



Intended Audience: Contracted Private Foster Care Agencies – Program Managers

To our valued Private Agency Foster Care partners,

Thank you for your efforts in assisting us navigate next steps as we continue to manage the complexity of Child Welfare and the COVID-19 pandemic. DCYF Contracted Programs have received ongoing guidance including COVID-19 precautions, non-essential home visits, visitation, community time and additional screening guidance. Please continue to follow those guidelines. Our responses are being guided by health and safety, as well as guidance from the Governor’s Office and the Rhode Island Department of Health.

We share your concerns on ongoing licensing needs and welcome your questions. We have created this list of recently discussed topics related to Recruitment, Development/Training, Support, and Licensing processes. We ask for your patience as we do not have all the answers, but we are here to work together on some solutions. DCYF is committed to work with providers to implement this guidance in a way that works for each program and ensures the safety and well-being of our children, youth and families.

Someone in a Foster Home with Symptoms of COVID-19

Foster parents have received guidance, via email, about what they should do if anyone in the home presents with symptoms of COVID-19. We have attached this guidance for your review in order to support your families. If a foster parent is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and the household adults are still able to care for a foster child, we request all efforts be made to stabilize the placement, as all individuals in the home would be subject to a mandatory self-quarantine.

Placement Availability

We have made requests to agencies to provide DCYF with a list of open and available placement resources. This includes families available for congregate care step down, planned transitions, emergency and after hour placements and most recently families who can be explored to support a child entering care in quarantine or who has been identified presumptive positive or tested positive for COVID-19. We are asking the availability of placement resources be sent, each Friday by 12:00pm, to Melissa Aguiar-Rivard (melissa.aguiarrivard@dcyf.ri.gov) and Deb Drury-Houghton (deb.druryhoughton@dcyf.ri.gov).

Placement Authorizations and RED team

If you have a family who is willing to expand their matching criteria, or take on additional placements, please contact the DCYF Placement unit. In accordance with the existing directives, when a non-kinship placement is made into a home where there is already another foster child, and/or any placement will result in there being more than five minor children in the home, administrative approval and a RED team review is still required.

Visitation

As a precaution and to ensure the safety of our families and staff, all in-person family visitation remains canceled. This includes family visitation at the Training School, at DCYF offices, visits arranged by foster parents, and our contracted visitation programs. We recently held a virtual meeting with our foster care agencies and visitation providers to discuss ways to ensure family contact as this pandemic continues, and we will be offering an upcoming training for foster families on this topic. We encourage our agencies to be creative and innovative in their efforts to support family contact. However, we do ask that you communicate with foster families to ensure that the plan is individualized to each family's structure. Agencies should keep in mind family schedules related to foster parents who may be teleworking, children who are distance learning, and the challenge with coordinating additional times to ensure "supervision" of visits.

Babysitting Resources

According to the Prudent Parenting Law, caregivers can use their own judgement to choose a safe person to babysit on an occasional basis. We encourage our agencies to help facilitate connections between foster parents and potential babysitters during this challenging time.

Reimbursement for Babysitting

We are happy to announce that we have been able to establish Emergency Child Care Financial Support, to reimburse foster families for child care expenses related to COVID 19 that are not covered through unemployment assistance. This financial support will cover child care expenses incurred from April 1, 2020 to April 30, 2020. Support has been approved by the state for 30 days and will be re-assessed on a monthly basis.

To request reimbursement, foster families must complete the attached *Request for Reimbursement Attestation*. Completed forms may be sent via email to DCYF.Licensing@dcyf.ri.gov **or** they can mail this form to the DCYF offices, c/o Emergency Child Care Financial Support (*Please note that paper forms that are mailed may result in a longer processing time*). If you work with a foster family who may benefit from this financial support, please do your best to help them through the process.

Foster Home Licensing Approvals

The Department is continuing the review and approval of new and renewed foster homes. Please continue to submit hard copy license approvals to the attention of your Licensing Specialist. We ask that in addition, you notify through email your Licensing Specialist and Supervisor when submitting a packet, including an electronic version of the home study in Word format. In the cover sheet, please include the Resource Family's demographic information and proposed capacity, and matching criteria.

Fingerprint Sessions

At this time, the Department will continue to complete fingerprints for foster families. However, in an effort to minimize contact, we will be completing staggered scheduling, with priority given to emergency situations. Please continue to follow the current process for scheduling a provider for a fingerprint session and note any emergency circumstances. Please note:

- At this time, fingerprint sessions will only be available at the DCYF offices.

- Individuals will be subjected to a COVID-19 pre-screen on the phone and prior to entry into the DCYF building. Any individual who communicates or presents with COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to leave and reschedule.

The Department will keep you updated in the event that we experience changes to this process.

Safety Inspections (Fire and Lead)

At this time, DCYF safety inspectors are not conducting in home inspections, with the exception of situations that have been deemed essential. All Safety Inspections should be requested through the standard protocol.

For License Renewal: If there is an approved safety inspection within the last two years, that inspection will be accepted for the purpose of Licensing Renewal. The agency will include information in the home study update that the family has smoke/carbon monoxide detectors in working order.

Physician's References

The Department is willing to issue a temporary waiver for the requirement for Physician's References if the foster parent or applicant submits the Foster Parent Health History Attestation. The current expectation is that a full Health History from a medical professional is completed within six months of the signing of the Foster Parent Health History Attestation.

Pre-Service Training

We are working with the Children's Alliance and other jurisdictions regarding the possibility of adjusting the TIPS-MAPP curriculum to be conducted via a live stream. As we work toward details and implementation your input is greatly appreciated. Anyone who was scheduled for or planning a training please send the following information:

1. Could you and your co-lead make the adjustment to a live/online training?
2. What technology/support would you need?
3. What new dates or schedule would you propose? *For example: Could you do two sessions per week for 5 weeks rather than one session per week over 10 weeks?*

Request for Application and License Transfer

We are requesting all Resource Family Transfer requests (*agency to agency; agency to DCYF; DCYF to agency*) be placed on hold, and that all families remain with their current agency through the duration of this situation. We will revisit the review of transfer requests at the conclusion of the State of Emergency. If extenuating circumstances necessitate a further conversation, please contact Melissa Aguiar-Rivard (melissa.aguiarrivard@dcyf.ri.gov) and Cathy Sears (Cathleen.Sears@dcyf.ri.gov).