

Back to school time...it's here!!! The kids are headed back to school and most parents are trying to figure out what the new school year *and* Year Two of COVID will look like. For divorced parents and for families who have separated during the summer, the uncertainty of the new routine may be even more difficult. *The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C.* offers these suggestions to help parents successfully navigate the start of a new school year.



1. Commit to open communication and broad sharing of information from day one and continuously one day at a time. Communication is KEY in successful co-parenting. When you receive information regarding your child, their needs and their activities, share it with your parenting partner. Remember, the information this isn't about either of you – it's about your children and setting them up for success.

2. Share "breaking" health information a.s.a.p. There is a myriad of health issues. The past few months we have seen and mediated parent disputes about whether to vaccinate or not vaccinate children between 12 and 17 years old. The issues are challenging and put parents in "right/wrong" thinking quickly. Issues like these that have no right or wrong answers can bring out the worst of parents while in the discussion.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, August 19
Justinian Society of Lawyers
2021 Installation
6:00 pm

Hyatt Lodge Oak Brook
2815 Jorie Blvd
Oak Brook, IL

Contact:
Jessica Defino
jessica@mngfamilylaw.com
630-407-1200

Wednesday, August 25
DCBA Golf Outing
12:00 noon - 7:30 pm

Naperville Country Club
25W570 Chicago Avenue
Naperville, IL

Ultimately, most parents want what is best for their children, even when they are 180 degrees apart.

Other medical issues can occur at your child's school, in their activities and even your home. If you are the primary contact for the school and the extracurricular activities, and you learn of a medical concern, inform the other parent as soon as reasonably possible. Confirm the other parent is a contact when the primary contact cannot be reached. And though we hope it goes without saying, we are saying it anyway: if your child wakes up with a fever or stays home for the school day, *let the other parent know*. Courtesy is appreciated and minimizes the risk of conflict when practiced.

3. *Coordinate school supply shopping plans and responsibilities.* Shopping for a new school year is a tradition for many families. In addition to supplies like crayons, pens/pencils, folders and notebooks, back-to-school shopping can also include backpacks, clothing, shoes, athletic shoes and gear and other necessities. Coordinate how you will share the responsibility of shopping and the costs for school supplies. One parent can shop with their child for the supplies they need for school, while the other parent could cover the cost of new school clothes. Consider having extras when children are living in two homes.

4. *Attend school-related events.* Confirm you and your co-parent are on the same page about the new school year and whether you are attending back-to-school and school year events together or separately or not at all. When one parent cannot attend, communicate information about the event and new information you acquired while there. Some parents request separate parent teacher conferences, some attend together. Have a plan for what makes sense given the dynamics of your relationships and the school responsibilities you have allocated between the two of you.

5. *Set up an internet-based shared family calendar, populate it and update it as needed.*

An ideal and neutral tool in the communication process can be a shared calendar. This can serve as

Robert Rupp
rrupp@dcba.org
630-653-7779



a neutral site for communication of information such as where the kids will be (or need to be) and when. There are a variety of shared family calendars available online. Though this is a parenting tool, some parents allow their tech-savvy kids access so they can add information to the calendar. BUT though they may have parent's permission to access and populate a calendar, ultimately the parents, not the children, are responsible for communicating the information.

With an internet-based shared calendar, you can keep track of:

- Extracurricular practices and events.
- Doctor appointments.
- Homework and project deadlines.
- School holidays and photo days.
- Parenting time schedule

Here are a few of the calendar programs that provide this capability and if you want a more complete list, email the office and we will send it to you:

- Google Calendar
- OurFamilyWizard.com
- FamilyTimePlanner.com
- ParentingTime.net
- FamilyCrossings.com



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
Nelson Mandela

The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C. wishes you a safe and enjoyable August, and a happy, healthy and conflict-free Back to School season!

Brigid A. Duffield

Attorney/Mediator/Speaker/Author

The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C.

630.221.9300

brigid@brigidduffield.com

www.brigidduffield.com

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The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C.

630-221-9300

www.brigidduffield.com

