

March 19, 2020

To: Parent Aide and Supervised Visitation Providers

From: Mike Faust, Director

Re: Parenting time – Virtual visitation facilitated by a contracted provider

Effective immediately and lasting through Sunday, April 5, 2020, the Department and contracted SVO/PA providers are approved to conduct virtual visitation for parenting time between children and parents. This directive is time limited and will be revisited on a weekly basis to determine if a continuation is required beyond April 5th.

Conducting parenting time is critical to maintaining parent-child connection, enhancing caregiver protective capacities, and achieving safe reunification. While transitioning to virtual visitation requires preplanning, coordination, and patience by all individuals; to reduce worry and the spread of COVID-19, a time limited transition to virtual visitation is warranted.

Although this is not the ideal method of supervising parenting time, the guidance provided is intended to limit constraints and allow for creativity to maintain social connections.

Requirements:

- SVO/Parent Aide providers supervising parenting time shall communicate with the caregiver and parent prior to parenting time to ensure the necessary technology is in place.
 - While the Department is not mandating the software a provider must use as a solution, all platforms must adhere to all confidentiality rules and regulations as per law.
 - The individual coordinating parenting time has the responsibility to ensure that all parties are using the same solution and can participate.

- Parenting time should be conducted per the duration and frequency outlined in the case plan and/or required by court order.
 - Given the limitation of interaction available during virtual visitation, it is conceivable that children will not have the attention span to participate for the entire scheduled duration. Efforts should be made, and documented, to conduct parenting time for the entire duration. If shortened, the reason for ending early should be included in the parenting time documentation.
 - Given that families may be self-quarantining, it is possible that individuals other than the parents and caregivers, who would not normally attend parenting time, will be in the family's home. This will be discussed on a case by case basis to avoid disruption of parenting time and maintain confidentiality, and is not a reason to cancel parenting time.

- These protocols assume that SVO/PA providers have technology to facilitate 3-way video conferencing and 3-way telephonic calls.
- Parenting time documentation shall include the following statement: “This contact was completed using virtual technology as a result of an in-person waiver during a declared public health emergency to protect against COVID-19.”
- In the event of parenting time supervised in person, please reference the attached “Guidance for Conducting Home Visits” questionnaire, to assess the safety of the family and home environment related to COVID-19.
- Providers will bill the parenting time per the standards for the referred service, as if the visit occurred full duration, in person.
- If a Provider uses a virtual visit, documentation of the parenting time must include the name of all participants, the location of all participants, the method of parenting time used, and the start and end time of the communication.
- The methods of parenting time below are outlined in the preferred numerical order.
 - **Method 1:** When the parent and caregiver both have technology to facilitate virtual visitation, the DCS Staff, or provider supervising the parenting time, will facilitate a 3-way video conference.
 - **Method 2:** When one party has the technology but the other does not, the DCS Staff, or provider supervising the parenting time, will go to the location of the individual without the technology, or transport the individual to a location that has technology, to facilitate the parenting time.
 - **Method 3:** When neither party has the technology to facilitate video conferencing, but both parties have a telephonic option, the DCS Staff, or the provider supervising the parenting time, will facilitate a 3-way audio only call.
 - **Method 4:** When one or both parties do not have technology to facilitate any of the prior 3 methods:
 - DCS staff shall hold a Supervision Consultation with the Program Manager to discuss option for maintaining contact between the child and parent and determining how to proceed.
 - The contracted provider shall communicate the situation to the Resource and Referral unit.

This directive is effective March 19, 2020 and replaces any prior directive or policy on this matter until April 5, 2020 or until further notice is provided.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,



Mike Faust
Director