

Memorandum

To: All DCF Staff

From: Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes

Date: 8/2/2020

Re: Update on Department Operations and Commissioner Weekly Video



Summer is quickly coming towards the end, many decisions to be made regarding children and youth in our care.

Watch this week's video for details on the following...



 [Commissioner Weekly Video 8-2-20](#) 

 **OUT OF STATE TRAVEL**  :

There are currently 34 states on the list of "hotspots" as the COVID transmission rates for those locations has reached the threshold for concern: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/travel> While there is no current travel ban, Governor Lamont has put a protocol into effect requiring quarantining upon return travelers entering Connecticut **from** these locations. This and other provisions also assist with contact tracing. DCF's Bureau of Child Welfare leadership is authorized to make short trip, out of state travel decisions.



 **ON-LINE LEARNING ONLY FOR YOUNG ADULT STUDENTS**  :

Figure 1 As of July 28, 2020, the following locations are included in CT's travel advisory

As for our students enrolled colleges in these identified "hot spot" states, we must take a more measured approach. Given the statutory authority for these young people, I am obligated to make decisions on their behalf. Therefore, I will be reinforcing the difficult decision to deny on-campus residence at any of the out of state schools in "hot spot" states for youth committed to the department's care. Our students should be prepared and heavily supported for on-line coursework for the Fall 2020 semester or until further notice.



 **BACK TO SCHOOL PLANNING**  :

Whether it's considerations for college students or making decisions to support K-12 education, planning during a pandemic is challenging.

Our Education Division and Child Welfare Bureau have convened internal discussions on topics related to Back-to-School planning. This includes working with CT State Department of Education leadership. As CSDE guides districts across the state on their individual strategies, we have been sharing considerations for educators as they plan for the children we mutually serve.

Figure 1 CSDE District Guidance for ReOpening Schools

The latest CSDE guidance for school reopening can be found here: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>

We have experienced the many nuances of distance learning illuminating **inequality** issues within academic achievement in CT. Access to enough technology, WiFi consistency, connectivity, Special Education needs and parental choice must be prominently planned for actively.

🔥 SPOTLIGHTING EQUITY 🔥 :



This past Thursday saw the release of DCF's monthly newsletter.

We are thankful for the equitable supports extended by our providers and stakeholders with the courts through our staff for going the extra mile.

Take a look as this edition highlights the work of

SW Cindi Putney, SW Loren Papagoda and SW Heaven-Lee Trenard as their collaborative work on each of their cases **with** our community partners resulted in beautiful outcomes for children and families. => [Spotlight on what's Right - July](#)

Keep those positive stories coming.....

🔥 EVALUATING OUR DECISIONS 🔥

Lastly, we continue to review the data, listen to our workforce and partners on the impact of our pandemic response to date. We keep in mind that amid a public health emergency, stakeholders have varying perspectives. For example, questions have been raised about the cohorts of children included in the in-person visitation triage processes. Feedback from our facilities as well as our area offices, help us actively plan to introduce additional cohorts of children for consideration. As it stands, the public health metrics and a myriad of other factors guide proposed next phases targeted for the week of 8/15/20 with planning for the remaining children in our care potentially being included in this triage process by the end of the month provided transmission rates hold steady.

Our Resuming Full Functioning Plan is fluid yet deliberate. It includes recommendations from inside and external to the dept. There are many moving parts to balancing the safety of our workforce with the mission critical work of DCF. Critical thinking guides every cautious step we take **TOGETHER**.



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