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Connecticut **LawTribune**

Tired, Stressed and Scared: Telecommuting Isn't Easy for Some Connecticut Lawyers

Connecticut attorneys with young children talk to the Connecticut Law Tribune about working from home and having to be a parent, teacher and caretaker during the current crisis.

By **Robert Storace** | April 01, 2020



Ryan McKeen, left, co-owner of Connecticut Trial Firm, and Angie Ioannou, managing partner of the Hartford office of Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith. Courtesy photos

As Connecticut attorneys join their peers across the country telecommuting amid COVID-19 concerns, those with young children face a difficult task.

“It’s like you are doing three jobs: your work job, the job of teacher and that of being a mom,” said Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith managing partner Angie Ioannou, who works from her West Hartford home with her wife, attorney Brooke Goff, and their 7-year-old son, Greyson. “It’s difficult to manage everything and maintain the same level of productivity. ... You are stretching yourself really thin.”

Ioannou said she starts her workday at 7 a.m. and finishes at 9:30 p.m. She blocks out three hours in the morning devoted to in-home instruction for her young son, while still managing the rest of the day to juggle working with upward of 20 clients daily. “Everything from phone calls and emails to noncourtroom litigation work,” she said.

“The upside is you are bonding with your child,” she said. “But the downside is you are tired, you are stressed, and you are scared. It’s a very scary time.”

While the needs of their children can affect their output and productivity, attorneys said they enjoy the family time, even if it means having to come up with creative ways to remain effective employees or, in the case of attorney [Ryan McKeen](#), effective law firm leaders.

McKeen, co-owner of Glastonbury-based Connecticut Trial Firm, has a 9-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. He said eight of the firm’s 10 employees have small children. That’s why he encourages staff to work in shifts during the day, so someone is always available to serve clients.

“It’s been a real challenge for me,” McKeen said. “The biggest thing is that we have to sort of lower our expectations of what we can possibly do.”

It’s a stark reality that McKeen says might take some getting used to in the coming weeks.

“I’ve been settling cases, talking to lawyers and adjusters, while throwing a football outside with my son,” he said.



Jessica Slippen, an attorney at Mitchell & Sheahan, and Christopher Houlihan, an associate at the Hartford office of RisCassi & Davis. Courtesy photos

McKeen estimates he works about 10 hours a day from home, but not continuously. He starts his workday at 6 a.m., about an hour or two before the family gets up.

“The kids will find me,” McKeen said. “Kids can be disruptive, and I have to spend more time to get the same amount of input I would as in the office.”

RisCassi & Davis associate [Christopher Houlihan](#), who has 3- and 6-year-old daughters, estimates he’s working up to 10 hours a day at home. He and his wife set up a shared calendar to see each other’s work commitments.

“We know that one of us will provide coverage for the kids if the other one has a set meeting, conference call or videoconference,” Houlihan said.

[Jessica Slippen](#), a Mitchell & Sheahan employment law attorney with two preteen sons, said she’s found herself immersed in the latest federal employment laws related to COVID-19.

“It’s having a huge impact on my practice, from things like new paid leave laws for working parents,” she said. “I need to stay on top of the new laws, while also providing virtual learning for my sons.”

Slippen has had to get creative to juggle her roles as parent and attorney.

“We are now doing scavenger hunts, a lot of bike rides and an early Easter egg hunt in the house,” she said. “You must be creative, as these days are long with no break anymore in the middle of the day.”