

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**To:         All Regional and Central Office Staff**

**From:    Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes**

**Date:     5/13/21**

**Re:         What's Our New Normal?**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We all just received a note from Gov Lamont discussing what lessons the past year has taught us about the way we conduct our work.  Please review his full memorandum here: [Governor: Getting back to Our New Normal](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DCF/Agency/COVID-Emails/Governor-Letter-to-State-Employees-5-13-21.pdf)

I, like him, appreciate your dedication to the children and families we serve and with much gratitude, I'm sending this to make sure you know what the timeline outlined means for DCF.

Many of us have been very fortunate to successfully telework during much of the pandemic. Remote work  has afforded greater flexibility and benefits that you’ve candidly shared in two telework surveys.  It is important that we now establish a balance of telework and reporting to an office as in-person work is an essential function of all jobs at DCF.

Governor Ned Lamont announced that eligible state employees, in the covered bargaining units and others including managers, will be allowed to telework and work from home, up to 50% of the time with manager approval through the pre-pandemic Telework Agreement. This decision allows for the work of the agency to get done in a more adaptive way moving forward.

This is a significant announcement many of you have been waiting to hear. We listened to you which has afforded us this very positive outcome.

**Key important dates for us:**

* **May 20th** - Complete resumption of in-person contact standards.
* **June 1st** - Offices will be open to the public; appointment still encouraged.
* **July 1st -** All employees resume regular or approved teleworking schedules.

As we return, schedules must have managerial approval and will be arranged locally to control capacity and coverage for those tasks that require in person attention. We are providing this guidance, so you have adequate notice to arrange childcare, eldercare or other necessary planning for your return to in-person work.  There is an abundant supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and proper use is a workplace requirement.

All DCF offices have been assessed and determined to safely operate within state and federal guidelines. Examples of safety measures are self-serve temperature scanners, floors marked for social distancing, conference room capacity adaptations, ample disinfecting supplies, instructions to clean cars/shared equipment, enhanced air infiltration, signage, cubicle trifolds, floor plans to ensure social distancing and increased touch point cleaning throughout the day etc.

As current practice allows, managers still have the discretion to require staff to come into a Regional/Central Office based on operational and performance needs. An employee who is absent on their assigned in-person workday *may be* assigned an alternative in-person workday. Required work must still be completed and appointments kept regardless your approved telework schedule. We are responsive to the public need and should govern ourselves accordingly. This plan does not apply to employees where in-person work is currently in place due to previously identified operational needs and/or Department essential functions. Employees who work in a 24/7 function will continue their current operations.

Thank you for your patience as this transition to our 'new normal' is under way. We are getting through this … TOGETHER.

**This plan is subject to change based on real time conditions and our authorizing environment.**