

March 19, 2020

Dear parents,

I am writing this letter to you amidst very challenging times and uncertainty. With the spread of COVID-19 and rising concerns in the community I want to assure you that with everything in my power along with the full support of Arizona's caregivers and service providers, we are taking good care of all children in foster care.

The department has been in contact with the courts, parent and child representation, service provider groups, foster licensing agencies and group homes constantly over the past 2 weeks instituting safety precautions including increased cleaning protocols, screening staff for illness and asking them to remain home if ill. Department staff have begun teleworking to reduce exposure and social spread of COVID-19 while court hearings are now being conducted telephonically in most instances.

Today I made the decision that for the safety of children, parents, caregivers and providers that through April 5<sup>th</sup> all visitation will move to virtual solutions. This means if you have the technology available, your parenting time will be conducted via teleconference. If you do not have the technology providers have been asked to make arrangements with you to use their equipment. If for whatever reason that is not possible, the providers or staff will arrange for a telephone call to support parenting time.

This decision was very hard to make as I know how important these visitations are. But for your safety, the safety of your children as well as caregivers and providers this is in the best interest of everyone. In my letter to caregivers this morning, I shared with them the importance of shared parenting and how critical a simple phone call can be. As a young boy 30+ years ago, I recall standing in a phone booth on cold January night speaking to my father. Sometimes just a phone call is all we need to get us through a tough situation.

Thank you for your patience. We are here to help; and like you we want what is best for your child: safety and permanency.

Sincerely,



Mike Faust  
Director