

# CASEWORKER VISITS WITH CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

May 29, 2020

The following guidance is based on the most current Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidance. The health and safety of children, family, staff and administrators are of the utmost importance. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as this event evolves.

Section 422(b)(17) of the Social Security Act requires that caseworkers visit children in foster care on a monthly basis. This policy prohibits the use of videoconferencing for meeting that requirement and requires that such visits must be held face-to-face. In light of the public health challenges related to COVID-19, the Children's Bureau modified this policy in March to permit the use of videoconferencing. Subsequently, Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) authorized the use of videoconferencing to meet the monthly caseworker visit requirement for children in foster care beginning March 20, 2020. In-person visits are an essential aspect of ensuring the safety and well-being of children and families. **Effective June 1, 2020, in-person monthly caseworker visits will resume.**

DHS is committed to protecting and ensuring the health and safety of the children and youth, the family and caregivers who support them, and the staff and providers who support them. If you need to drive somewhere with a participant or others in the car, consider having riders ride in back and open the windows.

## **FOLLOW MITIGATION PRACTICES FOR IN-PERSON CASEWORKER VISITS:**

1. Implement common-sense practices for preventing disease spread, such as covering a cough, staying home when sick, and washing hands. The CDC recommends washing hands for at least 20 seconds.
2. Call in advance of conducting in-person caseworker visits (see screening questions below).
3. During in-person meetings, do not sit within 6 feet of anyone in the home.
4. Avoid handling paperwork during the meeting.
5. Avoid touching your face or hair during the meeting.
6. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm, soapy water or hand sanitizer before and after the meeting.
7. The use of facemasks by the caseworker, the family and/or caregiver, and the child is highly recommended.

## **CONTAINMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Caseworkers should answer the screening questions for themselves prior to making an in-person visit. If any of the answers are 'yes,' workers should contact their primary care provider, follow the primary care provider's direction and not conduct any in-person visits to DHS children/ families until cleared by their primary care provider to do so. Workers should also notify their supervisor of the above.

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When preparing or scheduling appointments for in-person visits, be sure to ask all parents/ caregivers or applicable family members the following questions

## CONTAINMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

When preparing or scheduling appointments for face-to-face visits, be sure to ask all adult subjects and household members the following questions:

### Do you currently have any of the following?

#### COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Fever or chills
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Muscle or body aches
- ▶ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ New loss of taste or smell
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Congestion or runny nose
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting



Have you had contact with anyone who has known or possible exposure to the COVID-19 in the last 14 days?



Are you on home quarantine or isolation due to possible contact with someone with possible or confirmed COVID-19 or due to travel?



Have you or anyone in the household recently discharged from a hospitalization due to confirmed COVID-19 or due to travel?

If no pre-screening phone call is made in advance of contact with a family, caseworkers should conduct the screening questions within a safe distance from one another.

**If parents/caregivers answer “no”** during pre-screening for the above questions, then proceed with visit.

**Anyone who answers “yes”** to the screening questions should consult with their health care provider and public health as appropriate to follow relevant guidance which includes but is not limited to:

- ▶ Do not conduct the in-person visit.
- ▶ Direct the participant to visit [www.testiowa.com](http://www.testiowa.com) and enter their information, or to contact their local public health department or health practitioner for guidance.
- ▶ Advise the parent/caregiver to stay home, except to get medical care and to separate himself/herself from other people and animals.
- ▶ Direct the parent/caregiver to avoid sharing personal household items and to clean high touch surfaces every day.
- ▶ As appropriate, suggest household members stay in another room or be separated from the family as much as possible.
- ▶ Suggest that the family limit non-essential visitors in the home.
- ▶ Assess and ensure child safety as well as maintain contact with the family by phone or video conference or teleconferencing methods.

