

May 21, 2020

Dear Caregiver,

During this Foster Parent Appreciation Month, all of us at DCFS recognize the care and nurturing you provide to the children in your home. We also appreciate your support of children's relationships with their families, and the flexibility you have demonstrated while shifting to new ways of maintaining those family connections during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Department previously issued Action Transmittal 2020.02 (March 25, 2020), which indicated that in-person supervised parent-child visitation is suspended due to health and safety concerns. This guidance remains in effect until further notice. However, there may be cases in which courts order **in-person** supervised parent-child visitation to occur, contrary to the guidance set forth in Action Transmittal 2020.02. The following information, also communicated in a memo to direct service staff, guides how these visits will occur in the safest manner possible.

Promoting Safety During Supervised Parent-Child Visitation

Caseworkers will ensure that children, parents, and caregivers are asked pre-screening questions regarding every member of the household prior to the visit. If any participant in the visit answers "yes" to one or both these questions, in-person visitation cannot proceed.

Pre-screening questions are as follows:

1. Have you or 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, have you or anyone in your home been in close contact (closer than 6 ft for at least 15 minutes without use of a mask) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19?

Caseworkers will ensure that **face coverings are always worn by all participants** in the parent-child visit. For unsupervised visits, **caseworkers will inform parents that face coverings are required to be worn by all participants** who may attend the parent-child visit. **Exceptions to the use of face coverings are as follows:** face coverings should not be used for children under age two, or by those who cannot remove the covering without assistance or is having difficulty breathing.

Additional guidance on face coverings, which caseworkers will also share with parents is available here:

- **IDPH: Guidance on Use of Masks by the General Public:**
<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/mask-use>
- **IDPH: Face Covering Dos and Don'ts:**
https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/brighterfutures/healthy/Documents/COVID-19_Face_Covering_Dos_and_Donts.pdf
- **CDC: Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

Individuals attending visits are required to **follow social distancing guidelines** during the visit. Social distancing requirements include maintaining at least six-foot social distance from other individuals, washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer, covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands), regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, and not shaking hands. **Visitation shall not take place in a setting with more than 10 people in the immediate vicinity.**

To minimize child discomfort, we ask that foster parents and relative caregivers prepare children for the need to wear a face covering throughout the visit and inform them that their parent and others may also be wearing one. We also ask that you send children with snacks to avoid food sharing and unnecessary travel to businesses. To minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19, the exchange of gifts and packages will not be permitted at visitation.

Children should wash their hands before and after an in-person visit. Hand sanitizer will be available at visits.

The environment in which visitation is being held should be cleaned before and after the visit. Specific guidance is available at [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html) and [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Households \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html).

Tips for Enjoyable Supervised Parent-Child Visits

If you are supervising parent-child visitation, we suggest the following to make the visit more enjoyable for children and their parents:

- Pre-plan activities that can be completed while maintaining social distancing (a web or social media search may assist with ideas);
- Gather and bring what is needed to participate in chosen activities: soccer balls, basketballs, sandbags, ground chalk, other craft or play items.

Transportation to Supervised and Unsupervised Visitation

The transporter will be asked the pre-screening questions prior to providing transportation. All transporters and individuals being transported will follow guidance related to handwashing and social distancing. Transporters, or parents who are transporting their children, shall clean/sanitize their car, including car seats, before and after transport. Guidance can be found at [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Emergency Transport Vehicles \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html).

This guidance is intended to support attachment and family connection during court-ordered visitation, while also promoting the health and safety of children, parents, caregivers and their families. It will be updated as Illinois continues its COVID-19 response and plans for recovery.

On behalf of all of us at DCFS, thank you for all that you do to care for Illinois children. Our work would not be possible without you.

Sincerely,

Marc D. Smith
Acting Director