|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | | MEMORANDUM |
| **TO:** | **DCF All Staff** | |
| **FROM:** | **Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes** | |
| **DATE:** | **April 7, 2020** | |
| **SUBJECT** | **COVID -19 Positive Diagnosis - Ongoing Response and Communication** | |

We have made great efforts to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus within our Central Office, Regional Offices and Facilities. As a result of our staffing designations, telework activities, social distancing, the allowance for some essential functions to be done on a rotational basis and office closures, we believe we have had an impact on lowering the risk of potential exposure for our workforce, as well as the children and families we serve. Even with those efforts, DCF has now 15 staff members across the state with positive COVID-19 tests or clinical diagnosis.

Over the past number of weeks, we have been notifying you when a staff member, or visitor to our office, has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. It is important for you to know the process which takes place as a result of this information being learned and the subsequent planning across our Agency.

Each time a positive COVID-19 diagnosis is learned, an immediate team meeting occurs, which includes the following individuals depending on the nature of the discussion centering on an office or facility:

* The Commissioner and Executive Team
* Medical Director
* Chief Fiscal Officer which includes her role as overseeing Engineering responsible for building cleaning, supply acquisition and security
* Bureau Chief of Child Welfare
* Assistance Chief of Child Welfare
* Facility Superintendent
* Human Resources Administrators

The purpose of this meeting is to first and foremost determine the health and well-being of our staff. Contact tracing is then conducted which determines when the individual who has been positively diagnosed first showed symptoms, the last time they were in the office or facility, with whom they may have interacted for more than 10 minutes and within 6 feet, as well as the date they received the positive diagnosis.

This information allows us to determine if children, family members, DCF staff or others may have been exposed to the individual with the positive COVID-19 diagnosis as they were acting in their professional capacity.  If so, those persons are directly notified by a senior administrator of the exposure and encouraged to contact their physician and develop a plan of self-monitoring which may include temporarily not reporting to their work location or if asymptomatic, may be asked to continue to work wearing personal protective equipment. Lastly, a determination is made regarding immediate impact on office or facility operations.

We are now in the community transmission phase of the virus which indicates it is widespread throughout our state and across the country. Connecticut has documented over 7,700 COVID-19 positive results in its daily database.

Moving forward, we are transitioning from providing statewide notifications of each positive COVID-19 diagnosis in an office or facility. The focus will remain on timely notification of those individuals we believe have been directly exposed and may require further supports. I will continue to provide updates in my weekly video messages to you to keep you informed of our efforts.

Please view my most recent video message here: [Commissioner's Video 4/7/20](https://youtu.be/Sg_SeWUdYfQ)

We must remain vigilant in our actions to remain safe and healthy. We have worked hard to acquire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our Level 1 staff who have to continue our mission critical work in person. It is now a requirement this PPE is utilized while performing their work.

The course of this virus is monitored daily.  We are in consultation with other state agencies and child welfare jurisdictions across the country to be informed of best practices in our work.

The nature of our work has changed while we balance the mission of supporting families and protecting children with the health and safety of our workforce. It will continue evolving and your input is welcomed, used in strategizing and valued.

The Department has established a COVID-19 link on our website in which over 8,900 unique individuals have accessed the site over 12,000 times. The website can be accessed here:  <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/COVID-19/COVID-19>

We have also established an e-mail address specific to COVID-19 related questions and concerns. That address is [DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov](mailto:DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov)

Please continue to maintain social distancing rules, wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, and cough/sneeze into your elbow.  
  
**Please stay home if you do not feel well and contact your health care provider if symptoms persist.**

Thank you for your efforts each and every day.

Vannessa Dorantes LMSW   
Commissioner   
CT Dept of Children & Families  
(860)550-6300  
[Commissioner.DCF@ct.gov](mailto:Commissioner.DCF@ct.gov)