DEALING WITH
CO-PARENTING & ALCOHOLISM

When Addiction Complicates Shared Parenting

Co-parenting with someone who struggles with alcohol can be very draining and difficult at times for parents involved on a daily, long-term basis. Clear limits are key to protecting both you and your children. Decide what behavior is not okay and stay firm if those limits are crossed. Keep talks short, clear, and focused on the kids, using written tools or co-parenting apps to reduce conflict and improve clarity over time.

When alcohol use affects your children's safety or stability, proper documentation becomes important. Always keep notes of concerning incidents, including dates, behaviors, and conversations. Professional support can help—therapy for you and your children can ease the emotional strain, and legal guidance may be needed if custody or visitation must be adjusted to ensure a safe environment.

Taking care of yourself is critical when you are the stable parent. Lean on trusted friends, family, or support groups, and make time to recharge. Always put your children's well-being first, stepping in when needed and speaking with them in age-appropriate, non-judgmental ways that feel reassuring and supportive over time. Change can be slow, so managing expectations can help you stay grounded and resilient.

About Arlene:

Engaged for decades in the Northern California legal community, Arlene D. Kock is a past member of the Alameda County Bar Association (ACBA) Board of Directors. She served on their Attorney Referral Panel for many years and was the past chair of their Ethics and Civility Committee. In her capacity on that committee, Arlene was instrumental in assisting the team in preparing and creating the ACBA statement of professionalism and civility, a policy that is expected to be adhered to today by the court and litigants. She is currently a member of the ACBA and the Contra Costa County Bar Association.

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