



**Child Welfare Direct Services Continuity During COVID-19 Pandemic  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Foster Care Parents and Providers**  
March 26, 2020

**1. Will adjustments be made to how Information Sessions are conducted?**

In lieu of face-to-face sessions, Information Sessions can be held via Skype, Microsoft Teams or other video conferencing tools to engage prospective families. The official state PowerPoint presentation and video should be used when conducting the sessions. Attendance should be taken at the beginning and end of the session to ensure that participants remain until the conclusion of the presentation. Child Placing Agency's should continue to use their Information Session presentation.

**2. Will adjustments be made to how IMPACT classes are conducted?**

For IMPACT sessions that began prior to March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the remaining sessions can be conducted virtually via Skype, Microsoft Teams or other video conferencing tools to engage families. In alignment with the Governor's orders, new face-to-face IMPACT sessions should be postponed until further notice. Regional CRRU/RD teams and CPAs may send requests to utilize virtual training for any previously scheduled April and May 2020 classes to State level CRRU (DFCS) or OPM (CPA). Those requests should include a specific training plan and will be approved on a case by case basis.

**3. How are we to move family's through the foster/adoptive home approval process if they are unable to complete Live Scans, medicals and drug screens?**

Many doctor's offices and drug screen facilities are only open for emergency situations. As such, families may be unable to obtain these services at this time. Staff are encouraged to keep families engaged in the process by collecting all other documents and paperwork such as the financial form, marriage and birth certificates, divorce decrees, etc. Encourage families to contact their doctor's office about obtaining the physical exam via telehealth. Staff should also inquire as to whether the family has had a medical exam within the last 6 months so that the form can be sent to the doctor's office for completion.

To reduce the spread of the Novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19, and to support movement to employ measures to increase social distancing as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, DHS will temporarily suspend all internal fingerprinting operations provided by Electronic Fingerprint Technicians (EFT) effective March 27, 2020.

During this suspension, all applicants and foster parents needing a background check will be required to complete a consent form which will provide authorization for DHS OIG Background Investigations Unit to conduct a Georgia Only Name Based Search. In place of scheduling an appointment for fingerprinting, applicants and foster parents needing a background check will submit consent forms, provided by their regionally assigned EFT. If you need a consent form, please contact your local EFT to obtain detailed instructions. As this is a temporary process, all applicants and foster parents who received a Georgia Only Name Based Search will be required to complete the fingerprinting process upon return to normal operations

**4. SAFE requires that the Questionnaire 2 (Q2) be administered in the home, face-to-face and should never leave the sight of the Assessor. How are we to complete the home visit to administer the Q2 for both the Initial Family Evaluation and Re-evaluation (Conversion)?**

The Consortium for Children guidance has only been to follow the guidance of your local state leadership. As such, to keep with the fidelity of the SAFE model, Q2 visits should be suspended until the social distancing mandate has been lifted. Families should continue to be engaged in the process through the submission of paperwork and documents. **Note: Quarterly visits should gather information that should be used to complete the re-evaluation. Re-evaluations can begin 90 days prior to the approval end date.**

**5. For re-evaluations that require the SAFE Update form, can the form be provided to families via email to complete?**

The Consortium has advised that the SAFE Update form, like the Q2 is to be administered in person and therefore should not be emailed to the caregiver. The Division is working with the Consortium to identify potential short-term solutions for this issue.

**6. Untimely re-evaluations affect IV-E funding, should Resource Development staff work diligently to have these completed timely if the caregiver and family feel safe in making the home visit?**

Video conferencing should occur in lieu of face to face visits until such time as guidance is received that staff may resume face to face contacts. All household members should be interviewed, and a virtual tour of the home completed to observe the physical home environment for safety issues. **Note: Quarterly visits should gather information that should be used to complete the re-evaluation. Re-evaluations can begin 90 days prior to the approval end date.**

**7. Will adjustments be made to foster parent contact requirements?**

Resource Developers/CRRU staff contacts with foster parents via Skype, Whats App, 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. Documentation must reflect the method in which the visit was

made. Providers should continue to check “face to face” as the method of contact and document in the narrative the virtual contact

**8. What should occur in cases where transition visits to adoptive homes are scheduled?**

Adoption pre-placement visits should be put on hold. If a youth is currently in the adoptive home for a visit, we are requesting that the youth remain in that home until we have further guidance regarding COVID-19. If a youth has upcoming planned visits and they are still in their current placement, contacts between adoptive parents and the youth should be made using phone calls, Skype, Facetime and other social media platforms. If specific cases need further guidance please contact your assigned Regional Adoption Coordinator (RAC).

**9. If an approved caregiver is due to take CPR and 1<sup>st</sup> Aid to remain current, can CPR/1<sup>st</sup> Aid be taken online?**

To ensure the safety of our children, caregivers are required to maintain current CPR/1<sup>st</sup> Aid certification. Online CPR and 1<sup>st</sup> Aid will be accepted if it's completed by a reputable training organization such as the American Red Cross. Staff should provide approval for online CPR and 1<sup>st</sup> Aid to families prior to the family registering for the class.

**10. How do we complete the required documentation for new household members?**

The regular safety screenings including: Department of Corrections, Department of Pardons and Parole, Sexual Offenders Registry, CLEAR, IDS, SHINES, etc. should be completed. Child Placing Agency's should send the CPS History request to the Safety Screening Unit. Due to social distancing, obtaining the medical and criminal records checks may not be possible. Ensure that documentation in SHINES and GA+ Score indicate that the required information was unable to be obtained in a timely manner due to COVID-19. Providers will not be penalized for the lack of documentation, if the GA+ Score accurately reflects the reason. Regular safety screening should resume as soon as medical and criminal records check systems allow.

**11. Will Residential Child Care Licensing complete annual site reviews?**

RCCL is suspending onsite visits to facilities for routine RL visits, monitoring visits and foster home visits until the recommended social distancing and/or quarantine from the CDC has been lifted.

**12. Will the Office of Provider Management be conducting site visits?**

The Office of Provider Management is also suspending onsite visits to facilities for comprehensive site visits, monitoring visits and foster home visits until the recommended social distancing and/or quarantine from the CDC has been lifted.

**13. What is the process for running out of medication?**

On March 23, 2020 Governor Kemp announced that all Georgia licensed pharmacists are now permitted to dispense a 90-day supply of a prescription drugs if a patient has no remaining refills and the pharmacist cannot get in contact with the prescribing provider. Pharmacists may also dispense early refills for prescription drugs. Please note that these authorizations do not apply to Schedule II controlled substances.

**14. How should EPSDT and/or visits be recorded in GA+ Score if they are unable to go to the doctor?**

Providers should identify a medical provider who is able to provide telehealth services. If a telehealth provider cannot be secured, providers should document their efforts in GA+ Score. Providers should use the GA+ Score feature to document the attempt and notate that the appointment was unable to be completed due to the concerns around COVID-19. Providers will not be penalized if they document appropriately via GA+SCORE.

**15. Have all non-emergency medical and dental appointments been canceled? If not, can we assume that they will be?**

All non-essential dental and medical appointments should either be conducted via telehealth services or cancelled if those services are not available or appropriate.

**16. Can foster parents whose income has been reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions or work closures apply for food stamps?**

Yes, application can be made online at [gateway.ga.gov](http://gateway.ga.gov).

**17. GA SHINES validates information such as criminal records checks, medicals, CPR/1<sup>st</sup> Aid when approving or re-approving a home. How do we prevent a home from going into Unapproved status if we are unable to obtain these documents?**

Additional guidance will be forthcoming from CRRU and the SHINES team.

**18. Are foster parents able to arrange for respite during this time?**

Respite placements should be limited at this time to comply with social distancing and preserve the health and safety of our caregivers and children. In the event of an emergency respite can be utilized. State CRRU (DFCS) or OPM (CPA) are available for guidance and assistance.

**19. How does an agency handle when there is a need for extended prudent parenting days?**

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.

**20. In the spirit of flexibility (protecting placement), could RPPS (including overnights) be extended to include provider employees (especially in the case of emergency)?**

In general, RPPS is designed to allow flexibility in the use of informal support systems. Many cases involving a need for staff to be involved in caregiving activities could occur under existing provider operations. If a specific scenario arises that the provider believes is not covered by their existing operations guidelines they can reach out to OPM for assistance.

**21. How should we respond if we've been informed that a child, caregiver or household member may be quarantined because of COVID-19?**

For cases of potential exposure, contact the physician for medical instruction and follow their guidance for care of the youth or adult and protective measures to be taken for other youth, caregivers and/or household members. Also, immediately notify the DFCS Case Manager and/or OPM via email and telephone call. If a person has a confirmed diagnose of COVID-19, The Department of Public Health will take the lead in notifying anyone who has come in contact with the person diagnosed and make determination of next steps for self-quarantine and possible recommendations regarding the foster home or congregate care facility. For DFCS families, document quarantined families on the 'Quarantined Families' log located on the CRRU News SharePoint site. OPM is currently considering possible tracking methods for CPA homes.

**22. Are there any upcoming IMPACT Train the Trainer classes offered?**

At this time, IMPACT Train the Trainer classes for March and April have been cancelled. Hopefully, classes will resume in May.

**23. How should we handle allegations about a particular home?**

Investigations of CPS referrals may continue to require face to face visits. Non-CPS allegations should be assessed to consider any potential safety threats to children that could require face to face contact. Visits to foster parents to discuss policy violations or other non-safety related issues may occur via teleconferencing methods with documentation indicating reason for the teleconference method and any follow up action to be taken. CRRU and OPM staff are available for guidance as specific circumstances arise.

**24. What are the additional measures implemented by DFCS to address placement stability and discharge?**

DFCS is asking that all emergency and 14-day discharge notices be sent to Tammy Reed, Placement & Permanency Services Director in addition to the local county DFCS staff. Providers will be invited to "PAUSE" calls, which are designed to ensure placement changes only occur when all possible resources and solutions have been exhausted and/or is in the child's best interest. The goal of the PAUSE process is to improve placement stability for children in care, prevent further trauma associated with multiple placement moves and strengthen the decision-making process related to moves.

**25. Will agencies provide the cell phone numbers of caseworkers and supervisors so an agency can reach them if they do not respond to emails or do we use the 800 number provided?**

Updating listings of county and regional case management, supervisory and leadership contacts are being uploaded to GA Score and/or share with Together GA.

**26. DBHDD is making personal protective equipment (PPE) available to the mental health clinics. Since we are serving state kids, could DFCS also let CCIs and CPAs get PPE for our kids/staff and sites?**

DFCS will inquire with our state partners, make this request and provide additional feedback to the providers as it is received.

**27. How do we handle employees who have fingerprints expiring on their anniversary date and fingerprint sites are shut down? Can we fingerprint employees at a local sheriff's department if the department is willing to do so or can we only use a GEMALTO fingerprinting site?**

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