

May 7, 2020

Purchase of Service Agencies Frequently Asked Questions | COVID-19

Note: The responses in this document are based on the most current guidance at the time of posting. They may be updated as the situation evolves.

General

Q. Can we have guidelines / expectations in writing? Until then, practices will not be consistent across the state.

A. On Sunday, March 15, 2020, DCFS sent out guidelines to all providers. DCFS will continue to update those guidelines as circumstances change. There is a new site posted to the D-Net (<http://dcfsnet/oc/coronavirus/SitePages/Home.aspx>) – DCFS will continue to make recommendations and guidance available there, and will also maintain a provider Q and A area online.

Q. Should there be written summaries after each webinar?

A. DCFS will continue to publish written updates to this Q and A document. ICOY has shared the recording of webinars on its website, and DCFS will continue to link to those recordings on its website.

Q. What is the plan for the delivery of child welfare services in the community if a state of emergency is called and everyone is quarantined?

A. Please see the [Director's Message to all DCFS and Private Agency Staff](#), dated March 20, 2020. Governor Pritzker issued a Stay-at-Home Order on March 20, 2020. This executive order exempts all child protection and child welfare staff, both at DCFS and in the private sector.

Q. In anticipation of more restrictive "stay at home" orders further limiting local travel to help prevent spread, has there been consideration letters to allow DCFS and essential workers passage to commute to and from work should the need arise?

A. DCFS is in regular communication with the Governor's Office, IEMA and IDPH and will establish a protocol that allows DCFS and POS to carry out their duties should more restrictive orders call for it.

Budget and Finance

Q. What position will DCFS take on the POS contractual obligations that will be unable to be met due to COVID-19 fallout?

A. The expectations for POS obligations are the same as DCFS obligations. Every agency needs to develop and implement plans consistent with the guidance provided by DCFS on March 15, 2020, titled "*Guidance for Purchase of Service (POS) Agencies - Coronavirus Disease 2019.*" The safety and protection of children remain paramount during this crisis, and planning to ensure the continuation of essential services should be at the forefront of any POS agency planning effort. DCFS recognizes that staffing challenges lie ahead and that performance metrics during this period may need to be assessed differently.

Q. IDHS released a communication assuring community-based human service providers will not be financially penalized and will be held harmless and kept whole as operations are diminished or temporarily suspended during this national and state emergency. Specifically, capacity grant funding will be provided to supplement lost/reduced fee-for-service billings as well as fund operations within grant programs to help preserve Illinois' social services delivery system and safety net. What funding assurances is DCFS able to commit to help support private organizations throughout this crisis?

A. Please see the memo from March 20, 2020 titled [How is DCFS supporting private agencies who have diminished or suspended non-essential services?](#)

Q. If COVID-19 disrupts the service delivery process for POS agencies resulting in inadequate staffing/resources/etc., will POS agencies have any protection (indemnification) from negative outcomes that might occur?

A. POS agency contracts state that they are operating as independent contractors. Agencies are required under the contract to maintain their own insurance. Additionally, the contract provides that “Any indemnification by the Department will be governed by the State Employee Indemnification Act (5 ILCS 350/1 et seq.) as interpreted by the Illinois Attorney General. The department makes no representation that an independent contractor will qualify or be eligible for indemnification under said Act.”

Q. If we move to online resources for providing behavioral health services that we would currently bill for – will there be discussion with HFS to make online therapy, etc. services billable? If so, billing guidance is needed.

A. Governor Pritzker signed [Executive Order 2020-09](#) on March 19, 2020 to allow for expansion of telehealth. DCFS is unable to provide insurance or Medicaid billing guidance, but recommends consultation on this matter with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services and the Medicaid billing [resources](#) available through ICOY.

Q. How should we pay for teachers, educators & others for non-public special education schools for Act of God days? Continue to pay as normal? Lessen calendar days worked?

A. Local school districts and the Illinois State Board of Education are the primary education providers for youth in care. The Department will continue to pay as normal, so providers should have enough revenue to support all current staffing and payroll costs. Additional revenue-stabilization efforts are underway. Please see the memo from March 20, 2020 titled [How is DCFS supporting private agencies who have diminished or suspended non-essential services?](#)

Q. Will there be additional funding to offset the additional residential staffing costs to staff our homes during school hours while schools are closed by mandate?

A. The Department is developing an exceptional payment solution for facilities that have extraordinary COVID-19-related costs due to school closure and other COVID-19 challenges. Updates will be posted on the Department's COVID-19 [D-Net page](#).

Q. Other state agencies like DHS, are encouraging nonprofits to continue to pay employees regardless of their ability to do their jobs. We have at least one staff member that is in the high-risk category and is uncomfortable working. She is an essential worker and her job cannot be done remotely. I would like to be able to honor her discomfort coming to work but am incurring additional staffing costs. I know DCFS has added 20% to our contracts. Will DCFS help cover the additional staffing costs and any incentive pay to help keep staffing our group home?

A. Effective March 16 through May 31, DCFS will be providing additional financial support amounting to a 20% increase to the non-Medicaid portion of the daily rate. The first installment went out in mid-April. All agency support is included within the 20% supplemental funding and can be used flexibly by agencies as needed for program related COVID-19 expenses.

Q. Will POS agencies be able to keep excess revenues for this fiscal year?

A. Excess revenue/profit can only be retained in compliance with Rule 434.7(h).

Q1. Director Smith said on 4/4 that "DCFS has also increased board payments to foster parents for March and April to help with additional expenses." Where can we find information and amounts? When will additional March board payments be distributed? If foster parents were supposed to receive this and did not, what should they do?

Q2. Does the onetime payment also cover the \$100 grocery payment for two months to foster parents?

A. With youth in care unexpectedly out-of-school, foster families are experiencing additional food costs and our older youth in care and foster families are experiencing income instability and uncertainty. For March, April and May, we are extending a \$100 per month supplemental payment to the youth in paid out-of-home placements to help with these expenses. The first installment went out in mid-April. Additional information can be found on the Department's Coronavirus/COVID-19 Updates website under the Provider and Contractor News (Messages to Providers) section.

Q. Are emergency shelters included under the umbrella of residential programs that will receive additional funding at this time?

A. Yes, residential shelters will receive the additional funding.

Q. Will DCFS process/handle this \$100 supplemental payment the same way they do the \$10 Christmas payment to the kids each year? Will POS agencies pay licensed homes and DCFS pay unlicensed homes? Will it include payment for every child in a paid placement effective the last day of the month?

A. Yes, that was the quickest payment mechanism that allowed DCFS to get March payments out by mid-April instead of per diem-based payments, which would not have been paid until late in the fiscal year. POS will pay for their licensed homes and DCFS will be making all the unlicensed payments. The \$100 payment is not household-based but will be paid for every child in paid placement. For example, if a foster home has three children (licensed or unlicensed) on the last day of the month, they will receive \$300 for that month.

Q. Should the entire \$100 be sent to the foster parent placement as of the last day of the applicable month (i.e. for month of March paid to foster parent of record on 3/31), the same as the Christmas bonus? Will it need to be prorated by day and paid according to each placement during the applicable month?

A. Yes, funds should not be retained by agencies for administrative costs but are considered to be pass-through funds going to the caretakers. The payment will not be prorated by DCFS. This payment method, while fast to implement and with the critical benefit of getting funds out to foster parents and our youth living on their own in real time, does have the drawback similar to the Christmas payments of not being prorated.

Q. Some nonpublic schools are concerned with cash flow at this time. With respect to the SBA loan for PPP, intended to support businesses committed to maintaining employees that these loans which may be forgiven or paid back, there has been some speculation that if forgiven under current rules as regulations it would be treated as a grant and would offset our rate. Meaning we could see a decline in rate 2 years from now. Is this the intention?

A. ISBE is reviewing and will be providing guidance.

Q. Can you please clarify the termination date for the 20% rate supplemental payments? There were conflicting end dates on notices that DCFS provided. Thanks!

A. The dates are contingent upon conditions within the state and have been extended once so far. Current effective dates (updated 4/27/20) include March 16 through May 31 which may be extended again as necessary.

Q1. Will foster parents who have to stay home for children because of school closure be compensated lost wages for missing work?

Q2. How are foster parents being compensated when they have to miss work because schools are closed?

A. The Department is unable to replace lost income from non-DCFS sources. The Illinois web page on COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits can be found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/FAQ/Pages/Unemployment-FAQ.aspx>

Q. For HMR homes who receive children during this time, has there been anything put in place to financially help them with immediate needs? Remember it generally takes a while before they get any financial assistance.

A. See below responses regarding both payment and service continuity.

- **Payment Continuity**—The Department has designated our fiscal division as an essential service to ensure payments continue so our caregivers and agency partners can meet their obligations in maintaining essential services. Agencies that discontinue essential services will not be eligible for any supplemental emergency payment support during the COVID-19 crisis. (See Letter to POS Providers March 20, 2020)
- **Service Continuity**—The Department continues to support all foster caregivers under normal policy and billing practices. This includes services such as Respite Care, Special Service Fees, and Intensive Placement Stabilization. Additional caregiver supports (such as expanded use of Flex Funds) will be available soon. Updates will be posted on the Department’s COVID-19 D-Net page.

Protective Equipment/Testing/Screening

Q. Will DCFS provide POS agencies with protective gear/additional supplies needed to combat the virus?

A. Protective gear, or personal protective equipment (PPE), is in very short supply right now. The State of Illinois is prioritizing delivery of existing supplies to first responders at this time. DCFS is working with the state to acquire gloves, masks and hand sanitizer and will work with POS agencies as supplies become available.

Q1. Are there any testing kits available?

Q2. Given our therapeutic residential and foster care capacity is already limited and the escalating need for providers to maintain capacity to serve youth, especially those currently in hospitals and to more effectively mitigate and prevent further spread of Coronavirus throughout our communities, can DCFS advocate with state and federal officials to ensure referred youth are able to be officially tested for COVID-19 prior to admission?

Q3. A week ago, the Gov announced the intent to increase tests in IL from 4k to 10k within 10 days; is there information on where those additional tests may be available south of I-80? Is there any prioritization for children/families in care before the family member shows advanced life-threatening symptoms?

A: DCFS encourages POS agencies and other interested parties to review the IDPH COVID-19 webpage (<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>) for the latest information on testing. IDPH also maintains a map of testing sites at <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/covid-19-testing-sites>.

Many local health departments now have access to tests, which they may be able to provide to congregate care providers. Interested providers should reach out to local health departments about availability of tests.

Additionally, Aunt Martha's Health and Wellness reserved testing slots at Integrated Care Center (ICC) testing location. For information about testing at the ICC or other Aunt Martha's locations, click here: [Testing Update for DCFS and POS Staff](#).

Q. Will DCFS put out written guidance about what to do if a client has COVID-19 or screens as high risk?

A. If a youth has COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms, the caregiver should contact a health care professional for guidance and notify the DCFS Guardian's Consent Hotline pursuant to the memo titled [DCFS Notification of Youth in Care Exposed/Symptomatic/Confirmed to have COVID-19 \(4/7/20\)](#). Staff should also follow the guidance in [Guidelines for COVID-19 Exposed/Confirmed Youth](#) to address placement and service needs. Regarding staff visits to the home, please consult the memo titled [COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements \(3/20/20\)](#).

Staffing (Hiring, Training)

Q. Overall staff ratios to client for all programs will be affected. What guidance does DCFS propose?

A. DCFS understands there may be instances where ratios may not be met, as these are extenuating circumstances. Agencies unable to maintain staffing ratios shall implement strategies outlined in their Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and notify their APT monitor. During this unprecedented situation, DCFS and POS will ensure the best possible outcomes by working as one team to serve children and families. Agencies should report to Monitoring immediately if ratios become concerning for child safety.

Q. Recognizing that we are already under a workforce crisis and the need for training new staff is critical, how will DCFS implement further training?

A. The Office of Learning and Professional Development (OLPD) has put forth a contingency plan which includes converting all currently essential trainings to an on-demand, teleconference or webinar format so that all participants can continue with essential trainings without physically being gathered together in a training classroom. Where possible, participants will be redirected to already existing online or virtual formats of trainings, such as caregiver in-service and pre-service trainings. Where on-demand training options do not exist, such as caseworker Foundation Training, or where participants do not have access to online learning, such as certain caregiver pre-service participants, trainers will be ready to offer currently scheduled trainings from an adapted telephone conference or WebEx format. It will be possible to reschedule a very limited number of trainings to a future date when operation returns to normal. The OLPD has also put forth a strategy to postpone the simulation portion of investigator pre-service training to occur once operation returns to normal.

Child Welfare Employee License (CWEL) exams and tests all currently occur prior to simulations and are not directly impacted by a delay specifically in simulations.

The OLPD is also working on a plan for offering Foundations and CWEL testing virtually for both pre-service staff participants and university partnership student test takers who currently also take some of the Foundations tests. The virtual method will include the use of either a laptop or cell phone video scan of the participant's identification and a room environment to prove no external unauthorized resources are in view of the test taker. A virtual proctor will remain watching the video of the test taker through each time limited test. The OLPD is also piloting an option to continue Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) facilitator training and coaching using phone and/or video conferencing so Illinois remains compliant with the BH consent decree.

Q. How should organizations manage large absenteeism and quarantine?

A. DCFS requested that POS agencies complete their own contingency plans addressing these issues, and as of March 19, the majority have been submitted. Monitoring will be in regular contact with agencies and should be notified if staffing ratios become a safety concern.

Each DCFS Division continues to work on contingency plans as they relate to operational needs in their units. Essential staff have already been identified along with critical functions within their Divisions that absolutely need to be completed to keep the Department moving forward. DCFS is closely monitoring the day to day operations of all offices. If operations are impacted due to absenteeism, DCFS can exercise contractual rights to detail staff to other locations to assist as needed.

Q. Union vs. Non-Union rules/stipulations. Are there discussions with unions about situations where non-union employees might have to fill in for union employees?

A. At this time, DCFS is not aware of any discussions occurring. DCFS has a workforce that is comprised of almost 90% Union staff.

Q. Can the stringent hiring process for new employees be temporarily streamlined to help offset staff shortages due to COVID-19 infection?

A. DCFS continues to work closely with CMS and AFSCME as it relates to implementing new processes to streamline hiring. Currently, we are still able to bring on new hires with start dates prior to April 1st. We are revising on a case by cases hire dates beyond April 1, 2020 given there are employee requirements that DCFS has put into place this week, with the majority of staff working remotely. As this continues to move forward, DCFS is looking at conducting interviews utilizing WebEx, sending new hire paperwork electronically for completion as opposed to in-person meetings. The Office of Learning and Professional Development has made adjustments to procedures in order to conduct trainings via virtual means.

Q. What waivers, if any, are in place to assist with utilizing back-up staff?

A. DCFS understands that some programs may need to hire back-up staff or transfer staff from other programs or positions into programs that are experiencing a staffing shortage. Agencies seeking to hire back-up staff or transfer internal staff should contact their assigned DCFS Licensing representative or Licensing administration for assistance.

Q. What support will the DCFS provide to residential agencies should there be a staff shortage?

A. DCFS understands that some programs may need to hire back-up staff or transfer staff from other programs or positions into programs that are experiencing a staffing shortage. Agencies seeking to hire back-up staff or transfer internal staff should contact their assigned DCFS Licensing representative or Licensing administration for assistance.

Q. Will DCFS consider lifting certain hiring requirements (fingerprinting, physicals and training, etc.) for residential treatment programs as providers struggle with residential staff that have to self-quarantine or become ill from the virus, for purposes of redeploying other staff to cover these positions?

A. DCFS understands that some programs may need to hire back-up staff or transfer staff from other programs or positions into programs that are experiencing a staffing shortage. Agencies seeking to hire back-up staff or transfer internal staff should contact their assigned DCFS Licensing representative or Licensing administration for assistance.

Q1. FFCRA: Who is a “health care provider” who may be excluded by their employer from paid sick leave and/or expanded family and medical leave?

Q2. FFCRA: Who is an emergency responder?

Q3. Is there any new information on exemption for Child Welfare agencies in terms of the FMLA or Time off legislation related to COVID19?

A. Federal definitions of “health care provider” and “emergency responder” can be found in the Federal Register from April 6, 2020 (29 CFR Part 826.30(c), linked here:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-04-06/pdf/2020-07237.pdf>

DCFS leadership has consulted with the Office of Legal Services and Central Management Services on the application of FFCRA to DCFS employees. DCFS is unable to provide guidance on the applicability of FFCRA to POS agencies or other providers.

Q. If caseworkers are at work but not feeling well, do we ask them to go home or ground them from home visits?

A. The DCFS Medical Director has developed a [communication](#), available on the DCFS website and D-Net, to help staff determine when it is best to stay home. IDPH has posted guidance for employers at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus/business-guidance>, and the CDC has posted guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Education/Child Care

Q. What is the guidance from DCFS if all schools and day care centers are forced to close?

A. All K-12 schools have been closed across the state. DCFS and ISBE sent joint communication to all 852 school district foster care liaisons on March 13, 2020, requesting notification if the district is going to do e-learning or paper packets. If the district is 1:1 with computers, DCFS has notified the liaison that youth in care may not have internet access, and DCFS does not want students going to public places to get internet access. Students in the care of DCFS are a protected class with regard to e-learning, and they will not be penalized for incomplete work. DCFS has asked that youth in care receive a paper option. All district foster care liaisons were given their current, complete list of youth in care in their specific district on Friday, March 13, 2020.

Additionally, on Saturday, March 14, 2020, ISBE closed all non-public (therapeutic/ residential) schools in Illinois. These facilities are not 1:1 with computers. Therapeutic/residential schools decide whether to provide paper packets. Those decisions will be reevaluated on March 30.

All post-secondary students have been contacted about living arrangements in case students may not stay on campus. Youth in care, along with homeless and international students, are allowed to stay on campus. If the youth does not feel comfortable staying on campus, DCFS will work with the student to find housing during this time. DCFS's post-secondary education specialists have also let college youth in care know that DCFS will assist them with money for food and provisions during this time.

The majority of day cares have also been closed, per Governor Pritzker's order. Please see [Guidance for Child Care Centers, Child Care Homes, and Early Education Programs \(3/20/20\)](#) and [COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions Following the Mandatory Closure of All Child Care Centers and Homes \(3/20/20\)](#) for more information.

Q. Example: Foster parent has a child in the home who is medically compromised and wants to take a 3-year-old foster child out of preschool to protect the other child from exposure. Should we allow?

A. Schools are closed per Governor Pritzker's order.

Q1. Will foster parents be reimbursed if day-care is closed and they have to pay for alternative care for foster children?

Q2. If in-home caregiving is needed by a foster parent, specifically HMR, are there funds available to keep the placement stable? What is being done to ensure timely disbursement of these?

A. When previous child care has been suspended or availability is limited (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), foster parents who choose an alternative child care arrangement while employed, in training and/or in an educational program should fully complete the [CFS2000 – DCFS Day Care Service Eligibility Application](#) and submit it to the caseworker. The worker will review and ensure the following actions are taken in Section III on page 5.

Unrelated/Unlicensed Day Care Providers must be Fingerprinted (through a Department-authorized vendor) and complete the [CFS 718-D Authorization for Background Check](#) for Unlicensed and License-Exempt Child Care.

On the CFS2000, the worker or supervisor will provide the date in which the unrelated/unlicensed day care provider's Fingerprint receipt and CFS 718-D was submitted to Background Check Unit. The worker or supervisor is responsible for documenting the receipt and results of the unrelated/unlicensed day care provider's background check.

Related/Unlicensed Day Care Providers will have a SACWIS system background check (CANTS and SOR) completed by the worker or supervisor. On the CFS 2000, the worker or supervisor will document the date when the SACWIS-based CANTS/SOR checks were completed.

- Once completed, workers will submit the CFS2000 – Day Care Service Eligibility Application to the regional day care service eligibility/social service community planner for processing.
- The social service community planner will request that the unlicensed day care provider complete a [W-9](#) in order to secure a Provider ID number (through the Illinois Comptroller's Office) for payment purposes.

Q. How will DCFS payments to daycares be handled during this time of the daycare closure, but foster parents are still responsible for tuition?

A. Eligibility for DCFS-funded child care continues without interruption. Foster parents are not required to pay for day care services as long as a CFS 2000 - Day Care Service Eligibility Application has been reviewed, processed and approved. Regional social service community planners (SSCP) are responsible for processing the applications.

DCFS will continue to pay for child care for applicants (i.e. foster parents, birth parents (intact family services and reunification cases), teen parents and adoptive parents) who meet the criteria for eligibility (i.e. working, in-training, pursuing education/academic pursuits). Please note: Intact families with children aged 0-5 years of age are allowed DCFS-funded child care as long as a protective need has been identified. For additional information, see [Procedures 302.330 – Day Care](#).

Q. DCFS Daycare Licensing standards say that daycares cannot send a youth home for a fever unless the fever is 101.4 or higher. All information that we are aware of says that action

should be taken at 100.4 by the CDC. Will DCFS temporarily adjust the daycare standard to match what the CDC says?

A. DCFS will follow the guidance of CDC and IDPH during special and or national emergency situations.

Practice and Service Provision

In-Person Contacts

Several questions have been submitted about in-person visits to youth, families and facilities during this time. As of April 23, 2020, the most up-to-date guidance on in-person visits can be found here:

- [COVID-19 \(Division\) Preparation Plan and Emergency Contact List \(3/18/20\)](#)
- [Message from Acting Director Smith to DCFS and Private Agency Staff regarding COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements \(3/20/20\)](#)
- [Action Transmittal 2020.03 COVID-19 and Residential Monitoring Requirements \(3/24/20\)](#)
- [COVID-19 In-Person Visit Guide - Child Protection \(5/4/20\)](#)
- [COVID-19 In-Person Visit Guide - Intact/Placement/Permanency \(5/4/20\)](#)

Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation

As of April 23, 2020, the most up-to-date guidance on parent-child and sibling visits can be found here:

- [Action Transmittal 2020.02 - Parent Child Sibling Visitation during COVID-19](#)

Q. Will Dashboards be suspended during the COVID-19 precautionary period?

A. The Dashboard is operational. APT will be conducting monitoring meetings via phone once a month unless otherwise requested. Caseload ratios are a part of those monthly conversations and are recorded twice a month.

Q: Will procedures for Norman/Flex funds be adapted regarding in person check pick up/checking photo ID?

A. DCFS is still processing Norman and Youth Cash Assistance requests. Kaleidoscope (serving Cook county) and Cunningham Children’s Home (serving Champaign, DeWitt, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean and Vermilion counties) are only distributing checks via mail. Checks will be mailed to the caseworker, unless the caseworker indicates the check should be mailed elsewhere. All other Norman and Youth Cash Assistance Program providers can mail the check to the caseworker or payee if the caseworker requests it.

DCFS recognizes that there may be barriers to obtaining worker and supervisor signatures due to remote work. DCFS wants to ensure that we make every effort to meet the cash assistance needs of youth and families. Please contact John Egan at John.J.Egan@illinois.gov for assistance if you cannot sign Norman or Youth Cash Assistance requests while working remotely.

Q: What will be the response from MCR (SASS/CARES) providers for psychiatric emergencies?

A: The Department of Healthcare and Family Services has been issuing regular notices regarding programs, including MCR, and changes due to COVID-19 on its website at <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

Q. Will the DCFS scholarship due date be pushed to a later date?

A. The deadline was extended to April 30, 2020.

Q. How is DCFS processing licensing applications and other licensing paperwork? Should documents be mailed as per regular practice?

A. At this time, DCFS recommends that applications and other documents be e-mailed in order to comply with social distancing recommendations and the Stay-at-Home order.

Q. We have begun to provide telehealth services in our Behavioral Health Program. We are requiring that staff obtain a verbal consent from clients age 12 and older, as well as verbal consent from a parent/guardian for clients under age 18. For clients that are youth in care, how should we go about obtaining consent from the Guardian Consent unit in order for youth under age 18 to participate in Telehealth services? Thank you.

A. Please see [Letter to Providers of Mental/Behavioral Health Services re: Consent for Telehealth \(4/3/20\)](#) and the associated supplemental form, [Informed Consent of Guardian for Telehealth Services \(4/3/20\)](#), for information on the consent process.

Q. Will DCFS be releasing telehealth consent guidance for physical health?

A. At this time, physical health providers and case management staff should utilize the existing consent process.

Q. DCFS---Is there an email address to submit general consents, if you do not have an Illinois.gov email?

A. Providers without Illinois.gov email accounts should encrypt emails before sending. However, all POS case management staff should have an Illinois.gov email address. As such, this eliminates the need to submit consents via encrypted messages. Ordinary and routine consents should be sent to DCFS.OrdinaryRoutineConsentMailbox@Illinois.gov.

Q. Should non-essential medical visits be suspended?

A. DCFS recommends that you consult with individual health care providers first; however, reports indicate that many health care providers have been canceling these appointments.

Q. Should youth travel on public transportation?

A. According to the CDC, the risk of the risk of exposure to respiratory viruses may increase in crowded settings, like public transportation (source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>).

Q. What instructions should we give our janitorial services?

A. DCFS recommends that you follow CDC cleaning guidelines, which are available [here](#).

Q. Should vehicles that transport youth be disinfected after each use?

A. The CDC has published guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfection of Non-Emergency Vehicles here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>.

Q. If youth present with cough/runny nose/fever – what should we do?

A. Contact the youth’s health care provider for direction.

Q: How will residential monitoring be conducted to lessen the transmission of possible COVID-19 from campus to campus?

A. Please review [Action Transmittal 2020.03](#) for changes to residential monitoring requirements.

Q. What is DCFS recommending to providers who have youth who return from run? Can a provider turn a youth away who returns from run? We are hearing that some providers are refusing them entry back into the program. Not confirmed, just rumored at this time.

A. The department recommends that children/youth who have returned from elopement receive the following screening:

1. Does the youth have any of the following symptoms: sore throat, body aches, coughing, shortness of breath, or a fever of 100.4 °F or higher?
2. Within the last 14 days, has the youth been in close contact (*closer than 6 feet for at least 15 minutes without use of a mask*) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19?

If the answer to a and b is no, the youth should be quarantined and monitored for emerging symptoms for 14 days.

If the answer is yes to either a or b, or if within 14 days symptoms of COVID-19 emerge, providers should call a medical provider and the state health department.

DCFS and POS staff should follow the guidance in [Guidelines for COVID-19 Exposed/Confirmed Youth](#) to address placement and service needs. The Department will work to provide resources needed to support the provider’s decision to take the child/youth back into the facility from an

elopement. While the Department's goal is to promote a return to placement, a provider can recommend that a youth not return to a facility.

Q. With the statewide bed shortage and full shelters, how is DCFS managing this?

A. The Department is working to develop several resource pools to address the needs of children and youth who are impacted by COVID-19. Emergency Foster Care resources are being expanded to receive children and youth who would be displaced as a result of COVID-19. We are also working to confirm spaces throughout the state that could be operated as isolation/quarantine locations for children and youth who have been exposed to COVID-19, cannot be maintained within the current placement location, and need isolated monitoring for a 14-day time period.

Q. Has DCFS talked about whether residential/TLP/ILO youth would be receiving stimulus checks for those that haven't submitted a tax return? and if they have SSI collected by the department, does that change anything regarding receiving stimulus checks?

A. Regarding SSI, the IRS is in the process of developing procedures associated with the issuance of stimulus payments to Americans, as called for under the CARES Act. These procedures are evolving, and the IRS has not yet worked out all of the details. DCFS is monitoring for additional guidance.

In the meantime, youth can visit <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments>. The website can help to confirm eligibility and answer many common questions about the program.

Q. If a foster child is quarantined to a foster home – how much information can we share with the bio parent and still keep confidentiality for the foster parent?

A. If the parent's rights are still intact, they would be entitled to know about their child's medical condition. They are not entitled to information about the foster parent's medical condition without a consent. If the quarantine is based on exposure, and not because the child has contracted the virus, then that can be stated without disclosing the source of the exposure.

Q. What is our penalty from DCFS and the courts if we can't do all required home visits?

A. DCFS has not implemented any new systems for penalizing providers during COVID-19. Courts are approaching matters differently across the 102 counties in the State. The Department continues to work with court stakeholders across the State to address matters on the county-specific and statewide levels as well as on a case-by-case basis.

Q. With the inability to visit youth who are incarcerated due to IDOC's visitation restrictions, how can we monitor and utilize alternative service delivery, including the use of technology?

A. Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) has made video and phone contact available to individuals incarcerated in its facilities. Please visit this webpage for more information: <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/facilities/Pages/VisitationRules.aspx>

For youth detained in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility, please visit this webpage for more information: <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/Pages/COVID19.aspx>. Contact the youth's Youth and Family Specialist for specific questions.

Q. If therapists working with youth believe the youth is ill or has been exposed, can they limit the required therapy sessions?

A. The therapist should ask the following screening questions before an in-person session:

1. Has anyone in your home experienced symptoms: sore throat, body aches, coughing, shortness of breath, or a fever of 100.4 °F or higher within the last 14 days?
2. Within the last 14 days, has anyone in your home been in close contact (*closer than 6 feet for at least 15 minutes without use of a mask*) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19?

If the answer to any of the questions is "yes"; a family or child is determined to be in medical isolation due to exposure; or a family or child is determined to be quarantined, in-person sessions should not be held.

Providers may also utilize telehealth. Please see the United States Department of Health and Human Services guidance linked here: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html> and Executive Order 2020-09, signed March 19, 2020 by Governor Pritzker. Please also see [Letter to Providers of Mental/Behavioral Health Services re: Consent for Telehealth \(4/3/20\)](#) and the

associated supplemental form, [Informed Consent of Guardian for Telehealth Services \(4/3/20\)](#), for information on the consent process.

Q. Will ACRs and Court go on as scheduled?

A. ACRs will be conducted via telephone. Regarding court, staff should check <http://illinoiscourts.gov/Administrative/covid-19.asp> before hearings to ensure their assigned courtroom is still open.

Q. If we are transitioning some visits to phone or video call, what feedback will DCFS have regarding ensuring confidentiality and safety monitoring via phone or video call?

A. DCFS rules, state and federal law related to confidentiality apply when using technology. Staff should ensure that communication occurs away from others if they are working from alternate sites.

Q. What is the DCFS directive about youth in care traveling out of state? Will foster parents or the agencies need to follow any additional procedure for these?

A. Please see the Q&A from March 18, 2020. Youth in care should not travel out of state at this time.

Q. Due to decrease in staffing level with call offs due to sickness - what is the flexibility with staffing ratios?

A. DCFS understands there may be instances where ratios may not be met, as these are extenuating circumstances. Agencies unable to maintain staffing ratios shall implement strategies outlined in their Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and notify their APT monitor. During this unprecedented situation, DCFS and POS will ensure the best possible outcomes by working as one team to serve children and families. Agencies should report to Monitoring immediately if ratios become concerning for child safety.

Q. How is foster care intake being handled? Still through CAPU or through the afterhours process?

A. CAPU is still operating as usual during business hours.

Q1. How is DCFS going to continue to assist/support in parent reunification at this time?

Q2. How is DCFS going to help parents continue requested services such as requested evaluations for unification at this time?

A. The Department continues to support connection between children and their parents via phone and video. On cases involving children who have unsupervised visitation with their children, and wherein children are transitioning to permanency in the home of a parent- visitation has continued. The Department continues to assess the technology capabilities of parents and has plans to install technology in each field office for parental use for completion of services, as well as contact with their children. The responsibilities of a caseworker remain the same. They are charged with being connected to service providers, discussing progress of parents in services, and also requesting and reviewing progress reports and evaluations.

Q. Has the failure to adhere to social distancing and/or sanitary guidelines, specific to the COVID-19 Virus, being considered as a basis for taking protective custody?

A. Whenever necessary, allegations of risk of harm, and medical neglect will be considered and applied. As is the case for all neglect allegations, a parent's "blatant disregard" for the care and protection of their child shall be considered. A child protection specialist's responsibility remains unchanged in situations involving imminent safe concerns. Protective custody of a child shall be determined on a case by case basis.

Q1. Will licensing workers still be expected to accompany DCP workers on concurrent investigations for licensed foster homes?

Q2. For stand-alone/licensing only investigations, if a foster family answers yes to any pre-screen questions, can licensing workers delay their visit to the home? Or can the licensing worker utilize a virtual visit for initial contact with making in-person visit at a later date?

A. Please see [Action Transmittal 2020.04 - Licensing Requirements During the COVID-19 Health Emergency](#) for details regarding Licensing requirements.

Q. Are investigators being trained on how to have appropriate contact with at-risk families and protect themselves from the virus?

A. DCFS leadership has engaged in conversation with staff and held Regional Town Hall meetings with the DCFS Medical Director, Dr. Margaret Scotellaro, who spoke on how to have appropriate contact with at risk families and how to best protect themselves from the virus. Additionally, child protection staff have all been provided gloves and masks. A graphic guide to in-person visits has been developed and can be found here: [COVID-19 In-Person Visit Guide - Child Protection \(5/4/20\)](#).

Q. If a foster child has been exposed or is put in self-isolation with presenting symptoms of the virus, are POS agencies required to notify APT or any other DCFS entity?

A. Yes, POS agencies are required to notify APT/Residential Monitoring. This is also covered within the twice weekly COVID-19 report that has been established. Should anything change in between report outs, providers will notify APT/Residential immediately. Additionally, providers should notify the DCFS Guardian's Consent Hotline pursuant to the memo titled [DCFS Notification of Youth in Care Exposed/Symptomatic/Confirmed to have COVID-19 \(4/7/20\)](#).

Q. If an employee refused to do in-person visits due to the health risks, what would be the consequences?

A. The response to this rests with the individual POS agency as the employer. If an employee of DCFS refused to do in-person visits, this would be addressed on an individual basis by the direct supervisor.

Q. It's great that reporting/investigations are continuing with minimal delays -- Is the DCFS adoption process still moving with similar efficiency? If not, other than court hearing cancellations, what other adoption-related delays are being experienced or being expected?

A. Subsidy processing is currently moving forward with minimal disruptions. There is a concern about the potential expiration of background check timeframes, which may delay adoption finalization. DCFS is holding regional joint meetings with Adoption Supervisors and Adoption Panel Attorneys to identify joint strategies for getting Adoptions finalized. Permanency teams are identifying which counties are proceeding with adoptions during this time. Leadership has asked Adoptions staff to review any children pending permanency in a county that is either having court in person, by phone, or video in order to move those cases forward, rather than wait until restrictions are completely lifted.

Q. What guidance/direction can you give workers regarding when a foster family is not receptive to online or phone parent-child contact? What will be the implications of lack of contact and unavailable services over time for families working toward reunification?

A. Caseworkers should continue to communicate with caregivers about the importance of contact between children and parents and how essential this contact is particularly during this crisis.

The DCFS Operations team has also met with the Office of Legal Services to address the issue of reasonable efforts. It is our position that parents can only make “reasonable progress in services” if the child welfare system is able to offer them the means to do so. Under the law, DCFS is equally responsible for making “reasonable efforts” in delivery of services to parents.

As all of Illinois is under a Stay-at-Home order, providers have begun utilizing alternative means to serving our families, including phone and videoconference. DCFS Operations has been working with the Office of Budget and Finance and DoIT@DCFS to find ways to deliver services and visitation to parents via technology. DCFS is in the process of providing Chromebooks for each POS and DCFS office to facilitate video visitation and connection to service providers. We are in the process of confirming local office plans for the use of visiting rooms for this purpose. DCFS is also reviewing its contracted service provider list to confirm that each paid provider is living up to contractual obligation to continue to provide needed services to our families via technology.

Q. Will there be a temporary hold on visiting youth to assess for residential step-downs?

A. To reduce the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus in residential settings, video-based visitation sessions are recommended to facilitate step-down procedures. As such, service providers are encouraged to use HIPAA-compliant video platforms whenever possible.

However, providers may also consider the use of popular applications that allow for video chats, including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, or Skype, to provide step-down support services in congregate care settings.

Q. For parents who have been completing their service plan and meeting requirements for reunification, how will reunification be impacted if Illinois is shut down?

A. The Department continues to address the needs of youth and families during the COVID-19 public health crisis and to explore a variety of options to address reunification and permanency for

youth and families. Caseworkers should continue to complete required assessments related to the child, the home environment, and caregiver capacity for reunification. Visitation should continue in accordance with Action Transmittal 2020.02 until further notice. The Department will evaluate the possibilities for reunification on a case-by-case basis.

Q. Are shelters still being utilized for children taken into PC?

A. Yes, when necessary, shelters are being utilized.

Q. What is the impact on unsupervised visitation and intact services where the children are at home if the drops cannot be done?

A. In the case of unsupervised visitation, if there is a concern that the parent may be intoxicated or using substances, the worker and supervisor may decide to suspend the visits until a test can be completed. In Intact Family Services, the caseworker should assess safety of the children and respond as appropriate. If there are safety concerns and an assessment cannot be completed, the worker and supervisor may opt to request a law enforcement well-check or contact the hotline if there is a new allegation of abuse or neglect.

Q1. Are supervised parent-child visits able to resume with specific new guidelines as amendments are made to the Stay at Home order, expiring next week? Newborns and infants have been separated from parents with current reunification goals.

Q2. When will DCFS lift restrictions on youth in care traveling across state lines with their foster parent?

A. DCFS is currently planning to resume elements of practice, including visitation and travel, according to a phased-in approach. Updates will be provided on those plans in the near future.

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