

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

ACTION TRANSMITTAL 2020.03

COVID-19 AND RESIDENTIAL MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

DATE: March 24, 2020

TO: Division of Residential Monitoring and Residential Facilities Staff Serving Youth in Care

FROM: Marc D. Smith, Acting Director

EFFECTIVE: Immediately

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to guide DCFS residential monitoring staff in the fulfillment of their work duties and to provide guidance to residential facilities staff serving youth in care to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19.

II. PRIMARY USERS

Primary users include DCFS Residential Monitors and Supervisors; and staff of Child Care Institutions, Group Homes and Child Welfare Agencies licensed by the Department.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

The health, safety and well-being of all youth in care and all our child welfare staff at DCFS and partner agencies, along with our ability to continue to protect children in every corner of the state, are our top priorities. During the current health crisis and outbreak of COVID-19, DCFS is working closely with and taking guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), and other state agencies experienced at responding to infectious disease outbreaks. We are closely monitoring the information available and will continue to provide guidance. This Action Transmittal outlines specific protocols regarding in-person child welfare practice *effective starting March 23, 2020. These protocols shall remain in effect* until further notice is given.

This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as circumstances evolve, and all other DCFS policy guidelines shall be followed except for in-person contacts. The use of phone, video and any other form of technology is *strongly* encouraged to ensure continuity of services for our children and families.

In all in-person contacts, extra precaution shall be taken such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, use of protective gear and compliance with other CDC recommendations.



Recommendations for Residential Facilities

Consistent with the Memo of March 10, 2020, entitled “[Submission of Agency Action Plan: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)”, each licensed residential facility must ensure development of a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). If your facility has not done so already, ensure that a copy of your COOP is sent to your Agencies and Institutions (A&I) Licensing Representative and residential monitor as soon as possible. In addition, you must ensure all facility child care staff and child care supervisors are familiar with the measures outlined in your facility’s COOP to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Consistent with [Action Transmittal 2020.02](#), Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation (March 19, 2020), residential facilities shall make every effort to use available technology, including phone and video conferencing, to allow youth in care to communicate with their family members. Facilities shall also make every effort to allow video conferencing available for assigned workers to communicate with youth in care.

Recommendations for Residential Monitoring Staff

Consistent with the Memo of March 20, 2020, entitled “[COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements](#)”, residential monitors are not required to make in-person visits to residential facilities. Residential monitors and supervisors shall use phone and video conferencing (where appropriate) to contact agencies at least twice weekly to obtain the status of youth, programming, ratios and other necessary reports to assess each agency’s ability to fulfill its responsibility to keep children safe.

During phone or video contact with facilities, residential monitors shall inquire about the activities and approaches specific to each facility being implemented to manage milieus, including: relieving stress, keeping youth engaged, the health status of the youth and staff in each program, and any questions pertaining to the facility’s COOP. If staffing ratios at your facility are reported to be below required levels, residential monitors shall consult with the A&I Licensing Unit to provide guidance.

For residential programs that were recently or currently monitored on-site with an enhanced or intensive frequency, residential monitors shall make at least daily phone and/or video contact with the facility/program to assess the facility/program’s functioning.

Hyperlinks to Department COVID-19 Policy Cited in this Memo

[Action Transmittal 2020.02](#), Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation (March 19, 2020)
Memo, [COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements](#) (March 20, 2020)
Memo, [Submission of Agency Action Plan: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (March 10, 2020)

IV. QUESTIONS

Your assigned A&I Licensing and/or residential monitoring staff will be in contact with you to answer any questions or provide clarification regarding these instructions.