

March 30, 2020

Dear Kinship, Foster Families and Congregate Care Caregivers,

Your willingness to open your home and your hearts to children in need is what offers our organization the ability to serve the children and families we support. As a father of my own children and the responsible individual for foster children, this has been some of the toughest few weeks of my life. And I have to say, none of this is possible without you!

As this public health crisis continues, the Department is making every effort to adjust practice and procedures in order to serve the greatest amount of good during these unprecedented times. Communication and alignment throughout the State has been challenging yet we continue to work daily together with our partners and staff to ensure accurate information is conveyed to all who need it. These efforts will continue until this crisis subsides.

With that said, public health officials are informing us that Arizona has several more weeks of this and the spread of the virus will more than likely grow. As a collective, we must remain adaptive, communicative and supportive to ensure the overall best interest of everyone is considered. The Department will continue evaluating information daily and adjusting plans as required to ensure child safety, our top priority.

I thank each of you for your patience and compassion at this time. This is a challenging situation and I am so impressed by the community and the Department coming together as a team to help our children and families. We need to stay focused on keeping children safe, strengthening families and working to achieve permanency regardless of the public health situation.

I want to address technology as we are all relying heavily on it to stay connected to each other, our family and our community.

Virtual visitation presents challenges relative to anonymity. Extra steps are required to ensure that parties can connect with one another without disclosing their identity or location. Today we've added a tech support area to the [COVID-19](#) page of our website that will walk you through the steps required to [set up an anonymous Gmail account](#) as well as tips on how to successfully use [Microsoft Teams](#) and [Google Duo](#). DCS staff will be using Teams and Duo applications to reach out. Keep in mind that providers may be using other apps as well until the virtual visitation administrative directive is lifted.

Virtual Instruction - Many schools are proceeding with instruction and completion of this semester by virtual means. We know that presents unique challenges for our children in foster care. If technology barriers exist for children in DCS care, please follow this guidance:

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1. Check with your school for a solution.
2. DCS will make community resources available [HERE](#).
3. Contact DCS at the volunteer mailbox below if you cannot find a solution between school and community resources.

If you are facing barriers with any basic needs please let us know by contacting the Department at Volunteer@azdcs.gov or calling the Warmline at 1-877-543-7633 Option 3. We will do everything in power to help our community through this difficult time.

Again, thank you for all you do to care for the children of Arizona.

Mike Faust
Director