

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

ACTION TRANSMITTAL 2020.04

LICENSING REQUIREMENTS DURING COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

DATE: April 8, 2020
TO: Division of Licensing and POS Agency Licensing Staff
FROM: Marc D. Smith, Acting Director
EFFECTIVE: Immediately

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Action Transmittal is to guide DCFS licensing staff and POS Foster Care licensing staff in the fulfillment of their work duties and provide guidance to Day Care, Agencies and Institutions, DCFS Foster Home and POS Foster Home licensing staff in order to minimize the risk of becoming infected or spreading COVID-19, while serving youth in care.

II. PRIMARY USERS

Primary users include DCFS licensing staff, POS Foster Home licensing staff, and staff of licensed child care institutions, group homes and child welfare agencies.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

The health, safety and well-being of all youth in care and all child welfare staff at DCFS and partner agencies, along with our ability to continue to protect children in every corner of the state, are our top priorities. During the current health crisis and outbreak of COVID-19, DCFS is working closely with and taking guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and other state agencies equipped and experienced at responding to infectious disease outbreaks. We are closely monitoring the information available and will continue to provide guidance. This Action Transmittal outlines specific protocols regarding in-person child welfare practice *effective starting April 1, 2020. These protocols shall remain in effect until further notice is given.*

This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as circumstances evolve. All other DCFS policy guidelines shall be followed, except for in-person contacts that are eligible for a waiver based upon the circumstances. The use of phone, video and any other forms of technology is *strongly* encouraged to ensure continuity of services for our children and families.



- a) **In all in-person contacts, extra precaution shall be taken such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, use of protective gear and compliance with other CDC recommendations.**

1) **Recommendations for Residential Facilities**

Consistent with the Memo of March 10, 2020 entitled “[Submission of Agency Action Plan: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)”, each licensed residential facility must ensure development of a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). If your facility has not done so already, ensure that a copy of your COOP is sent to your Agencies and Institutions (A&I) licensing representative and DCFS residential monitor as soon as possible. In addition, you must ensure and document that all facility child care staff and child care supervisors are familiar with the measures outlined in your facility’s COOP to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Consistent with [Action Transmittal 2020.02 Updated](#), (updated March 25, 2020), for facilitating and conducting Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation, residential facilities shall make every effort to use available technology, including phone and video conferencing, to allow youth in care to communicate with their family members. Facilities shall also make every effort to allow video conferencing available for assigned workers to communicate with youth in care.

2) **Recommendations for DCFS Day Care/ Agencies & Institutions/ Foster Care and POS Licensing Staff**

Consistent with the Memo dated March 20, 2020 entitled “[COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements](#)”, DCFS and POS licensing staff may not be required to make in-person visits to child welfare agencies, foster homes, child care institutions, group homes, youth emergency shelters, youth transitional housing programs and day care facilities when other front line responders from DCFS have visited the facility and provided documentation that concerns related to the safety, health and well-being of youth-in-care have been assessed and any needed action has been implemented. All in-person contacts related to other licensing responsibilities shall be conducted, per the licensing Activities schedule and other information provided, below.

Consistent with the Memo of March 20, 2020 entitled “[COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements](#)”, this plan is designed to address routine licensing functions.

b) **Licensing Activities schedule**

- New Inquiries (Day Care/ Foster Care/ A & I) – Phone conferencing should occur in order to engage inquirer interest and forward licensing standards/ paperwork as deemed appropriate

- Pending Initial applications, in-person home visits may be required when virtual web viewing is not possible. The licensing process for foster homes shall not be delayed and video web viewing shall be accepted in lieu of required in-person home visits. In those cases where video web viewing is not possible, consultation with and direction from the licensing supervisor is required, while following the guidance provided below.
- License ready to be issued, in-person home visits that have not occurred within 30-60 days prior to the recommendation to license shall be completed via virtual web viewing. If virtual web viewing is not available, an in-person onsite visit may be required with supervisory consultation and direction, while following the guidance provided below.
- Permits are not allowed to expire. Licensing Representatives shall make a recommendation regarding full licensure within 15-days prior to the expiration of the permit. Onsite visits that have not occurred 30 days prior to making a recommendation regarding licensure shall be completed using virtual web viewing whenever possible and while following the guidance provided, below.
- Quarterly, Annual and Semi- Annual Monitoring visits – Postponed unless noted below.
- Change of address application will not be processed for 90 days unless the address change is to be made in order to place a child, and in that case, a home assessment visit shall be made. However, if a licensing representative has been out to the new address in the past 30 days, then the visit can be foregone, and a case note written confirming nothing has changed since the last visit and the home complies with licensing standards.
- Licensing Amendments – In-person contact not required unless noted below.
- Licensing Renewal visits are suspended for approximately 90 days unless noted below.
- Concurrent Licensing Complaint investigations – Child Protection (CPI) takes lead on such investigations. CPI and licensing should maintain communication and share information via email and/or phone. Protective Plans may be developed by CPI in consultation with licensing when deemed appropriate for concurrent investigations.
- Stand-alone Licensing Complaint Investigations. In-person visit required to address licensing requirements associated with safety. Protective Plans shall be developed using video/ teleconferencing with provider and/or provider agency.
- Licensing role is to ensure compliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and established standards.

Staff should reschedule, postpone, cancel or change in-person meetings to video or phone conferencing to minimize any potential exposure and practice social distancing. This also includes, but is not limited to team meetings, supervision, community meetings, etc.

If in-person contact is required, the following pre-screening questions should be asked and if any answers are yes, further consultation with the Licensing Supervisor is required:

1. Within the last 14 days have you traveled to an area with widespread coronavirus according to the CDC?
2. Within the last 14 days have you had close contact with a person with test-proven COVID-19?
3. Do you have fever, cough or trouble breathing?

In-person contact may be necessary to address an emergency licensing action where phone contact is not deemed appropriate by the licensing supervisor or manager.

In-person contact may be required to address a licensing complaint allegation impacting the safety of a child that is not associated with child protection investigation (Concurrent investigation- Rule 383).

In-person contact may be required for amendment of a license needed to accommodate the immediate placement of a child, when there is no documentation of recent contact to the facility within last 90 days.

c) **Hyperlinks to Department COVID-19 Policy Cited in this Memo**

[Action Transmittal 2020.02 Updated](#), Parent-Child and Sibling Visitation (March 25, 2020)

Memo, [COVID-19 and Modifications to In-person Contact Requirements](#) (March 20, 2020)

Memo, [Submission of Agency Action Plan: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (March 10, 2020)

IV. QUESTIONS

For Residential and POS foster care agencies, your assigned A&I Licensing Representative will be in contact with you to answer any questions or provide clarification regarding these instructions