Guidance for Private Providers and Facilities Operated by Private Providers

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
March 18, 2021

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 this event evolves.

Guidance for visitation to residential facilities operated by private providers

• Each residential facility will fully implement family visitation to resume with appropriate safety precautions by May 3, 2021.

• When scheduling visitation the following preliminary COVID-19 screening questions should be posed to family members wishing to schedule a visit BEFORE scheduling the visit and again upon arrival for the visit.
  o Have you been exposed to anyone who has been tested for COVID-19? If so, have results been received? If no, then visitation will not be scheduled until a confirmation of negative results received.
  o Have you been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19? If so, visitation will not be permitted unless it has been more than 14 days since last contact with that individual.
  o In the past 72 hours have you experienced any of the COVID-19 related symptoms identified by the CDC? (fever, chills, fatigue, headache, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, muscle/body aches, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea). If so, visitation will not be scheduled.

• Additionally, the following will be required upon arrival for a visit:
  o Temperature checks completed and maintained in a log prior to entering the facility; if temperature is at or above 100.4, admittance/visitation will not be permitted.
  o All family visitors, youth, and staff must wear a mask during the entire visit.
  o Each facility will ensure social distancing is maintained by all parties during visits.
  o Limit number of families allowed on a campus at one time.
  o Limit number of family visitors per child to two people during each scheduled visitation.

• All other visitors and volunteer access to residential facilities will resume based on facility policies no later than May 3, 2021.
• This revised guidance of family visits on campus applies to facilities that serve both delinquent and dependent and neglected youth.
• Following guidance from the CDC, DCS continues to strongly urge private providers who operate residential treatment facilities to conduct COVID-19 symptom and temperature checks on all
employees and other essential personnel prior to entry into their facilities. Per CDC guidelines, those running a temperature of 100.4 or higher should not be permitted to enter the facilities. (is this still needed?)

- DCS is urging all providers to follow CDC guidelines regarding limiting social interactions that could potentially expose custodial youth to COVID-19.

**Guidance for DCS staff making visits with youth in provider facilities**

- For youth placed in a Congregate Care setting, DCS FSWs should resume face to face visits in facilities beginning in April 2021. The FSW/JSW should contact the provider prior to conducting the visit to determine if the facility has any active COVID cases. IF there are active COVID cases within the facility, the FSW/JSW should discuss with their supervisor to determine next steps. While making face to face visitation, Health Department guidance will be followed.

- When DCS staff make face-to-visits at a facility, staff must wear mask as well as follow all other CDC, TDH and provider guidelines.

- DCS will continue to utilize videoconferencing to meet visitation requirements ONLY when there are active cases of COVID in a facility and the health department has restricted visitors; This will be determined based on consultation with the DCS worker, DCS supervisor after conversation with the facility.

**Guidance regarding transportation of youth**

- If youth must be transported for court appearances, medical exams, or other essential appointments, the department strongly urges sanitizing the vehicles before and after transportations occur.

- Youth and staff should wear mask during transportation to appointments and court appearances.

**Guidance regarding week-end home passes and family visits**

- For the period between the issuance of this document until May 3, 2021, home passes will be granted only for D&N cases where stepdown/THV is deemed eminent, which will be determined through the CFTM process where a detailed plan for transition has been developed or a court order exists requiring a home pass is in place. In this case, contact the FSW to consult with Legal regarding next steps for an agreed order and/or amended court order, etc. DCS staff will have responsibility for advising families of the updates to the temporary restriction. Please note: A Court Order cannot be violated and must be adhered to until DCS Legal advises otherwise. When visits do occur via videoconferencing, please provide a space for the youth where they can participate that provides quiet and confidentiality.

- Home passes for D&N cases will resume based on policy and procedure requirements beginning May 3, 2021. All types of visitation should be thoughtfully evaluated with all parties prior to the visit occurring taking into consideration the location, ability to social distance, and ability to follow CDC/THD guidelines.

- For the period between the issuance of this letter and May 3, 2021, Sibling visits and Parent/Child visits can occur via videoconferencing unless there is a court order requiring a face to face contact. In this case, contact the FSW to consult with Legal regarding next steps for an agreed order and/or amended court order, etc. By May 3, 2021 Sibling and Parent/Child Visits will resume according to
current policy and procedures

Guidance regarding court appearances

- From the date of this document until further notice if the child/youth has a pending court date, providers should check with the case manager to ensure that the court date has not been rescheduled.
- If transportation to court must be made, please refer to the guidance above on transportation of youth.

Guidance for provider staff to consider when providing services by face to face and video conferencing

- **Beginning April 5, 2021**, for youth placed in private provider foster homes, private provider agency staff will make a minimum of half of the required monthly contacts face to face in foster homes with all required visits resuming in **May 3, 2021** in accordance with the Contract Provider Manual and/or policy. Health Department guidance for face to face visitation will be followed.
- **Beginning April 5, 2021** for youth placed on a **Trial Home Visit** and being served by a private provider agency, the agency staff will visit the youth in their home and provide all required services outlined in the Contract Provider Manual and/or policy. Video conferencing will be allowed ONLY when there are active cases of COVID in the household; This will be determined based on consultation with the DCS worker, DCS supervisor and provider.
- **Beginning May 3, 2021**, all face to face contacts required by the Contract Provider Manual and Policy will resume.
- Prior to the face to face visit occurring the appropriate screening questions have been asked.
- When a youth is transitioning to a trial home visit from an out-of-home placement, the youth should be seen face-to-face, rather than videoconferencing, to assess safety. CDC guidelines should be followed.
- Assess the individual’s ability to utilize technology resources for a videoconference – e.g. webcam or smartphone?
- At minimum, verbal consent for services will be accepted during this time.

Guidance on reporting

- Providers will report to the DCS Executive Director of Network Development, Camille Legins (camille.legins@tn.gov or 731-514-1780) if any custodial child is exposed to, exhibits symptoms of, is being tested for COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Providers will send daily COVID-19 youth and youth testing by noon each day utilizing the daily tracking log.

Providers will report to DCS Executive Director of Network Development, Camille Legins (Camille.legins@tn.gov), and Deputy Commissioner of Child Health, Dr. Deborah Lowen (Deborah.lowen@tn.gov) and appropriate Regional Administrator/Director if a therapeutic foster parent tests positive for COVID-19.
The following guidelines are set forth and recommended by the TN Department of Health:

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 others from you
  - 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

**Guidance for COVID-19 vaccination**

Vaccinations against this infection have been determined to be critically important in controlling the pandemic and getting “back to normal.” They are deemed to be highly effective in preventing severe infections and deaths. The safety information about the 3 currently available vaccines is reassuring. Per CDC guidance, after vaccination there is no need to quarantine after exposure to COVID-19, you can gather indoors without masks with other vaccinated people, and you can visit others in their homes if they are low-risk for severe illness due to coronavirus.

- There are 3 vaccines currently approved for use in the US: Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson.
- Different shots are available at different locations, and priority level varies by location.
- The TN Department of Health believes the vaccine will soon be available to all adults.
- Children under 16 cannot yet receive the vaccine, and youth between 16-18 can only receive the Pfizer shot.

**Important:** For all the above reasons, CDC guidance encourages individuals to receive a vaccine when available.

**Links to Tennessee Department of Health Guidance**

