

November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Greetings,

As a parent involved with the Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (FSD) we understand that this is a difficult time as we continue to face an increased number of COVID-19 cases in Vermont. On November 13<sup>th</sup>, in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus, Governor Phillip Scott announced restricting social gatherings with others outside your household in response to rising numbers of COVID -19. We also want to let you know what steps we are taking to try to lessen the spread of this virus. The following is FSD's plan for the **next 30 days** which will be **reviewed every 30 days** and extended as needed.

As of November 16<sup>th</sup> - December 15<sup>th</sup>:

- Family Services Workers will not be having in-person visits with children/youth in foster/kin care or in residential programs. All visits will be virtual.
- Team meetings and case reviews will be held via phone or video conferencing.
- Children in the care of the DCF will not be travelling outside of the State of Vermont if the travel is not essential.
- We will plan with families for how to safely conduct family time between parents and their children.
- We will discourage movement of children from place to place within Vermont during this period.

If a situation arises where a Family Services Worker needs to visit a home, workers will call families before attempting to do a home visit and ask the following the **screening questions** recommended by the Vermont Department of Health:

- 1. Have you been in close contact with anyone who has COVID-19 in the last 14 days?**
  - Close contact means being within 6 feet, for 15 minutes or more, of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 during their infectious period.
  - Close contact does not mean being more than 6 feet away in the same indoor environment for a short period of time, walking by, or briefly being in the same room with someone.
- 2. Is anyone in your household subject to quarantine because they arrived in Vermont in the past 14 days?**
- 3. Are you currently required to quarantine due to travel outside of Vermont for non-essential purposes?**
- 4. Have you experienced any of the following symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the last few days?**
  - Fever (100.4° F or higher)
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Chills
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle pain or aches
  - Headache
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea

**If someone answers 'yes' to any of the questions:**

- We will make alternate plans to accomplish the purpose of the contact, and



- We will encourage them to contact their health care provider to get tested. If they do not have a health care provider, they can dial 2-1-1 to be referred to a clinic in their area.

If the answers are 'no' to all the screening questions, staff may proceed with the home visit or in-person interaction as planned while taking health and safety precautions. Staff will abide by the **Governor's mask mandate** and will request that families wear masks too.

Lastly, the FSD continues to utilize the following website to consistently communicate information to you and others that we work with: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/COVID19>

The Vermont Department of Health has created a comprehensive website that is updated at 1pm on a daily basis. This is the best place to go for up to date information regarding COVID -19 specific questions: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>

The Family Services Division's Centralized Intake/emergency services (CIES) is staffed 24/7. CIES can be reached at 1(800)649-5285.

With these additional safety precautions in place, we hope to keep you and your family safe. We look forward to reassessing where our state is at with our COVID-19 cases in December and hope to be able to work in person with you soon.

Stay Safe!

[insert Director's electronic signature]

[insert district] District Director, Family Services