

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact on Divorce and Child Custody Cases in Broward County, Florida

Many couples who have lived busy lives now are social isolating at home with their spouse. As people are required to reside in quarantine with their spouses, they often get to start knowing their husband or wife a lot more. For some, it may be a blessing that they chose the right person to grow old with and for others it is a wakeup call that their spouse is not the right person for them to live with for the rest of their lives.

The loss in the stock market due to the Coronavirus has subsequently decreased the financial wealth of many individuals. This has caused some wealthier spouses to decide it is an opportunistic time to get out of their marriage while their net worth is down for a lower settlement.

Law firms in Fort Lauderdale and throughout Broward County, Florida are listed under essential businesses that can remain open. In addition, although normal operations of the Family Division at the Broward County courthouse are suspended until Friday, April 17, 2020, many regular divorce and child custody court hearings are proceeding using electronic technology at the courthouse. The divorce and child custody judges at the Broward County Courthouse and dedicated family law attorneys have been equipped with Zoom videoconferencing to have remote court hearings to avoid the public appearing in person. Therefore, with the expected influx of divorces cases, work is being done to ensure that cases will continue to be processed without delay.

While some people have jobs with a steady salary and can work at home, many other people are being laid off due to the change in the economy. In addition, small business owners who had to close their doors due to the Coronavirus are financially suffering. This can directly impact a person's ability to pay alimony and child support. To avoid a disastrous situation and potential jail time for failure to make support payments, those with an alimony or child support obligations should continue to make payments based upon his or her ability to pay and also should be proactive in seeking a modification whether temporary or permanent based upon the circumstances in a particular case. Failure to be proactive and file for a modification can result in the payee's vested right to the support payments.

For separating couples who have children, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about new challenges. Parents are having questions about how to navigate their child custody schedules, especially those schedules that are focused around the child's school. Even though the schools are not open, the child custody agreements or orders should remain in full force as if the schools were open. Parents need to co-parent together and exchange information if a child was exposed to someone who either has the Coronavirus or has symptoms that may be the Coronavirus. For your child's safety, parents will need to work together or a Court can order specific requirements for your child's level of socially isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Attorney Rebekah Brown Wiseman can work with you to create a detailed parenting plan that meets your family's needs. This parenting plan can be negotiated with your child's other parent and if necessary, litigated in Court.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our daily life. Our office is actively keeping up with each update as it is released from the Broward County Courthouse and adjusting our practice accordingly. We are creating new language to agreements, creating new arguments for modifications and working with other professionals such as forensic accountants to address the financial changes caused by the Coronavirus to client's financial profiles. Contact the Law Office of Rebekah Brown-Wiseman at 954-563-1331 or send us an email to rbw@rbwfamilylaw.com so that we may discuss your particular circumstances to further assist you.