

April 9, 2020

Dear IFBS Provider:

As a community partner providing essential care and support to our vulnerable children, youth, and their families, you are depended upon each and every day. We here at the Family Services Division (FSD) very much appreciate the compassion and care with which you have responded to our community's current and evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know that Governor Scott's stay-at-home order, accompanied by school and childcare closings, brings an additional set of challenges to our whole community, and that this situation raises numerous questions. We want to start by letting you know that we appreciate you for all you are doing in this difficult time. We understand that families are scared, and challenged more than ever in meeting basic, mental health, medical, and substance use treatment needs, and we greatly appreciate your role as a critical support in this uncertain time.

## Service Delivery

### Remote Services

As we have communicated previously, services during this time should be provided remotely whenever possible. As remote service delivery is more conducive to shorter lengths of time for intervention (e.g., four 15-minute phone check-ins may be more useful to a family during this time than one hour-long conversation), we are making the following changes to the service delivery expectations required by your contract whenever providing remote services while the Governor's state of emergency remains in effect:

The Contractor shall have remote contact with the child/youth/family.

- a. Remote contacts shall be based on the family's current needs, within the following guidelines:
  - i. The Contractor shall meet with the child/youth/family remotely a minimum of one time a week;
  - ii. The Contractor shall meet with the child/youth/family remotely a minimum of one hour a week; and

- iii. The number of hours the Contractor meets with the child/youth/family remotely may reasonably be up to three hours a week.
- b. In cases when the Contractor believes that more than three hours of in-home support is necessary for a family in crises, the Contractor shall obtain approval from the District office to provide additional remote support. The additional remote support should be noted in the monthly progress report.
- c. In cases when a family is transitioning into or out of the program and the Contractor believes that one hour of remote services may be too intensive, the Contractor may provide less remote support.
  - i. In such cases, the Contractor shall note the variation from the above remote contact guidelines in the monthly progress report.
  - ii. The Contractor shall not provide less than one hour of remote support to a family in more than one month consecutively.

### In-Person Services

In cases when in-person service delivery cannot be avoided, please follow the [CDC](#) and [VT Department of Health](#) guidance and screen yourself and all family members prior to meeting using the following questions:

1. Have you been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19?
2. Have you felt unwell with respiratory symptoms in the last few days? Cough, high temperature, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing?

If anyone, including yourself, answers “yes” to any of the above, please notify the assigned FSW, and we will make alternate arrangements.

### **Families in Crisis**

If you are working with a family in crises, please notify the assigned FSW immediately. For cases when an emergency occurs after hours, the FSD Emergency Service Program (ESP) will continue to be staffed 24/7. ESP can be reached at 1 (800) 649-5285. In an effort to adhere to Vermont Department of Health guidelines, we will be encouraging limited movement of children and youth from place to place during this period.

In addition to ESP, families can contact their local crisis line at any time for immediate mental health support, or reach the Crisis Text Line by texting “VT” to 741741. A list of the crisis line phone numbers is available at this link: <https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/how-to-get-help>. Please provide the appropriate number to each family with whom you work.

FSD will continue to update following website with Division-specific information related to COVID-19, including guidance for community partners: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/COVID19>.

If you have any remaining questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Brenda Gooley, at [brenda.gooley@vermont.gov](mailto:brenda.gooley@vermont.gov) or Christine Cowart, at [christine.cowart@vermont.gov](mailto:christine.cowart@vermont.gov).

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to all of you for your ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable Vermonters. We are in this together!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Johnson".

Christine Johnson  
Deputy Commissioner  
DCF Family Services Division