



## DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

*Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities*



Vannessa L. Dorantes  
Commissioner

Ned Lamont  
Governor

Whereas, on March 10, 2020 Governor Ned Lamont proclaimed a state of emergency throughout the State of Connecticut as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States and confirmed spread in Connecticut;

Whereas, an in-person investigation of a report that a child has allegedly been abused or neglected is likely to increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19;

Whereas, in some cases the Department of Children and Families can fulfill its statutory obligations to investigate child abuse or neglect using alternate means of communication;

Whereas, DCF is required to provide records as requested after redaction;

Whereas, DCF staff may be reduced as a result of illness or need to self-isolate due to COVID-19 and may need additional time to complete an investigation of child abuse or neglect, to disclose the results of such investigation and to respond to record requests;

Whereas, DCF records are confidential and written consent is required to disclose records in certain circumstances, including providing DCF records to external service providers;

Whereas in person signing of releases is likely to increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19;

Whereas, DCF may utilize e-mail consent or verbal consent to provide Department records to service providers when it is not possible to obtain written consent;

Whereas, DCF currently uses name based and fingerprint based searches to obtain criminal history checks of individuals for placement of children in their home;

Whereas, fingerprinting is likely to increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19;

Whereas, DCF conducts administrative hearings and conducting in person hearings will likely increase the risk of transmission of COVID -19;

Whereas, in some case the Department of Children and Families can fulfill is statutory obligations to conduct administrative hearings using alternate means of communication, such as video conferencing and telephone;

Whereas, Multi-Disciplinary Evaluations provide important information and assessment about the medical condition of a child coming into DCF care; and

Whereas, availability of medical staff to conduct MDEs may be reduced due to prioritization of deployment of medical staff to COVID-19 related medical issues;

Pursuant to the Authority granted to me by Governor Ned Lamont pursuant to Executive Order 7M dated March 25, 2020, as Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, I hereby order the following:

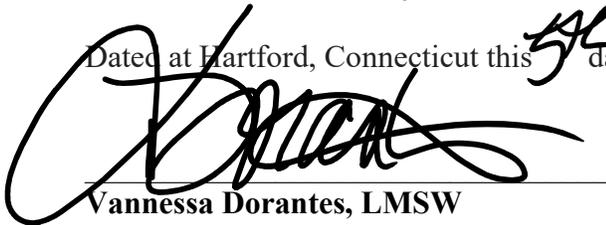
- **Temporary Modification of In Person Investigative Visits and Extension of Time to Commence and Complete an Investigation of Child Abuse or Neglect Conducted by the Department of Children and Families.** Section 17a-101g is modified so that the Department of Children and Families may determine if an in-home visit is required to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect and if alternate means of communication are available. Section 17a-101g of the Connecticut General Statutes is further modified to allow for good faith efforts to complete investigations within 33 business days and to make good faith efforts to respond to all reports other than emergency reports within 72 hours.
- **Temporary Suspension of Non-Critical Department of Children and Families record production.** Notwithstanding any provision of the Connecticut General Statutes or any regulation, local rule or provision of law, I hereby suspend, for the duration of this public health and civil preparedness emergency unless earlier modified or terminated by me, all statutory requirements for the Department of Children and Families to respond to record requests provided for in C.G.S. § 17a-28, unless the record request is for a Court matter identified as level 1 emergency cases as defined by the Judicial Branch. The Department shall make its best efforts to respond to requests that are not level 1 emergency cases within available resources and technology, as determined by the DCF legal division
- **Flexibility related to Written Consent for Disclosure of Department of Children and Families records.** For the duration of this public health and civil preparedness emergency unless earlier modified or terminated by me, the provisions of C.G.S. § 17a-28, and any associated regulations, rules, and policies requiring written consent for release of information of DCF records for purposes of referrals, continuity of services, or receipt of benefits are modified to allow for alternate means of obtaining in person written consent, including, but not limited to, consent through e-mail exchange and verbal consent that is documented in the DCF record.
- **Temporary Suspension of Non-Critical Department of Children and Families Administrative Hearings.** Notwithstanding any provision of the Connecticut General Statutes or any regulation, local rule or provision of law, I hereby suspend for 90 days from March 25, 2020, all statutory requirements or deadlines related to Administrative Hearings conducted by the Department of Children and Families to issue notice, conduct internal reviews, hear matters and/or render

decisions. I authorize the legal division to make its best efforts to schedule hearings within available resources and technology after first consulting with the Appellant to determine if the Appellant wishes to proceed with a hearing through videoconferencing and telephone conferencing.

- **Temporary Suspension of Fingerprinting by the Department of Children and Families** Notwithstanding requirements to submit fingerprints in accordance with 29a-17a, I temporarily suspend the requirement to obtain fingerprints within five calendar days of the name-based search of a prospective placement resource. The Department shall document the names of each individual licensed without a fingerprint based search and include documentation that the name based background check has been completed. This suspension shall continue until 90 days after the expiration of the state of emergency in Connecticut. I direct that there shall be a remediation plan developed to obtain the fingerprints upon resumption of fingerprinting.
- **Temporary Suspension of 30 day requirement for MDE.** I temporarily suspend the requirement that MDEs be completed within 30 days of the child coming into DCF care. The Director of Pediatrics shall develop guidance as to how the medical needs of a child coming into DCF care shall be assessed during this pandemic.

Unless otherwise specified herein, this order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect for the duration of the public health and civil preparedness, unless earlier modified or terminated by me.

Dated at Hartford, Connecticut this  day of April 2020



**Vanessa Dorantes, LMSW**  
**Commissioner**  
**Department of Children and Families**