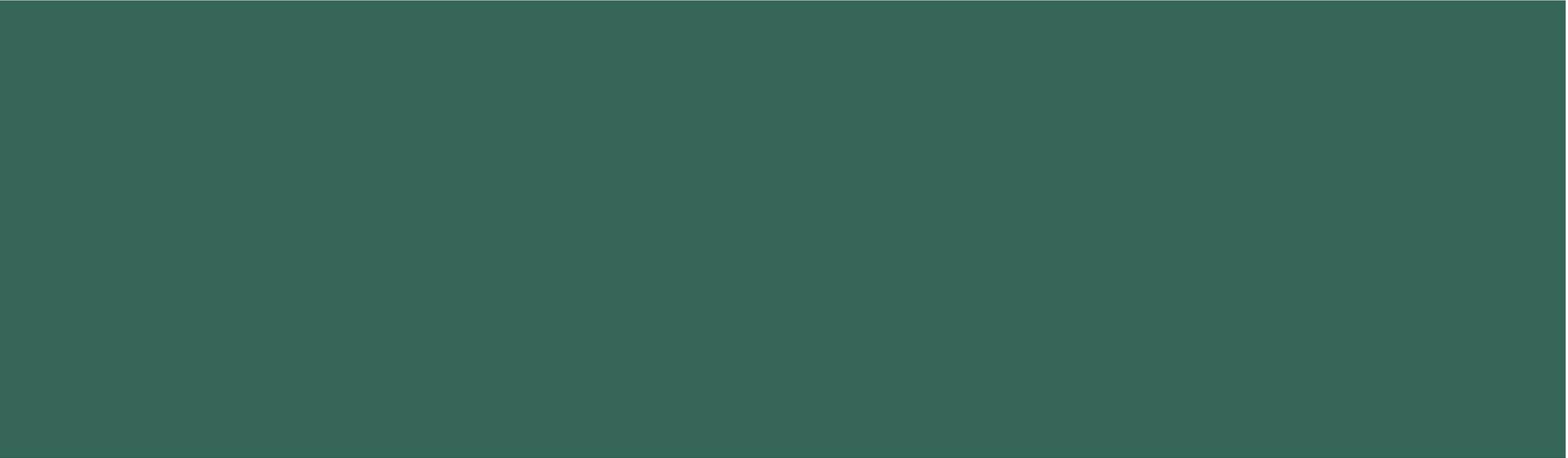




IMPACTS OF COVID-19 FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION UPDATES

TUESDAY MARCH 31ST



DISTRICT OFFICE COVERAGE

- All FSD staff are now teleworking
 - **exception:** Since State offices currently remain open, 2 FSD staff cover each district office to redirect walk-ins and phone calls
- FSD is still providing services but not in district offices
- Team meetings and Federally required case plan reviews are being conducted by phone and/or through virtual meetings (Skype/Zoom)
- Contracted partners who are still providing services are also doing so remotely

COURT

- March 16th : the Supreme Court issued the declaration of emergency which suspends all non- emergency superior court hearings through 4.15.2020
 - only emergency temporary care hearings and hearings on motions to suspend parent child contact will be held
- Court Reports Submission: staff continue to submit all required court reports by the date due.

CHILD SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

- FSD has released internal guidance on commencing and conducting child safety interventions.
- CIES is now assigning all accepted reports as assessments except for substantial child endangerment and reports involving allegations of immediate risk to a child 3 years and younger.
- When in-person contact is necessary, staff are directed ask the VDH screening questions.
 - If the answers to the screening questions are “no”; the FSW may enter the home, taking the following precautions:
 - Wash hands *before and after* being in someone’s home.
 - Stand a safe distance from family members.
 - Cough or sneeze into sleeve.
 - Keep visits short and contained to the matter at hand.

MONTHLY HOME VISITS

- **Custody Cases:** Face-to-face visits are suspended for the duration of the Vermont State of Emergency Declaration (at this time it is April 15, 2020), however, at least monthly communication, in some form, is still required.
- **In-Home cases:** Children still need to be seen monthly which can be accomplished with video conferencing, assuming child safety can be assessed in that manner.
 - FSWs can also request a visual of the inside of the home, the child or youth's bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, etc. when the condition of the home is an identified concern.

PARENT CHILD CONTACT

- Parent child contact is occurring remotely when all parties agree
- When there is not agreement to remote contact, FSD staff are responsible to facilitate this contact
 - Most parks, playgrounds, libraries etc. are closed so it has become increasingly challenging to find a safe public location to conduct parent child contact
- District offices are now available as a safe site for in-person parent-child contact to occur
- If there are safety and/or health related concerns, FSD staff have been provided with internal guidance on filing an Emergency Motion to Suspend In-Person PCC

ICPC/ICJ CASES & NONESSENTIAL TRAVEL

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and the Interstate Commission on Juveniles (ICJ)

- FSD will temporarily refrain from accepting any new requests to place VT children out-of-state.
- No children from out-of-state will be approved for placement in VT foster homes, or in private or public residential settings.
- If FSD receives notice that a child in a placement setting out-of-state is experiencing a disruption, FSD will work to bring the child back to VT.
- VT youth who are on runaway status located in another state will be returned to VT.
- During this State of Emergency, we are not supporting children having visits in other states through ICPC.

There may be specific exceptions to some of these guidelines- Contact Trissie Casanova (Patricia.Casanova@vermont.gov)

Non-essential out of state travel for children in DCF custody is suspended for the duration of the Declaration.

PLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CUSTODY

■ Placement changes

- FSD staff are working hard to keep children and youth in their current placements and minimize any unnecessary placement changes
- If a placement change is necessary, staff first assess if reunification can be done safely
- If reunification is not possible, staff try to keep children in their communities and with kin whenever possible

■ Foster Care Applications

- RLSI developed COVID-19 guidance for special circumstances when staff need to place a child in an unlicensed home, and they can't enter the residence at the time of placement

SUPPORTS TO FOSTER AND KIN PROVIDERS

- **Childcare:** children in foster/kin placement where caregivers work and cannot be home with the child(ren) are considered eligible for continued childcare

Supporting Child Care Needs for Essential Persons: here is the link for FAQs, at this time foster parents and all state employees are considered essential persons <https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Docs/COVID/COVID-19FAQs-for-Child-Care-Providers.pdf>

Link to list of essential persons:

https://vem.vermont.gov/sites/demhs/files/Essential%20Persons_03182020.pdf

- Central Office is exploring with the business office if additional financial supports can be provided

RESIDENTIAL UPDATES

- On March 16, 2020: 104 children and youth placed at in-state residential programs
- As of 3/25/2020: 80 children and youth placed at in-state residential programs.
- Districts and the Specialized Services Unit facilitated over 21 unplanned moves for youth in group settings to home or foster care.
 - several planned moves were expedited to make sure the residential programs could adequately staff the youth remaining in their programs.
 - 24 children and youth have moved from residential settings in 9 days.

Program	Normal Capacity	COVID Capacity	Beds Available
Allenbrook	8	3	Full
Brookhaven	8	5	Full
Community House	8	4	Full
Linden	8	2	Full
Abigail Rockwell	8	3	Full
Laraway Footebrook	4	0	Closed
NFI Group Home	6	2	Full
NFI Shelburne House	3	2	Full
Onion River	8	5	Full
Park Street	10	9	Full
T House	4	1	Full
VACN at Newbury	8	5	Full
VY School for Girls	25	17	Full
WCMH Programs	14	6	Full
Depot Program Bed	18	12	1 bed
Suite 12	5	5	Full
Woodside	30	0	Closed

WOODSIDE AND SUITE 12

- Effective March 24th, the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center closed
 - The State plans to use the space to house COVID-19 positive psychiatric patients
- The 4 youth that were in Woodside moved to a new program in St. Albans, **Suite 12**
 - a program is for high-end aggressive youth
 - staff secure setting
 - 5 beds

ISOLATION SETTINGS

- FSD is actively preparing to ensure that the 1200+ children/youth in DCF custody, and the foster parents and residential program staff have what they need to be able to remain intact (shelter in place).
- FSD also knows that some children and youth may not be able to remain in their current setting for a variety of reasons.
 - Some may have been exposed and are awaiting test results and may need to shelter in an emergency “isolation” setting.
 - AHS is working on establishing an emergency isolation settings

AHS WELCOME AND RECOVERY CENTER

- Goddard College has been identified as a Congregate Recovery Center for AHS clients
- Children/youth in DCF custody can be placed at Goddard if they have tested positive for COVID-19 or clinically diagnosed and cannot stay in their current placement

IMPACTS OF COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CLOSURES ON FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

- As colleges and universities close campuses, FSD and our contracted transition and aftercare program, the Youth Development Program, aims to ensure that former foster youth that were currently living on campus and impacted by these changes have access to necessary housing, food, health care, and emotional support services at this time.
- If you are aware of a former foster youth in this circumstance, please reach out to the local Youth Development Coordinator. Contact information for local case managers and the statewide Youth Development Program (YDP) can be found here: www.vtyouthdevelopmentprogram.org.
 - Youth can also access assistance by emailing YDP@wcysb.org.

FSD WEBSITE: COVID-19

- FSD has added a page to our public website with COVID-19 specific guidance, links, and documents:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/covid19>

- You will find current guidance for our:
 - Community Partners
 - Foster and Kinship Foster Parents
 - Parents Involved with DCF
 - Residential Treatment Providers
 - Youth age 18+