

Guidance released by Family Court for children in shared care

Judge Jacquelyn Moran, Principle Family Court Judge, has released [guidance](#) for what parents should be doing about children in shared care arrangements during the COVID-19 alert level four lockdown.

As businesses and services around New Zealand have been restricted and have had to make changes to their operation, care arrangements imposed by the Family Court will need to be reviewed and possibly adjusted on a case by case basis.

The Family Court's guidelines, following the primary directive to prevent the spread of COVID-19 advise:

- That shared care arrangements where the families are in different towns or communities should provide safety to the child by not moving them between homes;
- That children in the same community can continue to change homes unless someone in one of the households has been overseas in the last 14 days or is unwell, or if the child is unwell;
- That it may be in the best interests of preventing virus spread to reach an agreement where the child remains with one parent/caregiver for the duration of the four-week period; and
- That where a child is not able to move households, that indirect contact (texts, calls, etc) with the other household should be generous.

There is a strict request to parents that they consider what will be best for their children and “make decisions that are in the best interest of the child and their families in the wider community. This global pandemic should not be seen as an opportunity for parents to unilaterally change established care arrangements without cause or otherwise behave in a manner inconsistent with the child's best interests or the court ordered care arrangements”.

Resource:

Statement from the Principal Family Court Judge

<<https://www.districtcourts.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Media-Releases/24-March-2020-Children-in-shared-care.pdf>> 24 March 2020