Guidance for DCS Staff
COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Updated 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 may be updated at any time as more information is available. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as this event evolves.

Guidance for employees at Wilder Youth Development Center and Child Abuse Hotline.

- All staff at the Hotline who are not working from home will be required to complete a daily health questionnaire prior to each shift.
- Following guidance from the CDC, COVID-19 symptom and temperature checks will be conducted on all employees at Wilder and other essential personnel (such as attorneys visiting youth and contract nurses) prior to entry into Wilder. Per CDC guidelines, those running a temperature of 100.4 or higher will not be permitted to enter Wilder.
- Employees who refuse to follow the guidance will not be allowed to enter the facility and will be required to use personal leave for the missed shift.

Guidance for employees making face-to-face home visits

Effective April 1, 2021, the Department will resume a modified visitation requirement with a minimum of one face to face (in-home) visit and the option for the second visit to occur by video conferencing. Effective May 1, 2021 all program areas will resume normal practice in accordance with departmental policy on face to face (in-home visits).

- Face-to-face-visits will continue for all initial CPS visits. If other arrangements need to be made, prior approval is required from the CPS Director or Deputy Director.
- Home visits and follow up visits for CPS will occur in person per policy unless the family refuses to allow CPS in the home. If this occurs, the CPS case manager will contact the Team Coordinator for guidance and further direction.
- CPS alternative plans can be utilized (such as video conferencing) if there is a valid concern and approved by the Team Coordinator; however, the child/family will be seen face-to-face as soon as the risk is minimized.
- For youth placed in DCS Foster Homes or Private Provider Foster Homes, a modified face to face visit requirement for DCS FSW’s will begin effective April 2021 with normal face to face practice per department policy resuming no later than May 1, 2021.
- For youth placed on a Trial Home Visit (both D/N and JJ), DCS FSWs will resume visits per policy effective April 1, 2021.
- Foster parent support staff will make a face to face home visit to all assigned foster homes monthly beginning April 1, 2021.
- For youth placed in Private Provider Foster Homes, Private Provider Agency staff will visit the youth a minimum of 1 time per month face to face in the foster home in April 2021 and resume all other required visits to meet requirements of contract/provider manual effective May 2021.
For youth placed on a Trial Home Visit and being served by Private Provider Agency, the agency staff will resume visits per policy effective April 2021.

For scheduled visits, staff should call the family home in advance of the visit to complete the following health questionnaire with the family to determine risk 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?

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 should not occur until after the appropriate quarantine period.

c. In the past 72 hours have you had nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, fever over 100.4, chills, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, congestion, or runny nose? If so, document the results of the inquiry, complete a videoconferencing visit, and schedule a face to face visit for later in the month.

Staff should adhere to standard safety practices during home visits such as social distancing and wearing masks.

Guidance for employees making face-to-face visits with youth in DCS or provider facilities.

For youth placed in a Congregate Care setting, DCS FSWs will resume visitation on the modified schedule in April 2021 and per department policy effective, May 2021. Health Department guidance for face to face visitation will be followed if there are active positive cases of COVID in a congregate care facility, and Central Office Network Development and the Child Health Unit will apprise regions when visits should not be made to facilities for precautionary reasons. When DCS staff are making face to face visits at a facility, they must wear masks in addition to following all other CDC, TDH and provider guidelines. Additionally, regions should adhere to protocols that limit the number of staff visiting a facility and schedule in a manner that allows a minimum number of staff to see multiple children during a visit.

Guidance on reporting

Staff will immediately report to Deputy Commissioner of Child Health, Dr. Deborah Lowen if any visitors to a DCS office have been exposed to, exhibit symptoms of, have been tested positive for COVID-19. This includes children, parents, foster parents and DCS staff.

Guidance regarding court appearances

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

Guidance for visitors in DCS offices.

All visitors should complete a health questionnaire to determine risk prior to visitations or meetings.

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?
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. In the past 72 hours have you had nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, fever over 100.4, chills, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, congestion, or runny nose?

- Appropriate social distancing should occur with visitors in the office and masks should be worn during visits.

Guidance for travel.
- Non-essential staff out-of-state travel continues to be suspended until further notice.
- Essential travel has not been affected at this time.
- Out of state travel request for foster children should be reviewed by Regional Administrator/JJ Director, who have authority to deny if indicated/appropriate. Second level review and authorization is required for approvals and should be forwarded to Debbie Miller (Debbie.Miller@tn.gov) for final approval.

Guidance for meetings.
- Large group meetings (10 or more participants) should adhere to local guidelines with remote meeting options being the preferred method until further notice. All in person meetings must follow the social distancing guidelines as well as all participants must wear mask or facial coverings.
- New Employee Orientations and Pre-service will continue under guidelines issued by the Training Division.

General guidance for staff (set forth by TN Department of Health)
- 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 should be worn to protect you and others
  - 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