



March 16, 2020

Dear DCS Group Home & Shelter Contracted 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: Staffing Ratios:

Consider what options there are available to ensure the safety of children:

- Combining facilities within your organization licensed by DCS/OLR.
- Partnering with other providers
- Any variations requested by the provider to the Scope of Work or Article 74 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. Plan should be submitted to Thea Bish; Thea.Bish@azdcs.gov and Myriam Villarreal; Myriam.Villarreal@azdcs.gov. OLR may have additional questions in consideration of approving the plan.

Q2: Staff bringing children to facility:

Any variations requested by the provider to the Scope of Work or Article 74 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. Plan should be submitted to Thea Bish and Myriam Villarreal. OLR may have additional questions in consideration of approving the plan.

- Considerations to be addressed in plan should include:
 - What steps will be taken should children be showing signs of illness.
 - What are the individual needs of current placements in the facility and how will they be managed.

Q3: Staff bringing placements to their homes:

This is not approved.

Q4: Approval of alternative placements/visits with kinship or fictive kin:

Any visitation or transitional plan should be approved by the DCS specialist, including special approval for extended visits during this time and should be noted on the census.

Q5: 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.

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. Provider 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 CWL 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 Article 74 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. Plan should be submitted to Thea Bish and Myriam Villarreal. OLR may have additional questions in consideration of approving the plan.

Q10: Scheduled visitors to your facilities:

Providers shall permit any services provider and DCS staff to enter as needed to ensure child safety and child's services continue.

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,



Mike Faust

Director

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