

To: DCS All Staff

From: Mike Faust, Director

Re: Clarifying Requirements for Monthly DCS Specialist Contact with Parents

Date: April 15, 2020

The Department of Child Safety is required to have monthly contact with all parents when the child's Permanency Goal is Family Reunification or Remain with Family. In current practice, the DCS Specialist makes concerted efforts to contact the parent every calendar month in-person. Current DCS Policy and Procedure does allow that exceptions to monthly face-to-face contact with parents may be made on a case-by-case basis based on the unique circumstances of the family.

Given the continued necessity to support parents to achieve case plan goals and behavioral changes, and the growing need to practice social distancing for the health and well-being of ourselves and these same parents, the Department is waiving the in-person requirement of the monthly contact and instead accomplishing this through use of videoconferencing.

Effective March 19, and lasting through **Thursday, April 30th, 2020**:

Exceptions to face-to-face contact with parents may be approved for parents whose children are out-of-home, or in-home assessed safe (no safety plan necessary to manage dangers).

- The Department may make these required monthly contacts with parents using virtual technology (video conferencing). If video conferencing is not available to the parent, the Department may make the required contact by telephone. This directive is time limited and will be revisited on a weekly basis to determine if a continuation is required beyond April 30, 2020.
- If there is indication that Conditions for Return have been met or the child would be safe in the care of the parent(s), the DCS Specialist should conduct a home visit and in-person contact to assess whether the child can reunify.
- This time-limited exception only applies to parents who have no children in-home and assessed unsafe (safety plan necessary to manage dangers).

The Department will make the required monthly contacts in-person (face-to-face) with parents whose children are in-home and assessed unsafe (safety plan necessary to manage dangers).

Acceptable technology for use by the DCS Specialist is currently available on the DCS Specialist's laptop, tablet, or Department issued telephone: Skype, WebEx, Microsoft Team and Google Duo.

If a concern about a parent's safety or mental health arises during a virtual contact, assist the parent to obtain the services of a crisis response team, DCS contracted provider, community service provider, or emergency personnel as indicated by the nature of the concern.

Documentation of the contact using virtual technology shall be entered into case notes:

- Document the contact using the Case Notes window designated as PAR CRTKR CNTCT (Parent Caretaker Contact) type.
- Select the "In-Person" contact type radio button for contacts conducted by virtual technology while this administrative directive is in effect, including video conference and telephone.
- Highlight the names of all parties participating, including the DCS Specialist, in the "Contact With" list.
- Highlight the names of all parties discussed in the "Contacts About" list.
- Begin the note with 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."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Faust", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Faust
Director