

To: DCS All Staff

From: Mike Faust, Director

Re: Requirements for Parenting Time

Date: March 19, 2020, (revised Monday March 30, 2020)

Conducting parenting time (visitation) is critical to maintaining parent-child connection, enhancing caregiver protective capacities, and achieving safe reunification. Currently, supervised parenting time (visitation) is conducted in-person by either a DCS staff member, or by contracted Supervised Visit Only (SVO) or Parent Aide providers.

Careful consideration on how to best proceed with parenting time while ensuring the health and safety of children, parents, DCS staff members, providers, and the community is required to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Given this, virtual visitation for the purpose of parenting time and continued parent-child contact is approved.

Effective immediately and lasting through **Thursday, April 30, 2020**, the Department and contracted SVO/PA providers are approved to conduct virtual visitation for parenting time between children and parents. This directive is time limited and will be revisited on a weekly basis to determine if a continuation is required beyond April 30th.

Requirements:

- DCS Staff and SVO/Parent Aide providers supervising parenting time shall communicate with the caregiver and parent prior to parenting time to ensure the necessary technology is in place.
 - Acceptable technology for use is currently available on the DCS Specialist's laptop, tablet, and Department issued telephone: Skype, WebEx, and Google Duo.
 - While the Department is not mandating the software a provider must use as a solution, all platforms must adhere to all confidentiality rules and regulations as per law.
 - The individual coordinating parenting time has the responsibility to ensure that all parties are using the same solution and can participate.
 - Parenting time documentation shall include 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."
- Parenting time should be conducted per the duration and frequency outlined in the case plan and/or required by court order.
 - Given the limitation of interaction available during virtual visitation, it is conceivable that children will not have the attention span to participate for the entire scheduled duration. Efforts should be made, and documented, to conduct parenting time for the entire duration. If shortened, the reason for ending early should be included in the parenting time documentation.
 - Given that families may be self-quarantining, it is possible that individuals other than the parents and caregivers, who would not normally attend parenting time, will be in the family's home. This will be

discussed on a case by case basis to avoid disruption of parenting time and maintain confidentiality, and is not a reason to cancel parenting time.

- 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.

This directive is effective March 19, 2020 and replaces any prior directive or policy on this matter until April 30, 2020 or until further notice is provided.

Sincerely,



Mike Faust
Director