

## Memorandum

To: All Contracted Providers  
From: Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes  
Date: 3/18/20  
Re: COVID-19 Continuity of Operations

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Our state and local communities are deeper into the effects of COVID-19 and we recognize information evolves daily which impacts our collaborative efforts. In partnership with the community, our primary mission is to protect children. Now more than ever, children are at higher risk given they are not visible to others outside the home, while living with caretakers in the absence of appropriate supportive services.

We are using this opportunity to continue our communication regarding best practices and to clarify contractual obligations during these critical times. Keeping this in mind, we are sensitive to the needs of keeping your workforce safe and healthy. Simultaneously, we strive to achieve these same outcomes for our own staff.

Please note one significant point in our work is the Department's expectation that all group treatment, in-home and/or in-person services should be immediately suspended. During this heightened time of crisis, our desire is that all work be done remotely. We do ask that every program implement emergency protocols for the provision of safety assessments. Such protocols must include an in-home or in-person response to calls from families in crisis or a where a provider-assessed safety need is present.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions on the following:

### **1. Congregate (Residential) Programs**

- All Continuity of Operation Plans (COOP Plans) must be reviewed and updated as necessary;
- It continues to be the Department's expectation that programs maintain operations in accordance with the terms of the Department's contract/licensing requirements, with the exception of off-site activities and visiting;
- All off-site activities and non-emergency appointments should be immediately suspended;
- All programs should immediately suspend on-site, in-person visitation practices. Providers should make every effort to provide visiting alternatives to their population to include virtual visiting, FaceTime, Skype, etc.;
- It continues to be the Department's expectation that minimum staffing coverage, as defined per contract/licensing requirements, be maintained;
- If such staffing cannot be maintained, the provider must immediately notify JoShonda Guerrier ([Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov](mailto:Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov) / 860 817-4659) for direction on how to proceed; and
- If a resident becomes symptomatic, the provider must immediately notify JoShonda Guerrier ([Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov](mailto:Joshonda.Guerrier@ct.gov) / 860 817-4659) for direction on how to proceed.

## 2. Non-Residential Programs

- It is the Department's expectation that providers continue to perform individual family/client services through the utilization of HIPAA-compliant telehealth software and teleconferencing (Please see most recent Federal guidelines) where services are appropriate for such;
- It is the Department's expectation that providers perform an assessment of each family/client receiving services to assess their ability to utilize such telehealth software, and where there is an assessed need, assist with provision of such access;

## 3. New Referrals

- At this time, the Department will not suspend new referrals to its contracted programs;
- Referrals will be prioritized based on level of need and the Department will be judicious in its referrals; and
- It is the Department's expectation that providers continue to accept referrals and triage as appropriate and able within the confines of current working conditions.

## 4. Miscellaneous Frequently Asked Questions

- Does DCF have an emergency plan to remove its children in congregate or foster care if the child is confirmed COVID-19?

**At this time, the Department will not consider automatic removal of a child who is symptomatic or confirmed with COVID-19. The Department will assess each such situation on a case by case basis, in collaboration with the family, providers and medical professionals to determine the best course of action for that child and family.**

- Can new data collection requests be placed on hold?  
**Yes. The Department will suspend its requests for any new data collection, unless such requests are directly related to the COVID pandemic or the capacity of providers to continue service provision during this time.**
- Can DCF provide flexibility with training requirements/hours?  
**Yes. In cases where the requirement for such training is a Department requirement, the Department will temporarily suspend the requirement. The Department is also working with the model developers of its evidence-based programs to address this concern. Any licensure-specific requirements for training will remain in place.**
- Is DCF anticipating funding reductions to providers who are operating with reduced services or a funding reduction if services are to cease entirely based on presidential or governmental order?  
**No. As previously stated, the Department is committed to being a resource to our community partners. As such, the Department will issue each provider's 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Payment in accordance with contractual funding amounts, and, will evaluate Annual Financial Reports after June 30<sup>th</sup>, with an eye towards flexibility in line item expenses, given the current situation.**
- Is DCF coordinate with other state agencies on its guidance to contracted providers (acknowledging that many providers share funding sources across their continuum)?  
**To the extent possible with the fluidity of emerging direction regarding this pandemic, the Department is attempting to work closely with its sister agencies regarding**

**direction to its community providers. In cases where a provider perceives discrepancies between the directions given by multiple agencies for the same program population, please contact Melanie Sparks (860 978-6592 / [Melanie.Sparks@ct.gov](mailto:Melanie.Sparks@ct.gov)) for clarification.**

For those providers who have pending modification requests, unless such request deviates from above, please consider it approved. Any further modification requests beyond what is detailed above need to continue to be submitted to Melanie Sparks for review.

We remain very thankful of your collaborative efforts and encourage you to continue outreaching with any questions or concerns.

Future communications will be forthcoming as information is learned.