

June 19, 2020

Dear Caregiver,

Thank you for continuing to open your home to our youth in care during this public health crisis. I want to update you on resuming modified parent-child visitation, sibling visitation and in person contacts by caseworkers.

DCFS has worked closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) throughout the COVID-19 crisis and on March 27, 2020, we made the difficult decision to modify visitation procedures to ensure your family's health as well as yours and the health of children, parents and caseworkers are protected during the COVID-19 crisis. As this health crisis has evolved, so has our response. Working closely with IDPH, we have announced we are resuming modified visitations, implementing a staged approach with safety precautions as outlined below.

For Parent-Child Visitation:

Stage 1: Beginning June 15, 2020, the caseworker will begin preparing the parent, child and you for resuming in-person parent-child visitation.

Stage 2: Beginning June 22, 2020, the Child and Family Team Meeting will be held to provide an opportunity for families and service providers to communicate and work together in the best interest of the child. The caseworker will plan with the team arrangements for the visits and any special considerations.

For children with complex medical issues, the initial meeting will include a healthcare provider or medical professional who is knowledgeable about the child's medical condition and can provide a medical opinion as to the safety of the child participating in parent-child visitation.

Stage 3: Resuming In-Person Parent-Child Visitations and Sibling Visitations

Beginning June 26, 2020, In-person parent-child visitations will resume every other week with sibling visits resuming July 15, 2020.

The following are safety precautions to be followed during visitation:

- Caseworkers will ask you Pre-Screening Questions about all members of your household.
- **All parties will be expected to wear face coverings that cover the nose and the mouth.** Exceptions to the use of face coverings are: children under the age of two, individuals who cannot remove the covering without assistance and individuals whose face covering obstructs breathing. There may be other circumstances that make it difficult for a person to wear a face covering (e.g., sensory challenges, hyperactive children, children with intellectual disabilities). In these circumstances, the caseworker shall make accommodations as needed to ensure a visit takes place.
- Visitation will not take place in a setting with more than ten (10) people in the immediate area.

- All individuals attending visits will **follow social distancing requirements** during the visit. Social distancing requirements include maintaining at least six feet apart from other individuals, washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer, covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands), regularly cleaning surfaces touched by many people and no shaking hands.

Stage 4:

Resuming Weekly Supervised Parent-Child Visitation

Beginning July 15, 2020, the restart of weekly supervised parent-child visitation will be decided on a regional basis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

Transportation to and from Visitation

Transporters, or parents who are transporting their children, will clean/disinfect their car, including car seats, before and after transport and without occupants in the vehicle, using manufacturer's guidelines for CDC approved products. Products should not be used in the presence of children to minimize possible respiratory reactions.

In-Person Contact with Youth in Care

Beginning July 1, 2020, caseworkers will resume in person contact with youth in specialized foster care and will take place once every 30 days, with two additional video or phone contacts every 30 days from July 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020. Beginning August 1, 2020, in-person caseworker contact with youth will take place twice every 30 days, with one additional video or phone contact every 30 days.

Also, beginning July 1, 2020, for traditional foster care and licensed home of relative, in-person caseworker contact with youth will resume at one (1) in-person contact with the youth every 30 days including for youth in unlicensed home of relative placements, in-person caseworker contact with youth will resume at two (2) in-person contacts every 30 days.

For all placement types, caseworkers are encouraged to make phone or video contacts during the weeks that in-person contacts do not take place.

And for medically fragile or complex youth, caseworkers will continue **not** to make in-person contact until further notice and must continue with phone or video contacts.

Please know that my staff and I continue to monitor developments about the spread of the coronavirus disease using current health data to help us plan. If you have any questions, please contact the DCFS Central Office of Licensing at 217-785-2688.

I thank you for all that you do to nurture, support and care for children. Our work to keep them safe would not be possible without you.

Sincerely,



Marc D. Smith
Acting Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services