

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 encouraging staff to conduct business by video conference, skype and telephone as much as possible and to practice social distancing and universal health precautions when in-person contact is necessary.

All staff and visitors to the office are being reminded to wash their hands frequently. 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 insure the child receives proper health care and quarantine. 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 COVID19, 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 resource 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 is suspended until further notice. 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?

Electronic methods for visitation such as Zoom, FaceTime, telephone visits, or other communication applications are strongly encouraged for the remainder of the month or until further notice. 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.

OCS is requesting foster parents help facilitate electronic based visits for children age 4 and older. If you don't feel comfortable facilitating face time or phone calls between your foster children and their birth parents and siblings, please let your 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 such as avoiding large crowds, staying away from people who are sick and practicing 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 social worker to reschedule the visit or conduct the visit by telephone.

Screening Questions

To protect public health, we respectfully request that if you answer yes to any one of the following questions, we will gladly make other arrangements to provide services to you and your family.

- **In the past few days have you felt unwell, especially with respiratory symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)?**
- **In the past 14 days have you:**
 - **Traveled out of state?**
 - **Been in contact with a person who may be infected with novel corona virus (COVID-19)?**
 - **Been to a health care facility (hospital, walk-in clinic, emergency room) where people infected with COVID-19 may be treated?**