

March 31, 2020

Dear Parent,

We know you are concerned about the health of your child(ren) during this unprecedented public health crisis related to the spread of COVID-19. DCFS is deeply committed to ensuring their safety and well-being, while also continuing to work toward established goals for families.

Because of the challenges related to COVID-19 and the need to ensure that you and your family's health, and the health of foster parents and caseworkers is protected, DCFS has made the following changes to visitation between parents, youth in care and siblings; and visitation between caseworkers and youth in care. We understand the importance of maintaining your children's contact with you and their siblings. Family relationships remain of the utmost importance, especially during times of uncertainty.

Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation

DCFS has suspended all in-person supervised visitation between you and your child(ren) and all in-person sibling visitation until further notice. Your caseworker will work with you to identify other ways to allow contact with your child(ren) and siblings during this crisis. Phone calls or video chat will allow you to communicate with your child(ren) and their siblings during this public health crisis. Supervised visitation will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

Existing unsupervised visitation may continue. If you or your child(ren) are unable to participate in an in-person visitation because of sickness or health concerns, your caseworker will work with you to identify other ways to allow contact.

Caseworker-Youth Visitation

Caseworkers will continue to have contact with your child(ren) via video-conference or phone. In-person visits will take place if there are safety concerns or the placement is at risk of disruption. In those instances, caseworkers will take extra precautions such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, use of protective gear, and compliance with Center for Disease Control recommendations. The caseworker will ask brief screening questions to determine the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

We continue to monitor any developments about the spread of the virus, including its impact on the services provided by DCFS and our partner organizations. Please reach out to your caseworker with any questions about how this may impact your service plan.

For additional information and resources regarding COVID-19, please visit the following websites:

Illinois coronavirus website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>

DCFS website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs>

IDPH website: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>

CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marc D. Smith".

Marc D. Smith

Acting Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services