 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

This memo provides guidance related to COVID-19 Child Welfare matters as of January 1, 2021. All guidance is in effect until further notice. This case practice is in response to the COVID-19 resurge and the necessary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families, while expeditiously working towards permanency for foster children.

As a reminder, State Office notification is needed of any foster child or foster caregiver who tests positive for COVID-19. Notification is also needed of any hospitalizations of foster children/caregivers related to COVID-19. Notifications are emailed to Raynesha.Ducksworth.DCFS@la.gov and Michelle.Faust.DCFS@la.gov, with the following information:


- Name and role of Person Testing Positive (FC or Caregiver)
- First and Last Name of Foster Child
- Age of Foster Child
- Placement Name & Type (Certified-C, Non-Certified-N, Residential-Res, etc.)
- Worker's Name
- Date of Positive COVID Test
- What symptoms is the child exhibiting, if any?
- Hospitalization?
- Date quarantine began
- Names of all other foster children in this home
- Have these foster children been tested?
- Did one or both foster caregivers test positive?
- What symptoms are the foster parents exhibiting?
- Date quarantine began for each foster parent

Although State Office notification is no longer needed if a foster child/caregiver is identified as a close contact (as defined below), caregivers should report this information to the caseworker. The caseworker should remind caregivers of the need to follow all CDC guidance when testing positive or identified as a close contact. Document all positive test results and identification as close contacts in the case record.

VEHICLE USAGE

While the State is under a Declaration of Emergency related to COVID-19, an exception is granted to the 99-mile limitation for personal vehicle use. When there is a need to use a state vehicle, proceed as follows:

- All passengers are to wear a mask. Per the CDC guidelines, individuals under the age of two, has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or who cannot remove the mask by themselves should not wear a face mask;
- Each office is to ensure that a disinfectant spray is available in each vehicle. Each region has access to purchase disinfectant spray, BruTab 6S, through Louisiana Prison Enterprises.

 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

- Prior to using vehicles, use the disinfectant spray on steering wheels, sitting areas, dashboards, and car seats;
- After using vehicles, use the disinfectant spray on all identified areas.

The CDC provides additional guidance on cleaning and disinfection non-emergency transport vehicles that can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-tranCaregiversort-vehicles.html>.

State Vehicles are an extension of a DCFS Office. Accordingly, all procedures for cleaning and sanitizing vehicles are to be followed.

Note: During work hours, personal vehicles are considered an extension of State Vehicles and follow the same protocols.

CHILD CARE NEEDS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

As Day Care Centers are available, staff are to utilize childcare for eligible children in accordance with agency policy. If child care is not available through a licensed childcare center, or attendance at a childcare setting is not in the child’s best interests, reimbursement for babysitting through a “supplemental board rate”, as per CW Memorandum [20-009](#) COVID-19 Services for Families and Children, is available. Document rationale for the supplemental board rate in the case record.


CASE CONTACT REQUIREMENTS

For all in-person contacts, continue to use the COVID-19 screening questions prior to each contact, and if any questions are answered yes, staff should contact their managers for consultation on proceeding with case contacts. Take extra precaution such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, using indicated personal protective equipment, and following CDC recommendations when having contact with others. <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/contact-precautions-sign-P.pdf>

Safety of our children is paramount, it is especially critical during this time to work in partnership with our service providers and collaterals to assist with information gathering, assessments, and service provision. With less mandatory reporters having eyes on our children, extra diligence is needed in all cases with talking to neighbors, doctors, landlords, and others who have daily contact with families.

Guidance related to CPS Investigations

Upon arrival at the home, workers are to maintain social distancing, and complete the screening questions for all household members prior to entering the home. If the answer is no to all screening questions, the worker may enter the home to conduct the investigation as per normal protocol. If there is a “yes” response to any of the screening questions, the worker is

 Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

to, call the Supervisor/Manager to determine how to proceed with investigation contacts. State Office Program Managers and Consultants are available for consultation as needed.


Guidance related to Family Service Cases

Worker visitation for open Family Services cases:


- For cases with a safety plan, or when there is at least one child under the age of 3, there is to be at least two in-person visits per month. Maintain additional required SDM visitation with all household members via visual communication (Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, or other video conferencing technology) and/or verbal communication
- In all other cases, the worker should hold at least one monthly in-person visit with all household members, and maintain additional required visual communication and/or verbal communication according to the SDM level
- Parish Managers should assess designated areas where Family Team Meetings are held and determine the maximum number of participants for a FTM in the office, considering social distancing requirements. All FTM's should resume, preferably in-person or via virtual communication. If this is not possible, consult the Supervisor or Manager to explore options.
- For FS cases with in-person court hearings, the current COVID-19 protocols for each court will be followed. If in-person court hearings are held, contact the parent/caretakers prior to the hearing to conduct the COVID-19 screening. Depending on the outcome of the screening, work with the court to explore virtual hearings.

Guidance related to Foster Care and Adoptions (Including ICPC cases of children placed in Louisiana and out-of-state)

- For Foster Care, Adoptions, and ICPC cases, supervisory staffings should occur to determine if in-person visits, as well as COVID-19 safe family visitation, can resume according to policy requirements/case plans. If there is clear documentation as to why visits cannot resume according to policy, the following minimum requirements apply, unless consultation from the Supervisor/Manager advises otherwise:
 - For all foster children 5 years old and younger, or children whose placements are at risk of disruption, a monthly in-home visit with the child and caretakers is required. If in-person visits cannot be held with foster children, workers are to visit via visual communication with each child and caregiver. Workers are to document in FATS that this is a virtual Face-to-Face Visit that occurred in the home.

 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

- Twice a month in-home worker visits with parents who have children in a trial placement, or when there is a safety plan in place for non-custody children. Maintain additional SDM or policy required visitation via visual communication and/or verbal communication. All court ordered visitation is to occur per court order.
- Monthly in-home worker visits with open SP cases with additional SDM or policy required visitation to occur via visual communication.
- During this difficult time for our children and families, when in person visits are not required or not possible, at least weekly phone contact should be made to all caregivers of foster children to provide as much support possible.
- Family Visits. Workers and Supervisors should discuss the feasibility of resuming family visitation in a manner that ensures social distancing, such as parks or other outdoor areas. Supervisors/Managers should assess designated areas where visits are held and determine the maximum number of participants, considering social distancing requirements. If in-person visits are not possible, hold visits via visual communication. In absence of in-person visitation, QPI practices are strongly encouraged, including regular phone contact between Parent, Child, Caregivers, and Siblings.
- Court Hearings. Each court jurisdiction established protocol regarding court hearings. For all hearings that remain scheduled, the caseworker and/or supervisor is expected to participate. For in-person court hearings, complete the COVID-19 screening on all client participants, and if any screening question is answered yes, consult with ADA/BGC about holding virtually.
- Parish Managers should assess designated areas where Family Team Meetings are held and determine the maximum number of participants for a FTM in the office, considering social distancing requirements. All FTM's should resume, preferably in-person, but via virtual communication if an in-person FTM cannot be held. If this is not possible, consult the Supervisor/Manager to explore options. Manager participation in initial Family Team Meetings is required. As of 7/1/20 Manager completion of FTM review instruments is required.
- Adoption Petition staff are to resume in-person visitation as required by policy and or court orders. Any COVID-19 screenings indicating risk to COVID are to be discussed with Supervisor and ADA/BGC as to how to proceed with completing the adoption.
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids' Recruiters are to staff cases with supervisors to discuss and document any reasons why visits cannot resume. If they cannot, all visits are to be held via phone/Skype/FaceTime or other means available via technology.


 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

Home Development Case Contact Guidelines

- For **re-certifications due through January 31, 2021**, a waiver has been granted to allow the in-home interview and completion of the HDU 5 Checklist for Environmental, Health, and Fire Safety to be completed through virtual technology. In-home visits of those homes, including a review of the HDU-5, must be completed by the Home Development worker no later than April 15, 2021.
- For **child-specific certifications with children in DCFS custody living in the home** a waiver has been granted to allow two of the three required in-person home visits to be completed using virtual technology if the following criteria has been met: an in-home visit including the HDU 5 Checklist for Environmental, Health, and Fire Safety must have been completed and all criminal and SCR clearances must have been completed to certify the home. An in-person support visit in the home for all child-specific homes certified per waiver guidelines must be completed by April 15, 2021.
- For **regular foster home certifications** willing to provide placement types whereby regions are currently experiencing significant shortages, a waiver has been granted through January 31, 2021, to allow one of the three required in-person visits to be completed using virtual technology. Two in-home visits, one of which included the HDU 5 Checklist for Environmental, Health, and Fire Safety, and all criminal and SCR clearances must have been completed to certify the home.
- For all other pending certifications that cannot be completed per waiver guidelines, please note in the case record the certification delay is due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Support visits should be completed by phone/or virtual technology.
- All in-person recruitment activities/events are postponed until further notice.
- Orientations and pre-service trainings are to continue as virtual presentations via zoom.
- Priority for fingerprints should be given to families approaching certification deadlines within the months of December 2020 or January 2021 and for certified families whereby the 3-year timeframe for criminal clearances expires in December 2020 or January 2021.

Guidance related to EFC

- EFC staff will maintain contact with their youth as required by the model and/or as needed through in-person contact. Virtual visits will continue with children placed out-of-state. Prior to in-person contact, EFC staff will administer the COVID-19 pre-screening

 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

questions via telephone for all household members. If any answer to the pre-screening question is yes, EFC staff will consult with their supervisor and/or determine the next steps for in person contact. If EFC staff are unable to complete the in-person contact with the youth due to concerns related to COVID-19 screening, EFC staff will maintain contact with the youth through visual communication. All efforts to complete an in-person contact with youth shall be documented in the case record.

- Other than required in-person contacts listed above, all other in-person meetings and contacts required by the program model shall be conducted via visual communication.

Guidance for screening visitors to DCFS Child Welfare Offices


All DCFS offices will continue to be opened to the public. Follow all guidance provided by DCFS executive management regarding capacity, screening, signage, and any other protocols related to office visitors.

Fingerprint-based criminal clearances should be scheduled by appointment only and must comply with allowed office occupancy rates. Prior to the appointment being scheduled, the scheduling worker is to conduct a COVID-19 screening, and if the answer to all questions is no, proceed with conducting the fingerprint clearance. All possible measures to prevent exposure to COVID-19 are to be taken, including the use of Personal Protective Equipment. If the screening results in any yes answers, consult with the manager on how to proceed with placement.

Screening Protocol

Use the following questions to screen for COVID-19:

1. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 or had any of the following symptoms *that cannot be attributed to another health condition or activity in the last 72 hours?*
 - Fever > 100.4 degrees or feeling like you had a fever, OR
 - Cough, OR
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, OR
 - Chills, OR
 - Repeated shaking with chills, OR
 - Sore throat, OR
 - Headache, OR
 - Muscle pain, OR
 - New loss of taste or smell.
2. Have you recently come into close contact* with someone with suspected or lab-confirmed COVID-19?


 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

“Close Contact” – Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

For further direction on the CDC guidelines refer to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html>

SUMMARY OF CASE CONTACT MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Type of Contact	Requirements
Conducting CPS Investigations	Complete COVID-19 Screening Protocol prior to entering home. If yes to any protocol question, consult Supervisor immediately to assess safety and further direction to ensure the safety and well-being of children. This should not prevent other investigative activities.
Worker visits with Foster Children and Caretakers in Certified Foster Homes, TFC, Non-Certified Homes, and ICPC cases	Visit in-person with foster children and caretakers per policy. “Close Contact” to be avoided. Manager approval needed If visits cannot occur per policy. In addition, at least one phone call per month with the caretaker and children to offer support, discuss case plan, and other topics not able to be covered during the in-person visit. Visual face-to-face communication is preferred for this contact.
Worker Visits – EFC Program	In-Person visits at least monthly. “Close Contact” to be avoided. Other required face-to-face contacts to occur through visual communication. *In-person visits with EFC youth placed out of state are not required. Face-to- Face visits through visual communication are required.
Foster Children placed in Out-of-State PRTFs	Monthly in-person visits are not required unless court ordered. Private face-to-face visits with child at least weekly to occur via visual communication. Frequent contact with Treatment Team is required to ensure treatment needs are being met. Staff to ensure child has the ability to maintain contact with family, fictive-kin, and others who are significant in their lives. Consultation with Judge and Child’s attorney needed on worker and family visitation plan.

 <p>Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i></p>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	Memorandum
	Part No./Name	2021
	Section No./Name	Memorandum
	Document No./Name	21-001 COVID-19 Update
	Effective Date	January 4, 2021

Worker visits with children in In-State Residential Facilities	In-Person visits with children and caretakers per policy. “Close Contact” to be avoided. Manager approval needed If visits cannot occur per policy. At least one phone call each week privately with the caretaker and child is required. Visual communication is preferred for this contact.
Children leaving residential facilities for family visitation, work, extracurricular activities	Normalcy for our teens in residential settings is encouraged, while also understanding the vulnerability of children in congregate care to COVID-19. Manager approval needed for facility to restrict child’s participation in activities.
Case Worker visits with Service to Parents’ cases	For cases with an in-home safety plan or children in trial placements, there is to be at least two in-person visits per month. In all other cases, the worker should hold at least one monthly in-person visit with all household members, and maintain additional required visits virtually. Manager approval needed if in-person visit cannot be held.
Family Service Visits	For cases with a safety plan, or when there is at least one child under the age of 3, there is to be at least two in-person visits per month. In all other cases, the worker should hold at least <u>one</u> monthly in-person visit all household members, and maintain additional required visual communication and/or verbal communication according to the SDM risk level.
Family visitation in FC Cases	Family Visitation should occur according to the case plan, avoiding “close contact”. Manager approval needed if in-person family visitation cannot be held.
Family Team Meetings	To be held either through visual communication or in-person. Consult the Supervisor to explore the best option for holding the FTM. Manager participation and completion of FTM Evaluation Instruments required (See FTM Memorandum).

Employees are reminded that all DCFS Departmental policies and directives issued in Departmental Memorandums must be followed. The most recent Departmental Memorandum issued can be found at <https://powerdms.com/docs/805844>.