

# Preparedness Toolkit

For Emergencies, including Health Crisis and Natural Disasters

## Checklist of Things to Prepare:

- Folder of all important documents:
  - Birth Certificates
  - Identification Documents
  - Social Security Cards
  - Passports
- Certified copy of all court orders and parenting agreements
- Electronic copy of all court orders, parenting agreements, and documents
- Create a phone contact that includes:
  - Local Domestic Violence Organization
  - Local Legal Services
  - Local Bar Association
  - Local Shelter

## Precautions to Take:

- Review state laws on custody when no court order exists:  
[Custody Statutes by State](#)
- Check how your local court handled modifications of court orders during state emergencies  
[Emergency Matrix](#)
- If modifying an order include a plan for health crises, natural disasters, or new vaccines
- Review your courts virtual hearing process and maintain cell phones or laptop and chargers somewhere safe  
[Representing Yourself in Virtual Hearings 101](#)
- Keep all communications with other parent in writing

## Issues That Arise During Emergencies to Plan For:

- Unable to change existing court orders  
[Representing Yourself: The Three Most Common Family Law Legal Issues in Emergencies](#)
- Courts not considering the emergency to be a reason to change an order  
[Emergency Matrix](#)
- Continued parenting time with abuser
- Emergency evacuations or stay in place orders
- Availability of safe housing/shelters
- Loss of financial support (see page 3)

## What to do With a Pending Legal Case:

- Sign up for your local court closure notifications
- Keep all your contact information up to date with the court:
  - Phone Number
  - Email Address
  - Mailing Address
- Obtain clarification from the court on when any order of protection expires if court is cancelled or postponed

# DOCUMENT OVERVIEW:

## Power of Attorney (POA):

- You can choose someone to be your POA
- The POA receives the power to handle financial, health, insurance, benefits, and legal matters under certain conditions or time frames.

### Three Types:

1. General: Gives broad powers to the POA
2. Durable: Becomes active by certain event and remains effective (see examples below)
3. Limited/Special: Gives POA for certain actions only

## Designation of Standby Guardian:

- This allows you to choose a third party (non-parent) to care for a minor child, while the parents or legal guardians are still alive in case of a triggering event.

### Examples of triggering events:

- Mental Health Emergency
- Hospitalization
- Detention/Arrest
- To Lessen Potential Exposure of a Child to a Pandemic (i.e. COVID)

## Medical Consent:

- You choose someone else to make medical decisions for your child when you are unavailable.

### Tips:

- If safe, ask the other parent to sign a medical consent for any minor children before an emergency arises.
- If they will not sign, you can file a court case asking to either make the other parent sign or get the sole power to sign a medical consent.

## Where to Find Assistance Drafting These Documents:

- Check your local legal services to see if they offer help in drafting these documents: [Legal Services](#)
- Check your local courthouse to see if they offer free legal clinics: [Local Courthouse Websites](#)
- Check your local library or law library for resources: [Local Library Websites](#)

# QUESTIONS TO ASK TO ADDRESS ISSUES WITH PARENTING PLANS AND CHILD SUPPORT:

## Parenting Plans During Health Crisis:

- Does either parent work in the healthcare field or other essential business?
- Who will provide childcare if both parents have to work?
- Is either parent better situated to help with virtual learning?
- What is the plan if either parent or child becomes sick during the health crisis?

## Parenting Plans During Natural Disasters:

- Does either parent live outside of an evacuation zone?
  - If so, should the children go to their home in the event of an evacuation or go to a shelter?
- Are there shelters where you can remain separate from your abuser if you both have to evacuate?
- If you are ordered to evacuate how will it impact parenting time?

## Child Support During Health Crisis:

- If you lost all child care which parent will continue to work?
- If either parent loses their job how will this impact child support?
- In the event of a loss of child support, do you have enough resources to maintain essentials?
- Do you know where your local food shelters and benefits offices are located?

## Child Support During Natural Disasters:

- Would either parent lose their income if there are unsafe working conditions or they have to evacuate?
- Do you have a backup plan for how you will pay bills and buy necessities in the event you cannot work?
- Who will claim the children on taxes?