

From: DCF COMMISSIONER <COMMISSIONER.DCF@CT.GOV>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 10:15 AM
Subject: DCF - Parent/Child Visitation Triage Protocol



MEMORANDUM

TO: All DCF Staff and Community Partners
FROM: Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes
DATE: June 7, 2020
SUBJECT: Parent/Child Visitation Triage Protocol

Consistent with Executive order 71, the Department has been utilizing alternative means to maintain contact between families and children in care using existing technology. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide revised visitation guidance, cautiously lifting some in-person parent/child visitation restrictions loosely in concert with the broader ReOpen CT guidance phased approach. Consistent with ReOpen CT Phase 2 timeline, DCF is modifying the in-person strict visitation prohibition beginning **the week of June 15, 2020. It is incumbent upon all of us to do this, and to make sure our clients are aware that they can begin requesting** Department is implementing a **triage review process** for its 1st phase towards resuming full functi

This guidance takes into account the current available public health coronavirus community transmission data as well as feedback we are gathering from our DCF staff and external stakeholders.

At this time, the Department is implementing a **triage review process** for its 1st phase towards resuming full functioning. The following circumstances to determine whether in-person parent/child visitation can safely occur:

- ✚ Congregate care facilities with children/youth in DCF custody can determine visitation according to limitations of each facility using public health and best interest risk analysis.
 - Guidelines for resuming in-person visitation both Solnit South and Solnit North campuses are being finalized.
 - Private non-profit congregate facilities are also permitted to develop visitation guidelines consistent with a child and public health best interests.
- ✚ DCF cases where reunification is expected within the next 3 months
- ✚ Families with infants 0-6 months of age.
 - Except in cases with a co-terminus petition has been filed
- ✚ DCF cases where there have been unresolved barriers to virtual visitation.

When the Department receives a request from a parent, parent's attorney, child's attorney or youth for an in-person, face to face parent / child visit to occur, the following individuals shall triage the case and decide whether such visit can safely occur, and is in the best interests of the child:

- Social Worker, Social Work Supervisor and Program Supervisor responsible for the case along with Foster and Adoption Support Units (FASU) Program Supervisor
- Office Director & FASU Program Directors working in concert to help problem solve

**The incorporation of CAFAF liaisons, foster parents and FASU support staff is strongly encouraged during this process.*

The triage process for reviewing the case shall take into consideration the following:

- 1) Consistent with parameters set in pre-pandemic Visitation plans. For example:
 - a. Whether the visitation needs to be supervised and if so, how supervision will occur.
 - b. Whether outdoor visitation is appropriate and logistically possible
 - c. Whether the visit can occur in a location other than a DCF area office which are open but remain closed to the public.
- 2) Whether all involved persons, including parents, child's attorney, parent's attorney and foster parents, **consent** to the in-person visit. If any person does not consent, the decision shall be escalated to the Assistant Bureau Chief and Director of Foster and Adoption Support Units to decide.

A **medical consult** with the local area office Nurse or a designee shall occur using the COVID-19 screening questions to support the office's assessment of visitation safety.

In instances where a parent/child visit shall occur in person:

Personal Protected Equipment (PPE) is required to be worn by all people, except children under the age of two years of age. The department will provide PPEs to DCF staff & family members to be worn during the visit to minimize potential transmission between the parties.

Guidance for maintaining social distancing shall be followed:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Environmental-Health/COVID19-FAQ-Page>

DCF will also follow CDC guidance for non-emergency vehicles when transportation of children is involved: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

Please familiarize yourself with guidelines to keep yourself safe while utilizing transportation: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html>

A full rationale of visitation decisions shall be **documented** in the LINK case file by the Program Supervisor and clearly state that in light of the current COVID- 19 crisis and the Governor's *Stay Safe Stay Home* order, a parent/child visit will be allowed to occur pursuant to the triage process.

For the duration of this public health crisis, in situations where in-person visitation cannot be accomplished within these updated guidelines, parties are encouraged to use currently available remedies to address.

For **ALL** child in placement cases a clear and consistent schedule of virtual contacts shall continue for each child and their family. This schedule as well as documentation of any barriers to remote visitation shall be documented in LINK.

We will all get through this pandemic best by working safely **TOGETHER**.



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