



MEMORANDUM

TO: All DCF Staff
FROM: Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
DATE: December 22, 2020
SUBJECT: Safety While Conducting Mission Critical Work

We are all in this TOGETHER.

We remain in a public health crisis as Connecticut is experiencing a surge in COVID-19 positive test results across our state and within our Department.

This pandemic will not last forever — The pace of recovery will depend on the attention we pay to safety protocols today. It is everyone's responsibility to stay vigilant.

Your effort to conduct our mission critical work, while balancing your own health and safety, has been generally exemplary to date.

The Department of Children and Families must continue to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children -- That can never be compromised. During these unprecedented times, we can limit virus transmission by utilizing extraordinary caution as we pay close attention to virus exposure potential.

This is not an '*exact science*' yet we must listen to our public health experts and lead with Science. **Each** decision comes with a risk/benefit analysis of short-and long-term impact that we have to be willing to take. Due to the global pandemic, we must be as judicious as possible in executing the work to ensure the needs of children are being met.

Our mission critical work should be led with the question - "***Can the needs of the children and family be sufficiently addressed remotely?***" If after careful assessment with your chain of command, it is determined that an in-person response is necessary, then we should be asking "***What precautions will everyone take in preplanning and executing the encounter?***" The Department has been very successful in engaging with children and families utilizing remote technology throughout the pandemic. Given the prevalence of community transmission, we must consider the impact of decisions and increase the frequency or scope of the use of technology on a case by case basis.

Partner with your leadership to determine if working in the office is essential during these times. It is important we limit the number of employees within any office space or facility. **All staff are expected to follow the guidelines previously provided** regarding use of PPE within an office or facility and while interacting with others. The precautions also extend to **post in-person activity** including sanitizing high touch point areas in vehicles, common office machinery or indoor spaces after use. Assume equipment will be used by others.

We suggest that our external partners also employ these same protocols when assessing what in-person activity should occur. Consultation should take place with that agency in making these decisions. Use Department leaders to assist in communication & decision making with stakeholders if needed.

The Department is following guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control. They are being administered through our state Department of Public Health and interpreted by our internal medical experts. The guidelines have evolved and, in the months studying this virus, will continually be modified as we learn more. These directives come from the public health perspective and obviously don't fit within our ideal best practice. The work we do is relational involves in-person engagement.

To our staff whose work involves ongoing in-person interaction, consider this also a firm expectation of adherence to health and safety protocols.

Department leadership is here to support you and will continue to keep you informed .

We are ONE... #DCFstrong



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*"I do my best because I'm counting on YOU counting on me..."
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