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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

April 2, 2020

PIN 20-06-CRP

TO: ALL CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL LICENSEES AND  
FFA-APPROVED OR CERTIFIED HOMES

FROM: *Original signed by Pamela Dickfoss*  
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Community Care Licensing Division

SUBJECT: **RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PROVIDERS  
RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**

**Provider Information Notice (PIN) Summary**

PIN 20-06-CRP incorporates guidance from [ACL 20-25](#) that provided updated information to county child welfare social workers and juvenile probation officers regarding the provision of services to children and families during the evolving COVID-19 situation. This PIN provides recommendations and best practices related to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for licensed children's residential facilities, licensed foster family homes, and homes certified or approved by a foster family agency.

**BACKGROUND**

On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency ("[Proclamation](#)") for California in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Since that time, based on enhanced risk to older and vulnerable Californians and the fast rate of spread, the State has implemented multiple preventive actions, including the [statewide stay at home order](#).

Governor Newsom launched a COVID-19 public awareness campaign to provide useful information to Californians and inform them of actions they can take to further prevent the spread of the virus. The campaign is anchored by a new website, [www.covid19.ca.gov](http://www.covid19.ca.gov), that highlights critical steps people can take to stay healthy and includes many practical resources.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this PIN is to provide additional guidance, recommendations, and best practices for licensed children's residential facilities, licensed foster family homes, and homes certified or approved by a foster family agency, on the provision of quality services during the current state of emergency related to COVID-19. As the situation continues to evolve, and each individual situation differs, further guidance may be provided.

## **USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR VISITATION**

During this state of emergency, providers should be aware that visitation by county child welfare social workers, juvenile probation officers, and service providers that otherwise would be required to happen in person may occur through other means such as videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, Facetime, Zoom), phone calls, social media, and other online communication. When facilitating visits between a child or nonminor dependent and a family member, providers are encouraged to make available alternate means of communication and social interaction, such as phone calls, video calls, texting, social media and other online communications. Family connections that are essential to the wellbeing of a child should be maintained, consistent with screening protocols and social distancing guidelines provided by the CDC and resources identified in this PIN. Communications should allow for private and/or confidential communications as needed, and as required by law.

Foster Family Agency (FFA) social worker visits to certified and approved homes may also be done via videoconference during this state of emergency. Whether a visit should be conducted in person or by videoconferencing is a child-specific decision that must be made based on the training and experience of the FFA social worker and considering all available information. FFAs should begin by assessing the individual needs of their families and children. Factors that should be considered when determining if a face-to-face visit is necessary include but are not limited to the following:

- Is the child being visited by other professionals, tribal representatives, and/or mandated reporters during this time period and the caseworker can receive an updated report from those professionals and/or reporters regarding the child?
- Has the child been in the same placement for the last 4 months and the FFA social worker has determined that the placement is stable, without any concerns noted?
- Has the child been seen in person by a social worker or probation officer within the last 14 days with no concerns reported?

- Has the child been visited by a social worker or probation officer each of the prior three months with no concerns noted regarding the placement?
- The chronological and developmental age of the child, as young children and children with developmental delays or disabilities may not be able to verbalize or otherwise communicate needs and safety issues remotely.

It is recommended that FFA Social Workers increase frequency of communication, such as phone calls, video calls, and texting, with certified and approved families as necessary in order to offer support during this time.

If a county placing agency or FFA worker determine that it is necessary to conduct a face-to-face visit at a facility or home, a provider must grant access and follow instructions related to the mitigation of COVID-19.

Please refer to ACL 20-25 for county practices on the use of technology for monthly caseworker visits, caseworker visits to provide Technical Assistance, Child and Family Team meetings, and parent/child or sibling visits.

Technology used for alternative methods of communication, such as handheld devices and laptops, may need to be used by multiple youth. These items should be cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within facilities and homes. The CDC offers guidance on [cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces](#). The document [When-You-Cant-Be-There-in-Person.pdf](#) (also listed below) provides tools to assist parents and caregivers with the use of technology to stay connected to youth. It may be helpful during this time to conduct this type of contact more often than face-to-face visits would normally occur

### **WHEN FACE-TO-FACE VISITATION IS NECESSARY**

If a face-to-face visit is determined to be necessary by a county placing agency or FFA, providers may be asked to answer pre-screening questions. These questions may include:

- Has anyone in your facility or home tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
  - In the past 14 days have you, your children and/or anyone in your facility or household had any of the following symptoms?
    - Fever
    - Cough
    - Shortness of breath
- Have you, your children and/or anyone in your facility or household had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 with a laboratory confirmed test in the last 14 days?

Providers should be prepared to answer these questions to the best of their ability, monitoring children, family members, and staff for symptoms, and checking

temperatures if a fever is suspected. If a provider answers “yes” to any of the questions, they may be encouraged to notify the doctor of the symptoms and/or exposure, and alternate plans should be made to accomplish the purpose of the contact and ensure the youth’s health, safety, and wellbeing.

If face-to-face visitation is occurring, providers should ensure best practices are being followed in accordance with CDC Guidance. These best practices include [cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#), using “[Cover Your Cough](#)” etiquette, [hand washing](#), and social distancing. Additional guidance is available from health care providers, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the [California Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response](#), the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#), and [local health departments](#).

### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

CDPH has issued [guidance](#) regarding the most effective methods to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including basic precautions like washing hands for 20 seconds and refraining from touching your face. CDPH has also released [guidance](#) indicating that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should only be used by healthy individuals in specific circumstances (i.e., when staff are in prolonged close contact with someone with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection).

### **INFORMATION, SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS**

During this emergency crisis, caregivers are the first line of support to foster youth. Caregivers will be the first to witness and respond to youth’s physical, emotional, health and safety needs. As caregivers, additional supports may be required, ranging from the tangible (food resources) to the intangible (stabilizing a youth in crisis). Caregivers and families should reach out to caseworkers and a child’s mental health worker, if applicable, to access guidance and support available within their social services agency and the larger community. Below are some available resources that may provide support for families and caregivers through this time:

#### Health and behavioral health

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has issued guidance clarifying the ability for most services to be provided via telephone and telehealth visits, including mental health assessments. Substance Use Disorder (SUD) initial assessments for DMC-ODS can be done by telehealth or in-person, with subsequent services by telehealth or telephone. See [DHCS Information Notice 20-009](#) for more detail. Visit the DHCS website periodically as guidance and information is being updated as it becomes available.

### Education

It is currently anticipated that schools will remain closed for a significant period of time. Caregivers are encouraged to help support foster youth learning and engaging in academic and creative activities during this time and can reach out to their caseworkers with assistance gaining access to at-home learning options.

[The California School Directory](#) can help caregivers to locate a youth's school district for the purpose of identifying which school sites may be distributing packaged meals, finding information about [distance learning](#), and coordinating special education needs of youth. The State provides more information and education resources at [covid19.ca.gov/education/](https://covid19.ca.gov/education/).

The California MAP to Inclusion and Belonging, Making Access Possible, Newsletter provides educational materials for children including age-appropriate information on COVID-19 in the March 2020 issue [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Taking Care of the Children - Six Sets of Resources](#).

iFoster is currently offering technology access to foster youth ages 13-24, which include free unlimited high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops to assist in taking online classes. For additional information on available resources, contact iFoster at 1-855-936-7837 or via email at [phone@ifoster.org](mailto:phone@ifoster.org).

### Medication maintenance for youth

It will be important for caregivers to carefully monitor medications for youth in care and obtain new or refill medications as required. Circumstances may arise which will prevent youth from seeing their doctor and/or psychiatrist on a timely basis, and it may be necessary to arrange for additional medication and/or telehealth appointments to bridge any gaps between in-person appointments. Medi-Cal will allow up to a 100-day supply of medications to be dispensed at one time. This does not apply, however, to opiate medications. Caregivers should contact the doctor if the youth's supply is running low to avoid an emergency arising. In some instances, early refill warnings can also be overridden at the point of sale, allowing patients to get their refill before the previous supply has run out, if medically necessary. DHCS provides more information on pharmacy policies for Medi-Cal users at [medi-cal.ca.gov](https://medi-cal.ca.gov).

There are many issues that may arise during this uncertain time. Caregivers and families should reach out to their caseworkers and their FFA social workers (when applicable) for timely support and guidance. Reach out to your [Regional Office](#) with any questions or concerns, and stay up-to-date with the Department's COVID-19 information page at [cdss.ca.gov/#covid19](https://cdss.ca.gov/#covid19).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this notice, please contact the Community Care Licensing Division at (916) 657-2346 or via email at [CRPOPpolicy@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CRPOPpolicy@dss.ca.gov).

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

- [Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Needs During the COVID-19 Epidemic https://www.childtrends.org](https://www.childtrends.org)
- [When you can't be there in person: https://haralambie.com](https://haralambie.com)
- [The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse – Parents Anonymous https://www.cebc4cw.org](https://www.cebc4cw.org)
- [Counties Participating in Courtesy Supervision: https://www.cwda.org](https://www.cwda.org)
- [Emergency Plan – Youth Law Center: https://ylc.org](https://ylc.org)
- [Build a Teen Stress Management Plan: https://parentandteen.com](https://parentandteen.com)
- [Center for Parent & Teen Communication: https://parentandteen.com/](https://parentandteen.com/)
- [Find AA Meetings in California: https://alcoholicsanonymous.com](https://alcoholicsanonymous.com)
- [California NA Meetings: https://www.narcotics.com](https://www.narcotics.com)
- [What To Do If You Are Sick: https://www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)