

**Guidance for Foster or Birth Parent Visitation
COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
December 2020**

The following guidance is based on the most current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) recommendations for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as information continues to evolve.

Guidance for DCS employees making face-to face or videoconferencing or home visits with foster parents
Effective November 1, 2020, based upon the recent upward trending in reported positive COVID-19 cases, the Department is recommending limited Face to Face visitation until further notice.

- FSW's and Foster Parent Support workers, may utilize videoconferencing for required monthly face to face visits unless safety/risk factors indicate otherwise.
- When making home visits, staff will utilize Center for Disease Control and Tennessee Department of Health guidelines which currently recommend the use of masks.
- staff will call the foster family in advance of the visit to complete a health questionnaire based upon the most recent TDH guidance and CDC COVID-19 symptoms list.
 - a. Have you had contact within the last fourteen days with any person under investigation for COVID-19, or with anyone with known or suspected COVID-19? If yes, the visit should be postponed.
 - b. Have you been exposed to anyone who has been tested for COVID-19? If so, have results been received? If no results received, then visitation will not be permitted.
 - c. Have you been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19? If yes, the visit should be postponed.
 - d. In the past 72 hours have you had nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, fever over 100.4, chills, shortness of breath, muscle/body aches, headache, fatigue, congestion/runny nose, or loss of taste/smell? If yes, the visit should be postponed.

If the answer to any of the questions is "Yes",

1. Instruct the individual to remain at home and contact their health care provider immediately.
2. In all circumstances above, instruct the client or family member to notify the receiving healthcare provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
3. Notify supervision for any further instruction regarding the foster child/children in the home

Guidance for DCS employees making face-to face or video-conferencing visits with birth parents:

- Face to face visits may be completed either in the office or in a non-group community setting when recommended as part of the CFTM planning to expedite permanency.
- Parent/Child or Sibling Visitation may also be conducted via videoconferencing to include therapeutic visitation unless otherwise court ordered. Contact legal if a court order dictates the parameters of visitation.
- For scheduled face to face visits with birth parents, staff will call the birth parent in advance of the visit to complete the health screening questions above to determine any risk due to visitation.
- With the upcoming holiday season, staff should utilize the CFTM planning process to ensure that family visitation can be maximized in a safe and healthy manner.

Guidance for minimizing risk of exposure for DCS children and youth

- DCS staff will urge all foster parents to follow CDC guidelines regarding limiting social interactions that could potentially expose custodial children/youth to COVID-19.
- If a foster parent believes that he/she has potentially been exposed to COVID-19 through interaction with an individual who has exhibited symptoms or tested positive for the virus, follow CDC recommendations for self-quarantine, consult their medical provider, and immediately notify the child's case manager or follow the on call-protocol.
- In instances when planning vacations or out of state travel, foster parents are encouraged to carefully evaluate travel plans including attention to infection rates in destination sites. Final approval for out of state travel rests with designated Central Office staff (Debbie.miller@tn.gov) so financial travel obligations should not be made prior to approval.

Guidance regarding home passes:

For the period between the date of this document and until further notice, DCS will initiate D&N home passes only as the result of a CFTM permanency planning decision.

Foster parents should ensure that children/youth have access to opportunities to communicate by phone/facetime with those whom visitation was normally scheduled. DCS will have responsibility for advising families of the temporary restriction.

Guidance regarding court appearances:

- From the date of this document and until further notice, if the child/youth has a pending court date, foster parents should check with the case manager to ensure that the court date has not been re-scheduled.

General guidance for foster parents and foster children:

Everyone Should:

- **Keep hands clean**
 - Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds several times per day OR sanitize hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol
 - Avoid touching the eyes and face with unwashed hands
- **Avoid close contact**
 - Put six feet of distance between yourself and others, when possible
- **Cover mouth and nose with a mask or homemade cloth face cover when around others**
 - A cloth face covering helps to protect all parties
 - N-95 and surgical face masks are not necessary for public interactions
 - Do NOT place face coverings on children younger than age 2 or unconscious individuals
 - Use of a face mask does NOT replace frequent hand washing
- **Cover coughs and sneezes and immediately wash or sanitize hands**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day**
 - Remember doorknobs and handles, light switches, phones, faucets and sinks

Links to Tennessee Department of Health Guidance

[General Guidance and Use of PPE by Non-Medical](#)

[Close Contact Guidelines](#)

[Case Guidelines](#)