




**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES**

Andy Beshear
Governor

275 E. Main Street, 3W-A
Frankfort, KY 40621
502-564-3703 Office
502-564-6907 Fax
www.chfs.ky.gov/dCBS

Eric Friedlander
Secretary

Contract Correspondence Transmittal (CCT)

CCT Number: 20-02	Date of Issue: 03/17/2020
Issuance: Division of Protection and Permanency, Christa Bell, Director	
Key Words/Phrases: COVID-19, Coronavirus	
Attachments/Forms: COVID-19 screening tool	

The intent of this correspondence is to provide guidance regarding the impact of the potential spread of COVID-19 upon the Department for Community Based Services' (DCBS) service provision for children and families. Governor Andy Beshear has declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in response to COVID-19. We are taking every precaution to limit the transmission of the illness.

The following guidance is being provided based upon recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and following discussion among the Department for Public Health (DPH), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and DCBS.

Notification of COVID-19 Testing

It is imperative that any suspected or known cases of COVID-19 among children in out of home care (OOHC) be reported immediately. While cases of COVID-19 remain low within the Commonwealth, state and local officials are working together to ensure all necessary precautions are in place to mitigate spread of the illness to the extent possible.

Additionally, DCBS wishes to ensure that children or youth in OOHC who are exposed or become ill from the virus have necessary supports. Each provider is requested to notify the child or youth's DCBS worker with information about **every child in OOHC who has been tested for COVID-19** and provide the information to the Medical Support Section. Please contact Alice Scheffler, Nurse Service Administrator, immediately upon notification that a child has been tested. DCBS workers will also be notifying the Medical Support Section. Ms. Scheffler may be contacted at Alice.Scheffler@ky.gov.



Please provide the following information regarding the child or youth:

- The child's name and date of birth
- Name of the child's placement, including agency and foster family name, if applicable
- Date the child was tested and result of the test, if already received. If the result is pending or inconclusive, subsequent result of testing should be provided as soon as it is known.
- Other children in care placed with the child
- Whether the child is being treated in a home setting or a medical setting
- Current treatment recommendations, medical interventions, and isolation status

The CDC is currently recommending that individuals only seek medical attention if they would have typically sought medical attention for similar symptoms prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Medical Support Section may also be accessed for consultation, as needed.

Staff Visits to Children and Families

At this time, DCBS staff have been asked to temporarily cease face-to-face visits with children and families, unless necessary for the purpose of assessment of safety. This includes regularly scheduled visits to children placed with private child-caring and private child-placing providers. However, frequent contact via telephone, Skype, or similar platforms is required to ensure ongoing provision of services. Providers are asked to accommodate contact between DCBS staff, youth, and foster families utilizing these platforms. DCBS will continue face to face contact for the purpose of investigations of maltreatment and assessment of concerns of immediate safety issues. It is imperative that DCBS be allowed access to children **at any time upon request**. A suggested COVID-19 screening tool is being provided for use if a face to face visit is necessary. These measures will be in effect until further notice. The necessity of continuance of these temporary practices amid the public health crisis will be assessed frequently.

Private child-placing agencies may follow similar practices with regard to reducing or eliminating face to face contacts. However, the frequency of contact by phone or other means should be even more frequent than the normal frequency of home visits in order to ensure adequate supports to children and families. Some face to face contact may still be necessary for assessment of safety or in crisis situations. In addition to the utilization of screening practices in advance of face to face contacts, providers should continue to follow guidance from the CDC and DPH that was shared in previous communication. The use of teletherapy will be acceptable during this interim. There are specific platforms that are considered HIPAA compliant for the purpose of teletherapy, which should be utilized. Electronic signatures will also be acceptable during this time

Training for Foster and Adoptive Parents

Private child-placing staff are asked to cancel face to face training events for foster and adoptive parents that would require gathering large numbers of people together. Alternatives to face-to-face training should be considered to assist foster parents with gaining information or skills necessary to meet the needs of children in their care. This

measure will be reassessed and additional guidance provided in April. However, in the meantime, any concerns about the ability of foster parents to meet training requirements as a result of this guidance should be submitted to Out of Home Care Branch Manager, Kelli Root, at Kelli.Root@ky.gov.

Isolation of Symptomatic Youth

If a youth is displaying symptoms or has tested positive for the virus, the CDC guidance regarding isolation should be followed. If providers have identified space that is not part of the normal space/facility/cottages in which services are provided, the Division of Regulated Child Care has requested to survey that space on an emergency basis as soon as possible. If youth from several programs are to be isolated in a common space, consideration should be given as to age, gender, treatment needs, etc. to determine if those arrangements are appropriate. If there are concerns about the ability to identify an appropriate plan or space, please contact the PCC Liaisons to discuss.

Staffing Ratios

Concerns have been expressed about the ability to maintain required staffing ratios in the event of exposure or infection of staff or youth. The above described aggressive precautionary measures are being implemented to reduce the likelihood of the spread of infection. However, should this become an issue, providers should notify DRCC and the PCC Liaisons immediately to develop an acceptable plan to ensure the health and safety of both youth and staff.

The Department has received many questions regarding continuance of visitation between children and their parents. As the courts have ordered visitation in most cases, DCBS does not have the ability to unilaterally decide to cease all visitation. However, DCBS is working closely with the courts to develop guidance to staff and providers in response to the public health concerns. The Department's response to changing needs as a result of the impact of COVID-19 may require further adjustment to normal practices in the coming weeks and months. Additional guidance will be provided as new information becomes available. DCBS will continue to offer guidance and support. For the latest information on COVID-19 in Kentucky, please visit www.kycovid19.ky.gov.