



May 12, 2020

Dear Community Partners,

Last week, Governor Raimondo highlighted the state's plan for [Reopening Rhode Island](#) – a four phased approach to slowly and safely reopening our state. Each phase will last for a minimum of 14 days and will require the state to meet key indicators, such as stabilization or decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Phase I, called “Testing the Water,” began on Friday, May 9. For our state, this means that the stay at home order has been lifted, but social gatherings are still limited. Older adults and vulnerable individuals are strongly encouraged to remain at home unless they have essential medical visits or a need to purchase food/supplies. Cloth face coverings, vigilant hand-washing and increased cleaning must remain in place. And everyone who can work from home should still work from home. All activities must account for strong social distancing guidelines of remaining six-feet apart.

For Phase I, we do not anticipate many changes at DCYF or for our providers:

- **Visitation** will continue to be on-hold, as our team works on a plan to begin some visits for priority populations in Phase II. We will share more information on this soon.
- For our DCYF staff, current **teleworking** agreements will remain in place until May 30. We will share more information soon about how we will start phasing more staff back into our offices over time.
- Those entering our facilities will continue to receive a **health screening**, must wear **cloth face coverings**, and should continue practicing **social distancing**.
- **Family Court** is slowly expanding their hearings and are utilizing WebEx teleconferencing technology. Our staff will continue to attend these hearings via WebEx.

I thank you all for your continued patience and flexibility as we provide much-needed services to our families and youth in an ever-evolving environment.

[Guidance for Transporting Youth](#)

Attached you will find Phase 1 state guidance on businesses (including DCYF and providers) that are responsible for transporting clients. Please keep these guidelines in mind when transporting youth in our care.

[SNAP Benefits for Youth](#)

SNAP benefit cards were recently issued to children who are eligible for free or reduced lunches. The families of all eligible children received notice from DHS about these SNAP cards and some of providers have received notice for youth in your congregate care programs – both in-state and out-of-state.

These benefits go to any child that typically receives free or reduced cost meals at school. The children's names were provided to the Department of Human Services (DHS) by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). Once eligibility for free or reduced cost school meals is conferred on a student, that

eligibility is good for the whole year and as many as 30 school days the following year. Some of the youth in congregate care will receive these cards because of their eligibility status at their former schools. The federal government is also allowing these children to continue to receive grab-and-go meals at school pick-up sites while also receiving these SNAP cards.

For youth in congregate care, an adult staff person can use the cards to shop for youth. The youth themselves do not have to do their own shopping for food.

If you have any questions about this benefit, please use the following resources:

- If a family is a preexisting SNAP recipient, contact the DHS call center: 1-855-MY-DHS (1-855-967-4347)
- If a family was NOT a preexisting SNAP recipients, a youth has received a card for children who qualify for free and reduced lunch: Call 211, and they will collect information for DHS.
- The most up-to-date information on SNAP and other DHS benefits can be found on [DHS's What's New Webpage](#).

Finally, attached are numerous fliers from DHS that explains SNAP, WIC and their other benefits.

Thank you,
Kevin