



March 29, 2020

Dear Partners –

Governor Pritzker announced some terribly sad news yesterday. He reported the death of an infant younger than one year in Chicago who tested positive for coronavirus disease. It serves as a sober reminder that while older adults are at higher risk of severe illness, the boys and girls we serve every day are still at risk.

Keeping our staff safe while carrying out our mission to protect the health and wellbeing of children, has never been easy. But today, with COVID-19 confirmed in nearly 3500 cases spread across 43 counties, and those infected range in age from younger than one to 99 years, the challenges are unprecedented.

But I am deeply committed to working together with each of you to help address the challenges all of us are facing. The outpouring of support over the last week from many of you has been inspiring. I am grateful to all of you and your organizations and staff who stand with us in this fight. The truth is, we still have a ways to go but together, we will get through it.

Below is a summary of recent important updates from DCFS related to COVID-19.

- 1)** Last weekend, the Governor ordered the temporary closure of all care facilities. However, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD), in partnership with the Illinois Departments of Human Services (IDHS) and Children and Family Services (IDCFS), has established a structure and system for child care providers to apply for an emergency child care license to provide care for essential workers. For information as a provider of child care, the following documents will be helpful to you. [Frequently Asked Questions Following the Mandatory Closure of All Child Care Centers and Homes](#) and [Guidance for Child Care Centers Child Care Homes and Early Education Programs](#).

For families seeking information about child care closures and emergency child care, please see [this letter](#). For more information on helping parents find care, please call the statewide toll free number (888) 228-1146 or visit the [emergency care website](#).

- 2)** We are committed to supporting private agencies that are struggling with new costs associated with providing services while dealing with the spread of COVID-19. Effective March 16 through April 9 (extended as necessary), DCFS will be providing additional financial support to residential providers to ensure adequate staffing ratios are maintained while youth remain out of school during the regular school year. The additional funding will amount to a 20% increase to the non-Medicaid portion of your daily rate. I will send out a memo in the next few days with more details.

- 3)** To our partners providing foster care and intact services, DCFS will make a one-time payment to help address the safety needs of staff providing essential in-home services to ensure the safety of children. These funds may be spent in a flexible manner for program expenses related to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); preventative cleaning costs; remedial cleaning costs; or overtime costs related to staff needing to be quarantined to name a few. Please look for a memo in the next few days with more details about this payment as well.
- 4)** We know everyone is concerned about the shortage of available protective gear for staff. DCFS reached out to intact and foster care providers this past week to coordinate making gloves available to your staff. We distributed over 200,000 pairs of gloves across the state and are working to secure additional supplies for the weeks ahead. We are also receiving additional masks in the next couple of days. Once those have arrived, we will reach out and coordinate with each of you to share those supplies with your staff as well.
- 5)** I sent out new guidance this week for my 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. The guidance allows DCFS Residential Monitors and Supervisors to use video in the place of in-person visits at Child Care Institutions, Group Homes and Child Welfare Agencies licensed by the Department. The action transmittal can be downloaded from the [DCFS website here](#).
- 6)** A number of you had additional questions about visitation guidelines following changes I announces over the past few weeks. On Wednesday, March 25, we put out a clarifying action transmittal that more clearly spells out changes regarding parent-child and sibling visitation in response to COVID- 19. The action transmittal can be downloaded from the [DCFS website here](#).
- 7)** DCFS continues to receive questions from ICOY and directly from our provider community. Our online FAQ responses document has been updated five times in the last week with the most current answers to your questions. The latest copy can be downloaded on the [DCFS website here](#).

Daily updates from DCFS on COVID-19 can be found by visiting the [Department's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#).

We continue to be incredibly grateful for your support and willingness to continue to serve children and families during this crisis.

Thank you for all your efforts!

Marc D. Smith
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