

To: DCS All Staff

From: Mike Faust, Director

Re: Virtual Contact with Parents and Children on Tribal Land

Date: December 31, 2020

Given the expiration of the previously issued Virtual Contact with Parents and Children on Tribal Land directive, the extension of the Navajo Nation's state of emergency response to COVID-19, and concern regarding the rates of spread of the COVID-19 virus on Tribal Lands, the Department has identified the need to extend virtual contact with parents and children who currently reside in Reservations.

Effective immediately, and lasting until May 31, 2021:

- The Department will make the required monthly contacts with parents, children and caregivers who reside in Reservations using virtual technology (video conferencing).
 - If video conferencing is not available for use by one of the parties, the Department will make the required contacts by telephone. The use of virtual contacts does not change the Department's duty to ensure child safety; the child must still be closely assessed.
 - The DCS Specialist shall contact the parent or caregiver to arrange the virtual contact to occur through Department provided technology. Acceptable technology for use is currently available on the DCS Specialist's laptop, tablet, or Department issued telephone: Microsoft Teams and Google Duo.
 - If a concern about child safety arises during a monthly contact, the decision of whether the child must be seen in-person will be determined through a Supervision Conference with the Program Manager. If a concern about a parent's safety or mental health arises during a virtual contact, assist the parent to obtain the services of a crisis response team, DCS contracted provider, community service provider, or emergency personnel as indicated by the nature of the concern.
- The Department will arrange for parents who request to have in-person parenting time with their children to begin having in-person contact following the protocols outlined in the [COVID-19 In-Person Visit Guide](#).
- When in-person parenting time is not requested, DCS Staff and SVO/Parent Aide providers supervising parenting time will conduct virtual visitation for parenting time between children and parents in which one or more parties reside in Reservations.
 - DCS Staff or the SVO/Parent Aide provider supervising the parenting time shall communicate with the caregiver and parent prior to parenting time to ensure the necessary technology is in place and that all parties are using the same solution and can participate.

- The methods of parenting time below are outlined in the preferred numerical order.
 - **Method 1:** When the parent and caregiver both have technology to facilitate virtual visitation, the DCS Staff, or provider supervising the parenting time, will facilitate a 3-way video conference.
 - **Method 2:** When one party has the technology but the other does not, the DCS Staff, or provider supervising the parenting time, will go to the location of the individual without the technology, or transport the individual to a location that has technology, to facilitate the parenting time.
 - **Method 3:** When neither party has the technology to facilitate video conferencing, but both parties have a telephonic option, the DCS Staff, or the provider supervising the parenting time, will facilitate a 3-way audio only call.
 - **Method 4:** When one or both parties do not have technology to facilitate any of the prior three methods:
 - DCS staff shall hold a Supervision Consultation with the Program Manager to discuss option for maintaining contact between the child and parent and determining how to proceed.
 - The contracted provider shall communicate the situation to the Resource and Referral unit.
- The Department will make the required contacts in-person (face-to-face) with parents whose children are in-home and assessed unsafe (safety plan necessary to manage dangers).

Documentation of the parent contact using virtual technology shall be entered into Notes:

- Document the contact using Notes designated as Parent/Caregiver Contact.
- Select the "In-Person" as the method of contact for contacts conducted by virtual technology while this administrative directive is in effect, including video conference and telephone.
- Include the names of all parties participating in the visit.
- Begin the Note with the following statement: "This contact was completed using virtual technology as a result of an in-person waiver during a declared public health emergency to protect against COVID-19."

Documentation of the monthly child contact using virtual technology shall be entered into Notes:

- Document the contact as a new Monthly Contact Visit type Note.
- Select "In Person" as the method of contact and "Out-of-Home Living Arrangement" as the location of the contact.
- Include the names of all parties participating in the monthly contact.
- Begin the Note with the following statement, "This contact was completed using virtual technology as a result of an in-person waiver during a declared public health emergency to protect against COVID-19."

Sincerely,



Mike Faust
Director