



JB Pritzker, Governor

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

100 South Grand Avenue, East • Springfield, Illinois 62762
401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607

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Contact:

Meghan Powers, meghanpowers@illinois.gov

Patrick Laughlin, patrick.laughlin@illinois.gov

IDHS expanding services by phone and online; 14 offices will remain open

All nutritional and medical benefits remain available to the public; consumers still urged to stay home; open offices will operate with reduced onsite staff; staff available to respond in-person for emergencies

CHICAGO/SPRINGFIELD - Today, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is announcing that, starting tomorrow, Monday, March 30, 14 Family Community Resource Centers (FCRC) will remain open with reduced staff to balance the need to provide essential services while meeting Center for Disease Control (CDC) social distancing guidelines during the coronavirus situation. FCRCs are the public facing benefits offices that bring nutrition and medical supports to individuals and families across the state.

IDHS urges all customers to apply for and manage their benefits online at ABE.illinois.gov or by calling the IDHS *Help is Here* toll-free line at 1-833-2-FIND-HELP. IDHS will keep both its customers and employees updated as to rotations to other open offices or any further office closures.

IDHS's ultimate goal is to have as few FCRC offices open as possible, while still ensuring that all customers are able to receive their life-sustaining benefits. For those offices that remain open, IDHS will continue to take steps to ensure social distancing, customer and employee safety.

"This is not a decision we make lightly. However, we have to balance the urgent needs of residents facing hunger and poverty with extremely serious public health directives. Even as many IDHS offices close, our State's safety net remains available," said IDHS Secretary Grace B. Hou. "Please know that every local office has an *urgent call team* available to respond right away to emergency cases – and anyone who needs benefits can still use ABE.Illinois.Gov or call our hotline for support."

The 14 of the 75 public facing FCRCs remaining open will have a reduced workforce of 30%-50% of staff. Staff who are not working at the public-facing offices will continue working remotely to process important benefits, and over 80 in-person local office caseworkers will become statewide ABE (Access to Benefits Electronically) call center agents in addition to the nearly 100 call center agents that are already in place.

The department developed these changes in partnership with AFSCME Council 31, other bargaining units, and advocacy organizations across the state.



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"These operational changes are urgently needed to prevent community spread of the novel coronavirus and protect the public and IDHS staff," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said, "FCRC workers ensure that individuals and families have the medical assistance, nutritional supports and other benefits they need. State government must do everything possible to safeguard their health and that of all other state employees."

"We appreciate the steps IDHS has taken to ensure that people with disabilities will continue to receive the support they need during its office closures since a majority of our consumers rely on emergency food relief (SNAP), cash assistance (TANF), and Medicaid among other critical human services. We are committed to working with DHS during this unprecedented time to take the precautionary measures necessary to promote health and safety of those most in need," said Karen Tamley, President and CEO of Access Living

"The coronavirus crisis calls upon IDHS and all of us to address difficult and unprecedented questions. There are strong competing priorities. It is essential to try to balance the safety of people needing assistance, the workers who serve them, and the general public in the effort to control the spread of the virus. It is also essential to get vital services to people with heightened needs in this difficult time. IDHS's plan for how to address all of these factors appears to strike the right balance. We will, of course, continue to monitor the situation closely and contribute to any needed improvements. We commend IDHS for this decisive, but also careful and balanced approach," said John Bouman, President of the Shriver Center

"I appreciate the careful and caring approach IDHS is taking during this crisis. People across the state need access to benefits, and at the same time, we have to respect social distancing recommendations of the CDC and IDPH. This local office scale-down will help those who are in the most urgent need while protecting communities from further spread of COVID-19," said State Senator Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago).

"To reduce the spread of Coronavirus, we must further limit interactions with others in our communities for the near future. That's why the temporary closure of these facilities is critical to protecting the health of the public and state employees," said State Rep. Norine Hammond (R-Macomb).

On March 19, all Division of Rehabilitation Services' (DRS) Offices were closed to the public and all Home Services and Vocational Rehabilitation programs were shifted to remote access.

IDHS continues preparing to broaden and strengthen all of its remote options for consumers - and will use every available resource to ensure that residents of Illinois are not harmed by this temporary reorganization.

More information about COVID-19 is available at www.CoronaVirus.Illinois.Gov and through the COVID-19 Hotline, at 1-800-889-3931.

Public Service Announcement urging IDHS to use online and phone resources:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/cms/agency/media/radio/Pages/psa.aspx>



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Family Community Resource Center Locations

1. West Suburban 2701 W Lake St Melrose Park	8. Champaign County 705 N Country Fair Dr Champaign
2. Humboldt Park 2753 West North Ave Chicago	9. Rock Island 500 42 nd St, Suite 6 Rock Island
3. South Suburban 3301 Wireton Road Blue Island	10. Adams County 300 Maine St, 2 nd Fl Quincy
4. Englewood 5323 S Western Ave Chicago	11. Sangamon County 600 East Ash, Bldg. 500 Springfield
5. DuPage County 1717 Park St Naperville	12. Mid-Illinois 1550 Douglas Dr. Charleston
6. Winnebago 171 Executive Parkway Rockford	13. St. Clair County 225 N 9 th St East St. Louis
7. Peoria County 211 Fulton St, Suite 300 Peoria	14. Williamson County 1107 W De Young St, Suite 20 Marion

