

September 1st, 2021

Dear DCS Contracted Service Providers,

As we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in Arizona, the Department is constantly reassessing our directives & guidelines to determine if extensions, alterations, or expiration is warranted. The Department will remain flexible and continues to be mindful and cautious of the COVID-19 virus and the associated impact to serving Arizona children and families.

As the number of COVID-19 infections continues to rise again in Arizona, this directive on virtual services modifications will be reinstated starting **9/1/2021** and shall be in place through **10/31/2021**.

Below are guidelines & areas in our contracted services where service modifications should either continue or return to being provided as outlined in the contract scope of work. **The General Guidelines section below shall remain in place in order to limit the exposure and risk of COVID-19.** Please continue to reference the DCS COVID-19 website for more information & resources - <https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>.

General Guidelines:

- All contracted services shall be conducted virtually if anyone in the household involved with the service has reported symptoms of COVID-19, tested positive for COVID-19, or pending a test for COVID-19.
 - If a client is reporting symptoms of COVID-19 they should be instructed to seek a COVID-19 test. If the test results are negative, services should return to in-person.
 - If a client tests positive or refuses testing, services shall return to in-person after the CDC recommended isolation period (at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours have passed without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in symptoms).
 - The above guidelines should continue to be followed even for clients who have already received a COVID-19 vaccine.
- All other exceptions for virtual services must have written approval from DCS Program Manager & Program Administrator.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>) for Child Contacts & Parenting Time (Visitation).
- After a Positive COVID-19 Test ([CDC Guidelines as of January 7, 2021](#))
 - Stay at home or under isolation precautions until at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least **1 days (24 hours)** has passed since resolution of fever (including fever, chills, rigors, and body/muscle aches) without the use of fever reducing medications AND improvement in symptoms (including cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell). Precautions beyond 10 days are only needed if fever remains unresolved on Day 10. If the date of symptom onset is unknown, then use the date of COVID-19 test collection.

Congregate Care Providers (Group Homes & Emergency Shelters)

- Conduct health screening for all individuals entering the facility
 - Screening shall include:
 - Questionnaire regarding any recent symptoms consistent with COVID-19
 - Questionnaire regarding contact with known COVID-19 positive individual in the last 14 days.
 - All individuals entering the facility shall receive a screenings including but not limited to:
 - Group Home staff
 - DCS staff
 - Youth returning from activity outside the home
- Facial Coverings should be worn by all individuals entering the home who do not reside at the property including GH staff
 - Youth are not required to wear a facial covering while in the home
 - If the GH is a house parent model, the house parent is not required to wear a facial covering in the home with the children
- Ensure age appropriate conversations occur to support children and youth understanding as to current conditions of COVID-19 in Arizona. Communicate limits on normalcy activities are due to the care and concern for the children and youth, as not to be seen as punitive actions.
- DCS supports activities outside of the GH for youth that promote normalcy. Creating an exhaustive list of activities is not possible but some guidance includes:
 - Youth should be permitted to maintain employment outside of the home including active efforts to find new employment
 - Large group gatherings including trips to the grocery store, mall and other activities should be prohibited.
 - In-person visitation with parents are continuing but should be limited to parents only
 - This requirement has been clarified with DCS Field and Supervised Visitation Providers.
 - Transitionary visits and home passes should be reviewed with the program manager and program administrator.
 - If the visits have been occurring over the past several weeks/months they should continue.
 - If newly established, it may be permissible to delay the start of the activities.
 - Mentoring activities may continue and Group Home staff should engage with the Mentor on the activities that will occur while the youth is outside of the home and the Mentor should follow proper safety guidelines (Facial covering, physical distancing, etc) while with the youth.
 - When determining if mentoring should be continuing, consider whether or not the mentor is the primary adult relationship
 - Unsupervised free time away from the home should be limited at this time
 - Recognition of some peer contact will occur, document contact, and support youth's understanding of the use of facial covering, and safety precautions
- The below direction addresses many of the situations that arise when youth are exposed, symptomatic, pending test result or received test results.
 - If a child is exposed¹ to a known positive person or is symptomatic, the child needs to be tested for COVID-19
 - Please follow the instructions of the Primary Care Physician, quarantine the child and have them wear a mask.
 - Some Primary Care Physicians will request that testing is conducted only when symptoms are present. DCS is requiring, because of the congregate setting, that the child is tested.
 - Exposed means in contact with an individual who is confirmed to be positive and the child was within 6ft for 10 or more consecutive minutes.
 - If barriers exist for conducting tests please escalate to CHPCOVID19@azdcs.gov
 - While waiting for test results:
 - The child should wear a facial covering whenever they cannot physically distance
 - All children residing in the home should participate in virtual visits until the test results are received.
 - All children residing in the home are NOT to attend in-person school (virtual or teacher-led) until test results are received.
 - Access to the group home should be limited. DCS staff will conduct monthly contacts in person and will take appropriate precautions as long as child is not actively symptomatic.
 - DCS staff may require access to child and/or home at any time to ensure the well-being of the child.

School-related questions for children in care should be directed to the child's Local Education Authority (LEA) Foster Care Liaison: <https://www.azed.gov/fostercare/lea-poc-list/>

Foster & Adoption Supports

- All licensing activities & monitoring of home visits shall be done in person as outlined in the contract scope of work if a child/ren are placed in the home.
 - Monitoring visits shall be conducted in-person including if there are no children placed in the home.
 - Support Groups may continue to be done virtually until further notice.
- Foster Parent College shall be provided in-person.
- If there is a confirmed positive in the home the licensing worker shall attempt to reschedule an in person once the isolation period has entered. If not possible virtual is permissible but in person must resume the following month.

SVO/Parent Aide– The following service modifications shall remain until the termination of the Parent Aide contract.

- Supervised Visitation (Parenting Time) should continue to be conducted in-person following the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).
 - Visitation may be moved to virtual visits if a placement or caregiver has determined the need to quarantine per CDC guidelines due to COVID-19 direct exposure and/or confirmed positive. In these cases, document in case notes and notify the DCS Specialist.
- Parent Aide Skill Building sessions may be conducted virtually after **at least two in-person sessions** in order to establish rapport and engagement with the family.
 - Intake meetings are required to be conducted in-person.
 - If parents are not fully engaged in skill sessions services should be provided in person.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).

Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP)

- Services should continue to be provided in-person per the contract SOW.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).

Family Connections (FC)

- Services should continue to be provided in-person per the contract SOW.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).

Family Connections - SENSE (Nurse Home Visits)

- Home visits made by the SENSE trained nurse shall be done in person to conduct assessment of children(s) general health and developmental screenings. Administrative activities may be completed virtually or remotely after the physical assessment has been completed.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).

AFF Substance Abuse Treatment Services

- Initial assessments shall continue to be done in person as written in the SOW.
- Case Coordination & Management of services shall be done in person per the SOW.
- Educational Groups, Therapeutic Groups, Community/Peer support groups may continue to be done virtually until further notice from the Department.
- TDM/Staffing with DCS may be done virtually per the request of DCS.

Clinically Supervised Parenting Time (CSPT)

- Services should continue to be provided in-person per the contract SOW.
- Continue to follow the DCS In-Person Visit Guidelines (<https://dcs.az.gov/covid19>).

Psych/Counseling & Unit Consultation Services

- Psychological Evaluations should be delivered as outlined in the contract scope of work
- Individual/Family Counseling Services should be delivered as outlined in the contract scope of work.
- Unit Consultation with DCS staff should be delivered as outlined in the contract scope of work
 - Clinical interviews with parents and other participants should be done in-person.
 - Unit Consults shall report regularly as scheduled to their designated DCS field offices.
Please work with your assigned DCS Program Manager & Program Administrator.
- Telephonic consultations remain permissible as outlined in the contract scope of work.

Home Assessment & Courtesy Supervision & ICPC

- Emergency & Scheduled Visitation have returned to in-person.
- All initial and follow up contacts with the family will be done in-person.
- Monthly ICPC child contacts will be done in person as detailed in the contract scope of work.
- If there is a confirmed positive in the home the licensing worker shall attempt to reschedule an in person once the isolation period has entered. If not possible virtual is permissible but in person must resume the following month.

Young Adult Programs (Independent Living Skills & Fostering Sustainable Connections)

- Services shall be delivered in-person per the contract scope of work following the precautions outlined in the DCS In-Person Visitation Guides.
- One virtual visit per month per youth will be allowed for situations where staff are in quarantine due to direct exposure but no symptoms.
 - Document in the Monthly Progress Report (MPR), how the service is tailored to be effective in the virtual environment.
- The best interest and preference of the youth should be considered if services are requested to be provided virtually.

Thank you for your partnership,

Mike Faust
Director