

Foster Parent Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

What is the OCS systemic response to COVID-19 and how are these actions influencing its practice? How will this response plan be communicated to foster parents?

OCS is taking steps to limit the spread of the COVID-19 Virus by practicing social distancing and universal health precautions when conducting in-person contact and encouraging staff to conduct business by video conference, skype and telephone when possible and appropriate.

All staff and visitors to the office are prescreened and have their temperatures taken before entering the building. Face coverings are required, if they do not have one OCS can provide them. Limits to how many individuals are allowed in the lobby areas are in place. All public spaces are being sanitized twice per day or more often as needed.

Any OCS staff who are exhibiting signs of illness or not feeling well will be asked to go home.

Additionally, prior to home visits, caseworkers are instructed to call ahead and screen the home using the screening questions below, to determine if the home is safe for the visit to occur.

Will you know if a child has been exposed to COVID-19 before being placed in home? Will OCS disclose illness symptoms to FP before requesting placement?

If OCS learns that a foster child has been exposed to or has tested positive for COVID-19, the agency will be following State Health Department protocol to ensure the child receives proper health care and follows all relevant health guidelines. As with every placement, OCS will provide full disclosure to the foster parent of any illness symptoms exhibited by the child prior to requesting placement.

What is expected of us if someone in our family gets COVID-19 or a foster child gets COVID-19?

If a member of a foster family or a foster child in your home contracts COVID-19, your medical provider will discuss the proper health care treatment. Additionally, you should report to OCS for any concerns of exposure to COVID-19 to a foster child in your care.

Does Medicaid cover testing of a child for COVID-19? Can a foster parent get a child tested?

It is important that foster parents identify the Primary Care Providers (PCP) for foster children placed in their homes. If a child is ill, or you have concerns, call the office of the PCP with any questions, and you will be guided whether to have the child come to the office, go to the ED, or to monitor the child from home.

If a medical professional determines that it is medically necessary to have a foster child tested, Medicaid will cover the cost for the test.

Is it safe to travel with kids? What do we need to do?

All non-essential out of state travel for children in state custody must be discussed with your assigned OCS caseworker. Many limitations still apply and out of state travel is not recommended at this time. Limiting all travel in order to reduce exposure and spread of the virus is highly recommended. As always, please consult with your OCS caseworker before making travel plans that involve your foster child.

What about visits and family contact? How will the safety of children and adults be protected? What if birth family are visibly sick? Can I stop a visit?

Monthly caseworker visits and family contact has resumed. Family visitation participants are prescreened and must wear face coverings. Children under the age of two and those with underlying medical conditions who have been advised by their health care provider to not wear masks do not have to wear face coverings. Electronic methods for visitation such as Zoom, FaceTime, telephone visits, or

other communication applications are encouraged between visits. Face to Face visits may still occur so long as the children and parents do not screen positive on any of the screening questions below.

If you don't feel comfortable facilitating visitation, face time or phone calls between your foster children and their birth parents and siblings, please let your OCS caseworker know.

Many foster parents are older and many family placements are grandparents. Are there special precautions for the elderly and medically fragile populations?

Older caregivers or caregivers with chronic diseases, such as heart or lung disease and diabetes should take precautions. It is recommended they avoid large crowds, stay away from people who are sick and practice frequent hand washing. If adhering to such precautions creates a hardship for caring for a foster child, please contact OCS for assistance.

What assistance can OCS give if child care is an issue with the shutdown of schools?

OCS will continue to assist foster parents with finding alternative and temporary providers when needed. The Office of Children's Services Childcare team is available at 465-5648, to answer their questions and to assist locating alternative daycare as needed.

Can foster parents refuse entry of a caseworker into their home if they believe the social worker is sick or showing symptoms of being sick?

Caseworkers should be calling ahead to ensure that everyone is healthy before they attempt to do a home visit. However, yes, if an OCS caseworker arrives at your home and appears to be showing symptoms of being sick, such as coughing, sneezing or having a fever you may ask the caseworker to reschedule the visit or conduct the visit by telephone or virtual methods.

Screening Questions:

In the past 2-14 days have you or anyone else in your household felt unwell or experienced any of the following symptoms:

- a. Cough or shortness of breath
- b. Or at least two of these symptoms:

Fever	Muscle Pain	Chills
Headache	Repeated shaking with chills	Sore throat
New loss of taste or smell		