



COVID-19: PREVENTATIVE MEASURES IN THE FAMILY COURT

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

The Family Court of Nova Scotia has introduced measures to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, while ensuring urgent family law matters, such as child protection, can continue to be dealt with in court, as needed.

As with other levels of Court in the province, counsel or members of the public who have travelled internationally within the last two weeks, or who are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus, should not visit the Family Court.

Individuals who are due in court who have travelled recently or are experiencing symptoms should contact their lawyer or the Court immediately to seek instructions from the presiding judge in their case.

Anyone looking to make an application to Family Court is advised to call the Court first to discuss their matter before coming to the courthouse.

For currently scheduled docket matters, the Family Court Officer will notify the parties if your matter is to be rescheduled. If it is not rescheduled, and unless otherwise directed, it will be conducted by phone.

New applications requiring docket appearances, excluding applications under the *Children and Family Services Act* and the *Adult Protection Act*, will not be accepted unless it is deemed an emergency as determined by the Family Court Officer and the Court.

Matters under the *Children and Family Services Act* and *Adult Protection Act*, as well as urgent matters under the *Parenting Support Act*, will be handled by telephone. Social distancing measures will be practised for any court matters that do proceed in person.

Until further notice, all documents, including orders, filed with the Family Court should be done so electronically. Each Family Court location will provide an email address for such filing, upon request.

All settlement conferences and most scheduled hearings will be put on hold and rescheduled or heard by phone.

If necessary, scheduled hearings under the *Children and Family Services Act* will be commenced *pro forma* and timelines may be extended to maintain jurisdiction in the Family Court.

Until further notice, the Parent Information Program (PIP) will administered online only. Group Intake is cancelled and conciliation on existing matters may be done by telephone.

These preventative measures are in line with the advice of public health officials regarding social distancing, avoiding large public gatherings, and mandatory self-isolation for individuals who have recently travelled outside of Canada or are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus. As with any Court, the presiding judge has the discretion to decide how a matter will be heard.

-30-

Media Contact:

Jennifer Stairs
Communications Director
Nova Scotia Judiciary
902-221-5257
stairsjl@courts.ns.ca

Court Contact:

Contact Information for all Supreme Court locations in Nova Scotia is available online at https://www.courts.ns.ca/Courthouse_Locations/Courthouse_Locations_Map.htm/.