

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

ACTION TRANSMITTAL 2020.14

CHILD WELFARE STAFFING NEEDS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

DATE: December 30, 2020

TO: All DCFS and POS Intact Family Workers, Permanency Workers, Adoption Staff and Foster Care Licensing Representatives, and their Supervisors and Managers; and All Staff of Group Homes and Residential Facilities Licensed by DCFS

FROM: Marc D. Smith, Acting Director

EFFECTIVE: Immediately

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Action Transmittal is to extend all actions issued under Action Transmittal 2020.06 to address staffing needs within POS agencies, and congregate care facilities licensed by DCFS, and refresher training needs for affected DCFS and POS staff relating to the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation in response to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

This Action Transmittal remains in effect until further notice from the Department.

II. PRIMARY USERS

All current DCFS and POS Intact Family Workers, Permanency Workers, Adoption Staff and Foster Care Licensing Representatives, and their supervisors and managers; and all staff of group homes and residential facilities licensed by DCFS.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

Our work continues during this difficult public health crisis. We appreciate the dedication of our direct service work force, and acknowledge the impact you have on children and families. The Department also recognizes that this work brings with it concerns for personal health and the health of the families of the Department's work force.

In light of the extreme circumstances related to COVID-19 and the need to ensure that the health and safety of children are protected during this crisis, the Department is implementing:

- a cross-specialty staffing plan to ensure sufficient direct service staffing in POS offices; and
- a staffing plan to ensure sufficient care of children in DCFS-licensed residential facilities.



a) POS Agencies: POS Office Staffing and Refresher Training

Depending on staffing and caseload needs, POS agencies may assign staff as necessary, to participate in a workload reassignment to support their offices. This workload reassignment may be intermittent, or for the entire duration of the COVID-19 health crisis.

POS supervisors and managers may reassign workers or make additional assignments in their office or agency. Workload reassignment may consist of case assignment within the worker's current specialty or across specialties.

The plan for staffing allows for staff to cross specialty areas as needed, to allow offices to meet the needs of children and families. This plan acknowledges that workers have basic competencies and proficiencies in their service areas that are transferable and provides the following tiered pathway to assist during this crisis:

- 1) All staff can continue to accept and be assigned cases in their current specialty area.
- 2) Staff holding two or more CWEL specialty licenses can accept and be assigned cases in their current specialty area and in any other area in which the staff hold a specialty license:
 - A) If practiced in another specialty area in the most recent 5 year period, no refresher training is required to accept cases in that area.
 - B) If practiced in another specialty area more than 5 years ago, a full-day refresher training will be provided in the other specialty area in which cases are assigned.
- 3) In some areas of the state, it may become necessary to ask for staff to accept case assignment in a specialty area new to them. For these staff, the Office of Learning & Professional Development will offer a 3 day truncated (abbreviated) certification conversion training to rapidly bring these workers, supervisors and managers up to a basic level of competence to serve these cases.

b) DCFS: Refresher Training

The Collective Bargaining Agreement permits staff to cross specialty areas as needed, to allow offices to meet the needs of children and families. This plan acknowledges that workers have basic competencies and proficiencies in their current service areas that are transferable and at the discretion of management on a case-by case basis the Department is able to provide the following tiered pathway to assist during this crisis:

- 1) If practiced in another specialty area in the most recent 5 year period, no refresher training is required to accept cases in that area.

- 2) If practiced in another specialty area more than 5 years ago, a full-day refresher training will be provided in the other specialty area in which cases are assigned.
- 3) In some areas of the state, it may become necessary to ask for staff to accept case assignment in a specialty area new to them. For these staff, the Office of Learning & Professional Development will offer a 3 day truncated (abbreviated) certification conversion training to rapidly bring these workers, supervisors and managers up to a basic level of competence to serve these cases.

c) **Congregate Care Staffing**

In group homes and residential facilities, this plan for staffing allows the following staff (provided background checks have been completed) to assist in congregate care to meet the needs of children by permitting:

- non-CWEL-licensed professional staff employed in congregate care facilities (e.g.: social workers, LCSW-licensed staff, teaching assistants, developmental specialists); and
- other CWEL-licensed Child Welfare Agency staff (e.g.: foster home licensing, foster home support staff).

However, non-CWEL licensed professional staff employed in congregate care facilities do not meet the qualifications to work as case managers.

- d) This Action Transmittal remains in effect until further notice from the Department.

IV. **QUESTIONS**

Staff, supervisors and managers may direct their questions through their chain of supervision. POS agencies may contact their APT monitors for additional guidance. The Offices of Learning & Professional Development will post additional information soon about training to support this staffing plan.

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