromats.

**Q: Should I still continue with the custody arrangement if me or my child is high-risk for COVID-19?**

A: Yes, if you or your child is high-risk for COVID-19, you and your co-parent may need to have open communication on how to reduce risks for your child. Some ways to do this are highlighted by the [CDC](#). If you and your co-parent feel that the risks are too high, contact your child’s pediatrician for advice. You may need to discuss alternatives to your current custody arrangement, such as FaceTime visits or scheduling make-up visits for a later date. Please be advised that altering your custody schedule is a last resort for when all other options have been exhausted. Any changes that you make to your custody schedule should be put in writing.

**Q: What if one parent becomes infected with COVID-19?**

A: If one parent becomes infected with COVID-19, you may need to alter your custody arrangement. The infected parent may need to postpone visits, keeping in mind that this may be what is best for your child. This is temporary, only until the parent has recovered, and does not become the permanent schedule. Any changes that you make to your custody schedule should be put in writing.



**Q: Should we still maintain our custody schedule, including visitation, if one parent is a medical professional?**

A: While it is important to maintain the custody arrangement, it is also important to be reasonable. If a parent needs to work unusually long hours, or if a parent's job increases the risk that your family will be exposed to COVID-19, you and your co-parent may decide to temporarily suspend visits until COVID-19 has subsided. Ideally, this should be a discussion between you and your co-parent and any changes to your custody order should be put in writing.

**Q: What if one parent cannot pay child support because of COVID-19-related financial issues, such as the loss of a job or temporary suspension?**

A: Generally, temporary changes to financial situations are not grounds to modify child support. However, you and your co-parent should be flexible, reasonable, and understanding of each other's needs during this time. The parent paying child support should pay as much as they can because their child is depending on this support. The parent receiving the support should also recognize the unusual financial hardships caused by the pandemic.

**Q: What do I do if my child relies on meals served at their school?**

A: DC is still providing meals for students every weekday at many locations throughout the city. A [list](#) of meal sites and times is provided.

**Q: How is my child continuing their education from home?**

A: DCPS has distributed packets of learning materials for students from Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and each graduation requirement course for 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade. You should have already received these packets. Please contact DCPS if you have not. DCPS has also provided further instructional materials [online](#).

**Q: My child just returned from a visit with the other parent without their school packet. What should I do?**

A: Unless prohibited by court order, you should contact your co-parent and arrange some way to get the packet to your child. For example, they can leave it in your mailbox or you can go pick it up. You may be able to exchange it at the next scheduled custody exchange. It is important that your child continue their education, even during social distancing. While you and your co-parent work out how to get the packet, your child may still continue their education through [online resources](#) provided by DCPS.



**Q: What do I do if my child does not have access to a computer/WiFi at my co-parent's home?**

A: DCPS is engaging in distance learning through educational packets that may not require the use of the computer. However, there are some additional resources available for your child online. You may want to have a discussion with your co-parent about your child's access to a computer. For example, maybe they have a family member who can help. If there are no options available, then you should work out a learning schedule for your child that allows them to do schoolwork that does not require a computer while at your co-parent's house. If access to the internet is an issue, Comcast's [Internet Essential program](#) is providing families who meet certain criteria up to two months of free internet service.