



MEMORANDUM

TO: All DCF Staff
FROM: Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
DATE: May 17, 2020
SUBJECT: Update on Department Operations and Commissioner Weekly Video

For almost two months, we have worked extremely hard to empower and support our families as over 85% of our workforce are teleworking. Staff in our Solnit South and North facilities and the Careline have remained fully operational. Designated Level 1 staff have actively been providing direct services to children and families in the most critical circumstances.

The state is starting to partially re-open this week. This decision has been met with both excitement and concern. The question many of you have centers around what is next for the Department of Children and Families.

Our weekly message will focus on the Department's planning to resume full operations in our Regional and Central Offices. Please let me confirm that we have no specific timeframe for when this will occur. Comprehensive planning is taking place, with the input from hundreds of staff across all disciplines within the Agency, to inform our decision making.

While we continue our mission critical work, we have formed subcommittees to address how and when we resume full operations in four main areas:

- a) Physical Safety
- b) Emotional/Psychological Safety
- c) Health/Medical
- d) Personnel Considerations

On Tuesday, these subcommittees will provide recommendations to myself and the Executive Team. From there, I will include these recommendations in discussions with other sister state agencies to inform the broader re-open efforts.

Furthermore, you were encouraged to provide input to our dedicated DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov e-mail address. We have had over 135 responses to that request. Your points were very well received and what was especially appreciated was how staff took the time to praise their supervisors, program supervisors and office directors for their support and encouragement during this time.

We are also in the process of gaining input from our Statewide Advisory Council, Legislators, FAVOR, AFCAMP, Family First workgroup members and private providers to ensure all voices are heard.

These are challenging times. We have grown as an Agency and have learned so much about our work which we can continue to practice in the years to come.

We are being challenged both personally and professionally.

This week, I came across a quote which I read to our Senior Administrators:

"The comfort zone is a psychological state in which one feels familiar, safe, at ease, and secure. If you always do what is easy and choose the path of least resistance, you never step outside your comfort zone. Great things don't come from comfort zones."

Roy T. Bennett
"The Light in the Heart"



As we also remind ourselves it is Foster Care Appreciation month, this week we will publishing our next "Spotlight on What's Right" newsletter which highlights our foster care work.

Let us also remember it is Mental Health Awareness Month. Please look for helpful links regarding resilience, self-care and how to support one another especially during these trying times.

We will also extend our triage process to discussions related to assessing risks and benefits regarding in person visits between children and their families.

Our Southwest Regional Offices that border New York are in the process of being brought on-line consistent with the other 9 Offices.

We are all in this together and I walk with you during this journey. We acknowledge the uncertainty in our future and the impacts on our personal and professional comfort. I encourage you to embrace the challenges of growth and new ways of operating as an agency.

Please know you are appreciated, and I admire your ability to balance our work while you care for your families and yourselves.

I am proud to be your Commissioner.

Please see my weekly video for additional updates on the Department: [Commissioner's Weekly COVID-19 Update, May 17, 2020](https://youtu.be/Gk24uWF41Uo) (<https://youtu.be/Gk24uWF41Uo>)