

TODAY'S CO-PARENT

2020 Edition, Issue 3

OCTOBER, 2020



Divorce, Co-Parenting & COVID-19: Challenges & Opportunities

For separated or divorced families, co-parenting can be stressful even in good times. During the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, families are discovering that previously stable arrangements may not withstand the stresses created by fears of illness and mandates to shelter in place. And for families whose co-parenting and custody arrangements were already contentious, COVID-19 may be amplifying conflicts and creating new ones.

“In a crisis, children and parents alike need a place where they feel safe,” says Anthony Charuvastra, MD, adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at NYU Langone and member of its Child Study Center. “For many of us, that place is the family, in all its various configurations. How can divorced, separated, or separating parents address the unique parenting challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic creates?” Dr. Charuvastra offers advice for co-parenting during this challenging time.

Working on Your Relationship, Even After You're Divorced

“Post-divorce parenting falls into three categories: **conflicted, parallel,** *Cont. on page 4*

WFCF solely survives on **donations** to continue to provide **our newsletter, helpline service, and monthly meetings in 10 areas** in WI, each month. Donations also make it possible for WFCF to continue **talking with our legislators on the benefits of shared parenting for our children,** and for

their parents, as well as for society as a whole.

There are several ways to help us (WFCF) continue to provide these services.

JOIN: <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/join.htm>

VOLUNTEER:

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/volunteering.htm>

DONATE:

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/join.htm>
bottom of the page for donations.

Inside this issue:

Covid 19 challenges and Opportunities	1
President's message	2/3
New bill in Congress to preserve parental rights	3
WFCF NEEDS YOU	4
SMART parent advice"	5
Inter. Conference Shared Parenting	6

We are Wisconsin's Oldest "**Separated Parents Organization**" having been formed in 1988. We have been hosting our Monthly Support and Network Separated Parents Night Out Meetings since 2000 and are a 100% volunteer organization that has always and will always believe that

Kids NEED BOTH Parents

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT *Tommy Bickel*

We are still in the Covid situation unfortunately. Schools are partially open, or not open at all with online the only educational option.

More pressure on parents, especially **separated parents**. Things like Co-Parenting skills and cooperation and communication become that much more important during a situation like we are in now. Certainly parents would not want to add more pressure than kids are currently dealing with, addressing remote learning, and social in person separation anxiety. Working smoothly and effectively with the other parent is absolutely a paramount concern now.

Due to health concerns all of WFCF in person meetings each month have been cancelled. To continue to **provide help** to people involved with family court or just separated parent issues, we have initiated four individual night ZOOM meetings where people can ask questions and talk over viable

solutions. Information about the four ZOOM meetings can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinFathersForChildren-AndFamilies>

The below bills have **one more chance to move to the**

“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of (both) parents.” - Jane Hull

Governors desk in **DEC 2020.**

AB 95: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab95.pdf> Future contingencies allowed in placement orders if parents both agree. Without this it is VERY difficult if not impossible for an unmarried parent with a newborn to establish a significant relationship with both parents post infancy. There is a *presumption with the courts that not changing an initial placement order is in a child’s best interest. Potential added disruption.*

AB97: <https://docs.legis.wisc.onsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab97.pdf> Involvement and cooperation of both parents is **in a child’s best interest.** Except in certain cases where DV or abuse has occurred, in the vast majority of situations having **both parents** working together is clearly in their child’s best interest, and is certainly the **best** situation for

MH IMAGING
KNOW YOUR INNER HEALTH

Any single MRI \$550
(all inclusive)
for non-insured patients.

MH Imaging
Save up to 75% compared to hospitals

Same day appointments with same day results

Imaging reports by local, onsite, Triple Board Certified Radiologist, Malcolm Hatfield, MD, FACR

The world’s most advanced open MRI technology.

Also offering CT, Ultrasound and X-Ray Services

MILWAUKEE | 414.281.1490 | 7818 | W. Layton Avenue
KENOSHA | 262.842.1400 | 1020 35th Street, Suite 120
RACINE | 262.321.7970 | 6800 Washington Avenue, Suite B

www.mhimaging.com

kids.

AB98: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab98.pdf> Updates a few of the 16 factors and requires Judges/Court Commissioners to provide a written explanation if less than shared placement is ordered. **Parents deserve to know** the reasoning behind why a decision was

(Continued on page 3)



Join Today ~ \$30 Lifetime Membership

For PDF versions of our WFCF newsletter—email: wfcftreasurer@outlook.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT CONT'D /BILL IN US CONGRESS TO PRESERVE

(Continued from page 2)

made that may limit their parental time with their shared children.

We will work to have the bills that did not make it to completion **reintroduced** in the new session starting January **2021**.

AB 209: <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/ab209.pdf> Co-parenting training that is under \$50 or **free** online, does NOT have to be done in person/*together*. Over half the counties in WI now mandate it. This training has proven to help parents work well together as separated **co-parents**.

We are also preparing two additional new bills for the 2021 legislative session:

A modification to statute 767.41 that iterates ***joint parental involvement by both parents is in a child's best interest***

An addendum to 767 physical placements -. ***The court shall presume, for either temporary or permanent orders, shared physical placement in accordance with maximum time provisions of (2) is in the best interest of the child.***

Our goal as **WFCE** along with **NPO-WI** is to become **better** at clearly explaining current problems for so many chil-

dren with separated parents in ways our legislators can understand. We believe this will lead to providing our legislators with **viable legislative solutions**, and to assigning the **appropriate urgency** to these separated family issues. **Every year we wait, thousands of WI children with separated parents, are left to go through childhood with only one involved parent to assist and guide them.** That one issue makes all those children much more susceptible to **trouble** in school, **trouble** with police, and **trouble** with drugs, pregnancy, and suicide. **WI currently leads the nation in the number of two involved parents for children**, but thousands and thousands of children in WI are still left to fend with only one involved parent.

Wisconsin can do better, and we will!

New Bill in Congress to Preserve Parental Rights During COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE // August 13, 2020 // Washington, D.C.
– On Friday, **Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI)** introduced a bill on the floor of the US House, which would suspend a federal provision that generally requires states to file for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) against parents whose children have spent 15 or more of the last 22 months in

foster care or other state custody.

Moore's bill is H.R. 7976, the "Suspend the Timeline Not Parental Rights During a Public Health Crisis Act."

Proponents of the bill, who hail from all sides of the political spectrum, argue that suspending the arbitrary timeline just makes sense in this season of unintended and often-inescapable delays caused by reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Before the pandemic, many of these children would have been returned to their families," Jey Rajaraman, chief counsel for the Family Representation Project, Legal Services of New Jersey, said for a press release from the Congresswoman's office. "But agencies have been unable to provide the services needed to facilitate reunification. We should not allow this pandemic to lead to unnecessary permanent termination of parent-child relationships."

Andrew Brown, with the Texas Family Policy Foundation, agrees. "Parents who were diligently working services required to provide a safe, stable home for their children suddenly, and through no fault of their own, found themselves unable to access these services due to COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdowns. . . . A temporary suspension of termination timelines gives these parents a fair opportunity to restore their families and honors their decision to take personal responsibility by doing the hard work necessary to achieve reunification."

(Continued on page 5)

WFCF NEEDS YOU /

We **need** a new newsletter editor ASAP!

WFCF benefitted greatly from board member Kevin Monahan's skills over the last three years with our newsletter. Kevin singlehandedly brought our newsletter from a mid-90's old look to a new, modern, attractive current look. Kevin now has a large amount of things on his plate, and needs to step down as our newsletter editor. We need a **new person** to step up, that has *Microsoft Publisher* experi-

ence, and can donate an hour or two each month toward helping WFCF continue to publish a quarterly or triannual newsletter. Our newsletter goes to all members of WFCF via email, and is published on our Facebook page and website platform, and is mailed to all legislators and over 100 other groups and organizations in WI.

Our newsletter helps educate people on what is going on legislatively in Wisconsin that affects separated parents

Over 60 academic studies show shared co-parenting is what's best for the vast majority of WI children

and their children. It also promotes shared and cooperative parenting as it applies, to the best interest of our children when their parents are separated. You can see our previous issues at this link: <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/media.htm>

Please send an email to wfcftreasurer@outlook.com to apply for this position.

WFCF needs more volunteers no matter how much or how little you can give your experience and contribution can make the difference for someone else..

A small contribution from more people truly makes it easier for everyone to continue the mission of WFCF.

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org/volunteering.htm>

COVID-19: Challenges & Opportunities *(cont. from page 1)*

or cooperative,” says Dr. Charuvastra. The majority of divorced parents start out either in a conflicted or parallel mode. Conflicted parenting is where the parents frequently argue with each other, often about parenting or money. Parallel parenting is where parents don't communicate much, and children live in two disconnected spheres. Cooperative parenting is where parents are flexible, communicate, compromise, and try to create a single parenting world for their kids, even though there are two households.

“Children of divorce do best when parents are flexible with each other under changing circumstances, communicate well with each other about how they are adapting, and work together to solve new, specific challenges,” Dr. Charuvastra says.

This may seem like a tall order for people who are divorced. However, Dr. Charuvastra says that divorced parents often learn how to parent cooperatively during times of crisis. “In the largest study of divorced families, we learned that many parents become cooperative during an emergency. In ‘normal’ times, a crisis like a broken leg or a new diagnosis of a learning disorder would force parents into a cooperative pattern—but the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that all divorced families are now facing together.”

When it comes to parenting, emergencies force us to adjust to an unexpected and sometimes upsetting new set of facts. “Parents often have an easier time setting aside old grudges and patterns when they realize they have to

adapt together to some external threat to their child's wellbeing,” Dr. Charuvastra adds.

Coping with Anxiety When Your Child Isn't with You

“Shared custody means your child is outside your sphere of influence some of the time, and this is a source of anxiety for many divorced parents,” Dr. Charuvastra says. Concerns about contagion and illness in the COVID-19 pandemic can amplify this anxiety enormously. Increasing communication with your ex-partner can be an antidote to this anxiety.

“It can be helpful to make a list of all things you are worried about for your child, and share this list with your ex, either in an email or over the phone,” Dr. Charuvastra says. “Can you imagine listening to or reading

Continued on page 6

“PARENTS IN A SEPARATION AND DIVORCE, OFTEN HAVE INTENSE ANGER AND RESENTMENT
“IT’S **HARD** TO AVOID ARGUING—IF YOU DO ARGUE, TRY YOUR BEST TO DO IT IN A WAY WHERE YOUR KIDS CAN’T SEE IT, AND CAN’T HEAR IT

Cont. from page 3 -NEW BILL IN CONGRESS

“Termination of parental rights has been called ‘the death penalty of the family courts,’” adds Michael Ramey, executive director of ParentalRights.org.

“By no means should we race to inflict it on families just because they had the extreme misfortune of being separated, often by overzealous state actors, in a time when COVID-19 alone prevents reunification.”

The Children’s Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services has urged states to employ an exemption for special circumstances; that exemption is already written into the federal law that created the guidelines in the first place, but many states are not making use of it. This leads to virtually random results from state to state—and often from judge to judge.

“Congress made this mess by putting this arbitrary guideline into the Adoption and Safe Families Act in the first place,” Ramey says. “Now it’s time for Congress to clean up their mess, by providing clear guidance for states to employ common sense instead.”

Ryan Howard from: **Smart Parent Advice**

Article on how today’s dads differ from prior generations. It talks about the role that fathers play these days, and also covers how things have changed over time.

This article is a great resource, so I think it’s something that our audience would appreciate.

You can check it out here:

<https://smartparentadvice.com/todays-dads/>



SHARED PARENTING CONFERENCE



www.twohomes.org

International Council
on Shared Parenting

International Conference on **SHARED PARENTING 2020**

December 5-6, 2020

VANCOUVER, CANADA
Live Online

The Intersection of Shared Parenting and Family Violence

Preliminary Program

Read more and register on <https://vancouver2020.org/>

Saturday, 5th December 2020

7:30am PST / 4:30pm CET – 1:30pm PST / 10:30 CET

Cont. from page 4 Covid 19 challenges

your ex's list of worries? Now is a good time to try to see your ex in a new light, as someone you need to collaborate with in order to get through this crisis, at least for the sake of your child."

The goal isn't to become emotionally close to your ex again, he says, but to understand each other in order to make needed adjustments to how you are co-parenting and organizing joint custody or visitation.

Managing Disruptions to Visitation Schedules

With the shelter-in-place orders that many of us are living with, it may be harder or impossible to adhere to usual visitation schedules. For some families, one parent's residence may be more suitable for the unique challenges of home confinement—better internet connection for online learning, a bigger yard, or a private room—or one parent may be more able to provide the daily supervision that is now required since school and other activities are cancelled.

In other families, one parent may be an essential worker and therefore more at risk of getting sick or exposing their children to COVID-19. Some kids may also rely on public transportation to get from home to home.

"These are all potential reasons to renegotiate custody and visitation schedules," Dr. Charuvastra says. At the same time, parents feel even more protective of their kids during times of crisis, and thus the idea of seeing your child less may seem particularly upsetting. "We encourage parents to try their best to ask 'what is best for my child in this particular situation,' and if your child is old enough, it may be good to actually ask them what they think," Dr. Charuvastra says.

“Remember that if you can adjust visitation to adapt to the current crisis, you can adjust it again when the crisis passes.”

Agreeing on What Counts as Risky Behavior

Parents, whether they are divorced or still married, often disagree about what counts as risky behavior on issues ranging from bike helmets to screen time to curfews to diets to dating.

“The difference in the COVID-19 pandemic is that there is very clear guidance, from both experts and the authorities,” Dr. Charuvastra says. **“This is a time to put aside past disagreements and try to agree to work together to do what we are all being asked to do. .”**

Join Today ~ \$30 Lifetime Membership

WFCF Lifetime Membership Application

Name					
Date of Birth		Gender <small>(This data may be used in reporting membership population)</small>		Male	Female
		Prefer Not to Disclose			
Physical Street Address					
City	State		Zip		
Mailing Address <small>(If Different than Physical Address)</small>					
City	State		Zip		
Phone					
Personal E-Mail Address					
Check Here to be Contacted about Volunteer Opportunities with WFCF					

Qty	Description	Unit Price	Extended Cost
1	WFCF Lifetime Membership ★ Includes E-Mail Subscription to "Todays Dad's Newsletter"	\$30.00	
	3 x 11 ½ in. Removable Vinyl WFCF "Kids NEED BOTH Parents" Bumper Sticker	\$3.00	
	1 ¼ in. WFCF Logo Lapel Pin	\$5.00	
1	One Time Donation to WFCF 501(c)(3) Not for Profit Organization		
<i>\$ Membership Fees and Donations are IRS Tax Deductible \$</i>		Total	

Please detach or copy this page and send with check or money order to:

WFCF
PO Box 1742
Madison WI 53701



**WISCONSIN FOR CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES**

PO Box 1742
Madison WI 53701

<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org>



MONTHLY SEPARATED PARENT MEETINGS / TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

WFCF IS NOW OFFERING **120 MEETINGS** IN PERSON MEETINGS
ACROSS THE STATE PER YEAR

Milwaukee:

4th Saturday of the month
8 AM - 9:30 AM at:

Milwaukee market

400 Water St, Milw/ upstairs mezzanine

Madison:

Third Monday of the month
6:15 PM at:

World Buffet at South Town Mall

2451 W Broadway, Monona, WI

Fox Valley:

Third Tuesday of the month
6:30 PM at:

El Jarapeo Mexican Restaurant

1727 Freedom Rd, Little Chute, WI

Central WI:

Second Monday of the month
7:30 PM at:

Korner Kitchen

4890 Hwy H, Edgar, WI

NW WI (Eau Claire):

Third Thursday of each month
6:30 PM at:

Taquera La Poblantia

2436 London Rd, Eau Claire, WI



Green Bay/NE WI:

First Wednesday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Townline Pub

2544 Lineville Rd, Green Bay, WI

La Crosse:

Second Thursday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Sheninigans

2100 Dawson Ave, La Crosse, WI

Janesville:

Second Thursday of the month
6 PM at:

Denny's

2020 Milton Ave, Janesville, WI

Racine:

Third Friday of the month
7:30 PM at:

Asian Buffet

3701 Durand Ave, Racine, WI

Fond du Lac:

Second Monday of the month
6:30 PM at:

Schmitty's Oar House Bar and Grill

N7044 Winnebago Dr, Fond du Lac, WI