



MEMORANDUM

TO: DCF All Staff
FROM: CT DCF Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
DATE: March 24, 2020
SUBJECT: Updated Visitation Guidelines

Our Agency continues to balance the mission of protecting children while keeping our workforce safe and healthy. Planning occurs daily as to the most appropriate manner in which to accomplish these goals.

These times call for us to continue making decisions as a team, while determining the unique needs of a particular child or dynamics present within a family.

This memorandum serves to confirm our updated visitation guidelines and to further support those efforts which have already been implemented.

Investigation staff will respond to emergency Careline reports coded as Same Day or 24 hour responses. A triage will occur for those reports as well as 72 hour response time designations. Good faith efforts will be made to respond within our established timeframes.

Consistent with our message to our contracted providers, all contact with families should now be done remotely while utilizing alternatives to in-person face to face visits such as telephone calls, FaceTime and Skype to assess a child and family's safety and well-being. Upon assessment, an in-home or in-person response, by a Level 1 staff member, may be necessary if a circumstance is identified which cannot be resolved by alternative means.

Visitation Between Families and Children in Care

The Department has already begun utilizing alternative means to maintain contact between families and children in care by use of existing technology. At this time, in-person face to face visits between families and children in care will be postponed. A clear and consistent schedule of virtual contact should be established for each child and their family.

Governor Lamont has signed Executive Order 7I which authorizes the Commissioner to restrict visitation to protect the health and welfare of such children and staff upon discretion. Those orders are outlined below:

Limits on Visitation with Children Placed in the Care and Custody of the Department of Children and Families. Notwithstanding Section 17a-10a of the Connecticut General Statutes or any other statute, regulation, local rule or ordinance or provision of law, the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is authorized to issue any and all orders restricting visitation with children placed in the care and custody of the commissioner pursuant to an order of temporary custody or an order of commitment, that the Commissioner deems necessary to protect the health and welfare of such children and staff.

Visitation to DCF Operated Facilities

Youth at our facilities are also utilizing alternatives to in-person contact with their families via the technology available to them. At this time, in-person visits between families, advocates, attorneys and children in DCF facilities will be postponed and should be conducted virtually. A clear and consistent schedule of virtual contact should be established for each child and their family.

Governor Lamont has signed Executive Order 7I which authorizes the Commissioner and head of a facility or institution, to restrict entrance into facilities upon discretion. Those orders are as outlined below:

Limits on Visitors to Facilities That Treat Children or Youth with Psychiatric Disabilities. Notwithstanding Section 17a-16 of the Connecticut General Statutes or any other statute, regulation, local rule or ordinance or provision of law, the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families and the head of a facility or institution under the Commissioner's jurisdiction are authorized to issue any and all orders restricting entrance into facilities, as defined in Section 17a-32 of the Connecticut General Statutes, including the Albert J. Solnit Children's Center - South Campus, and the Albert J. Solnit Children's Center - North Campus, that the Commissioner deems necessary to protect the health and welfare of such children and staff.

Please note that all visits to area offices are restricted to staff only access.

All of us in the Department need to continue making every effort to establish meaningful contact with our children and families. These times call on creative and thoughtful interventions while assessing safety and risk and for providing support to those we serve.

We appreciate all of your diligent efforts.