



**Child Welfare Direct Services Continuity During COVID-19 Pandemic
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Foster Care Parents and Providers**
March 16, 2020

1. Will adjustments be made to DFCS case contact requirements?

A temporary Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) has been developed to provide guidance for monthly contacts with children in foster care, their parents, and their caretakers. Skype, Facetime, or similar applications are temporarily approved as a platform for making these case contacts. In the event of technology limitations, telephone calls can be used. Additional virtual contacts are encouraged beyond the monthly requirement to further ensure and support safety and well-being of children, family members, and caretakers.

2. Will adjustments be made to DFCS foster parent contact requirements?

The temporary Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) described above also applies to Resource Development/CRRU staff contacts with foster parents. Skype, Facetime, or similar applications are approved temporarily as a platform for making quarterly face-to-face contacts. In the event of technology limitations, telephone calls can be used.

3. How will caregivers contact the agency in the event of an emergency?

Caregivers will continue the current process of reaching out to Case Managers and other supervisory and administrative county level staff for emergencies. If you have been unable to reach the Case Manager, Supervisor and County Director, you may call 1-855-GA-CHILD for assistance with reaching a county point of contact.

4. For new placements, are there any assurances the children or youth have not been exposed to COVID-19?

At this time, no assurances can be made that children/youth coming into care have not been exposed to COVID-19. The Department is following all applicable guidance and recommendations of the CDC and DPH related to the identification of COVID-19 symptoms.

5. What is the protocol if a youth is suspected of having COVID-19?

Contact the youth's physician for medical instruction and follow their guidance for care of the youth and protective measures to be taken for other youth and staff. Also, immediately notify the DFCS Case Manager and OPM via email and telephone call.

6. What do we do about court-ordered visitation?

It is the Division's recommendation that in-person court-ordered visitation be suspended and replaced with frequent video conferencing and / or phone calls to ensure children stay safe while remaining connected to their parents during this period. In order to remain compliant with judicial court orders, county DFCS offices will need to immediately work to get local juvenile court approval prior to this temporary practice change occurring.

7. For foster parents who must continue to work, can Reasonable & Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS) be used to identify a substitute caregiver?

Yes, foster parents can use RPPS to identify a caregiver to supervise children while they are at work. Foster parents must provide the name, address, telephone number, days, and hours that the child will be with the substitute caregivers.

8. What is the status of trainings and meetings?

Current and scheduled trainings and group meetings are being postponed.

9. Will all DFCS staff telework?

DFCS staff will telework, if possible. Administrative staff will ensure coverage for our core functions in and outside of the office – including providing coverage for the main phone lines and front desk. Case managers are available by cell phone.

10. What is the role of Emergency Management?

At this time Emergency Management is not directly involved in child welfare direct services continuity efforts.

11. What do we do about dependency hearings?

On March 14th, the Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice declared a judicial state of emergency which lasts until April 14th, 2020. As a result of this, the majority of hearings will either be continued or occur through video conferencing. County staff will work with their appointed SAAGs to determine what the local juvenile court's practice will be, and staff will make themselves available for any scheduled hearing.

If you have additional questions related to Covid-19 and DFCS, please email:
DFCSCovidQuestions@dhs.ga.gov