

March 24, 2020

Dear Foster Parent:

All of us are navigating through unprecedented times in terms of protecting the health and well-being of our Tennessee children and families. It seems appropriate for me to reach out to you at this time in order to thank you, encourage you, and give you information that will help during this challenging time.

As foster parents, you stepped up and made a commitment to provide a safe and nurturing home environment for Tennessee's children and youth who cannot remain in their biological homes. What a noble gift you have given and yet with the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, you now face the challenge of ensuring that your household is protected at every level for both your biological and foster family.

Please know that the Department of Children's Services is committed to protecting our partnership with you. We support you in your commitment to meet the requirements of serving as the custodial guardian of children in DCS custody and doing so while keeping your household safe.

In the spirit of that shared goal, we have temporarily modified our normal visitation protocols. While we cannot "waive" monthly visitation, in most instances, we will be able to complete this requirement through videoconferencing. There will obviously be situations when it will be necessary to have a face to face visit with a child in your care. In those instances, you will be contacted with several screening questions prior to the visit.

In the immediate future, you should look forward to a contact from your local foster parent support staff who will answer any specific questions you might have regarding the modified visitation procedures. If you have questions before that call, please let us know. We will do our best to respond promptly.

We have created a special section on tn.gov/dcs with the latest information from Governor Lee's office and the Department of Health on the state's response to COVID-19. There, you will find all of Governor Lee's Executive Orders, as well as, guidance from the department and resources that can help you and your families during this time of social distancing.

We thank you for the work that you do, and together we will continue to meet the needs of Tennessee's most vulnerable population.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Nichols
Commissioner