

March 16, 2020

Dear Foster and Adoption Support Providers and Therapeutic Foster Agency Providers:

There has been much anxiety with the growing situation as it relates to COVID-19 and the children in your care. DCS met this morning to take action to assist in how we can collaborate together to seek solutions to barriers as they arise during this current situation. Our top priority during this time is ensuring that children are safe and that families are able to see and know that their children are safe while in out of home care.

Below are actions that we are implementing effective immediately:

Q1: Monitoring Families by Provider:

Consider what options there are available to ensure the safety of children and that foster families are supported during this time:

- Any variations requested by the provider to the Scope of Work or Chapter 6 should be presented in a plan to OLR. Specifically, should detail the variations being requested and how it will ensure ongoing child safety if approved, please include the Quick Connect ID for the family. Plan should be submitted to Thea Bish; Thea.Bish@azdcs.gov and Mary Long; Mary.Long@azdcs.gov. OLR may have additional questions in consideration of approving the plan.

Q2: Life Safety Inspections:

Life Safety Inspections will continue as usual and inspectors will take necessary precautions.

Q3: Foster Parent College:

There has been concerns expressed regarding holding the FPC in-person classes and the current situation regarding the COVID 19 virus. I completely understand any concerns and anxiety those of you holding the classes, and our students have regarding attending those sessions. I am sure you have received heightened concerns from your students due to the announced recent school closures and recommendations to limit exposure to large crowds receiving media coverage. Therefore, we will move forward with trying to accommodate these issues by supporting the following options for you:

- You can take a pause in holding any further in-person classes until the week of 3/30/2020.
- You may continue classes, holding them in a 1:1 format.
- You may continue to train your parents in a 1:1 setting, or if you have small group and all are comfortable continuing, using the Alternative Schedule (front loading online content and covering meeting materials over 2 days).

If you are going to move forward with options #2 or #3, we will need that communicated to us (via the OLRTraining email address) and appropriate notes attached to the final submitted rosters. Example: they have already attended several normal meetings and will now be covering the remainder in 1 or 2 days and the sign in blocks have irregular (not 5 or 2) meetings initialed. This will also serve as a record of what meetings were covered/when.

Q4: Visitation with birth parents/family:

All scheduled visitation should continue unless a child is symptomatic. If DCS determine in person visitation cannot occur please seek approval from the DCS specialist to arrange a phone call or Skype visit so that parents know that their children are safe during this time. Please encourage your families as appropriate to communicate with parents to ease concerns during this time. If the child is high risk or immune compromised the tele visits or postponement is acceptable for up to 2 weeks.

Q6: Ongoing Appointments including therapy and other assessment:

All appointments should continue unless the child is symptomatic or unless the service provider has canceled or is not available. Foster Caregiver should continue to arrange transportation to all scheduled appointments unless an alternative plan has been approved by DCS.

Q7: Community Resources:

Schools throughout State are offering meal programs to children under the age of 18. Please work with your local district to ensure you have access to this resource. Consider partnering with other providers to pool resources utilize FHL google group to access other providers.

Q8: Behavioral Health Services and needs:

All current processes should be followed. Please try to identify strategies to engage children and keep them active during this time in an effort to minimize escalating behaviors.

Q9: Licensing Rules and Contract Requirements:

Any variations requested by the provider to the Scope of Work or Chapter 6 should be presented in a plan to OLR. Specifically, should detail the variations being requested and how it will ensure ongoing child safety if approved, please include the Quick Connect ID for the family. Plan should be submitted to Thea Bish; Thea.Bish@azdcs.gov and Mary Long; Mary.Long@azdcs.gov. OLR may have additional questions in consideration of approving the plan.

DCS is committed to supporting our provider community. Please understand we are learning more on COVID-19 each day just as the rest of the community. We will be communicating regularly as we have information.

If your organization has any other questions or if there is any other way DCS can assist during this time please reach out to Gillian Vanasse, gillian.vanasse@azdcs.gov and Thea Bish; Thea.Bish@azdcs.gov

Sincerely,



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to report child abuse or neglect: 1-888-SOS-CHILD