

COVID-19 Questions and Answers

Q. What is the recommendation for handling foster care placements when there are symptomatic household members in the foster family and contractually required visits are required?

A. Providers should ask the following screening question:

- Does anyone in the foster family have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever or shortness of breath) or had exposure to someone with COVID-19?
 - If a client answers yes and is exhibiting mild symptoms, advise the client to stay home and separate themselves from others as much as possible.
 - If a client answers yes and is exhibiting severe symptoms:
 - Direct the client to the nearest emergency room for medical treatment and testing.
 - Instruct the client to notify the receiving medical provider or facility of a potential concern for COVID-19 so these professionals can take proper precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. This should be done in advance of arriving at the medical facility or being picked up by the medical transport (e.g., ambulance).
 - Inform your regular DCS contact if a client requires medical attention for possible exposure to COVID-19.

Remote contacts such as teleconference, Skype, FaceTime and telephone may be used if a person or someone in their household is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or if the Child and Family Team has determined a remote contact is best. Providers must also communicate regularly (at least weekly) with the referring worker about these types of cases and discuss when regular face-to-face contacts should resume.

Q. Under what circumstances should visitations be canceled?

A. Providers should ask the following screening question prior to a visit:

- Do you or anyone in your family have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever or shortness of breath) or had exposure to someone with COVID-19?

- If a client answers yes and is exhibiting mild symptoms, advise the client to stay home and separate themselves from others as much as possible.
- If a client answers yes and is exhibiting severe symptoms:
 - Direct the client to the nearest emergency room for medical treatment and testing.
 - Instruct the client to notify the receiving medical provider or facility of a potential concern for COVID-19 so these professionals can take proper precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. This should be done in advance of arriving at the medical facility or being picked up by the medical transport (e.g., ambulance).
 - Inform your regular DCS contact if a client requires medical attention for possible exposure to COVID-19.

Communicate with the referral source about the response. The Child and Family Team should communicate about whether it is appropriate to cancel visits given the information obtained. Court orders should also be considered when evaluating the appropriateness of canceling visits, and the court should be notified if decisions are made to cancel any court-ordered visits. Rooms used for visitation should be deep-cleaned after every visit.

Q. We are getting a placement that is asymptomatic, or one that just came back from a visit with parents that are reportedly asymptomatic. We have no idea if that were exposed or not. What should we do?

Even though you are in a house, you can still practice social distancing. Find clean clothes for the youth and have them bath/shower immediately. Wash/disinfect any belonging that came with the youth. Assign the youth their own room, and if possible, wear face coverings. Monitor the youth's condition for the next several days. Check temperature twice daily and note any symptoms that may become present. If symptoms arise, contact Adult and Child, DCS, call a doctor and follow the instructions that the medical professionals recommend.

Q. There has been much confusion around travel for foster children. It appears that some regions have implemented travel policies that are more stringent than the statewide policy. Can we get clarification on this?

A. The official communication that was sent on March 11 reflects current policy around visits. It stated:

“Currently, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is still following the Out-of-Home Care Travel policy for instate and out-of-state travel.”

Also the CDC has released travel guidelines that should be taken into consideration.

There is not a restriction for travel for children in foster care. Non-essential travel for the state has been restricted. Essential travel still continues and is evaluated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the courts. When considering traveling, follow the recommendations of the

CDC.

Q. What is the expectation for court visits?

A. If the court is open, providers should work with the youth's referring worker on whether it is safe and appropriate for the youth to attend any scheduled court hearings. They should also work with them to notify the court if it is recommended that there be any deviation from court orders.

Q. CPR/first-aid instructors have canceled classes. Will we be given any leeway to submit a home without first aid? Can we submit a home now and be given a date to have for completion of CPR/First Aid?

A. If a provider wishes to receive a waiver (even a temporary one) of a required training, they must submit a request in writing to DCS and discuss in the request how they plan to ensure the learning that would have been obtained from this required training will still occur.

The American Heart Association has granted a 120 day extension to any certification that expires after April 1, 2020. They have also altered the training regimen slightly for safety purposes. For example, students will not have to demonstrate giving breaths. Adult and Child is putting together a CPR training program that will allow us to start getting people certified as soon as the guidelines allow in person contact. Currently, we are anticipating early May. Classes will be limited in size, but offered more frequently.

Q. When do we pull kids from their jobs? For instance, are we required to prohibit them from going to a job in the community if there is some connection between the location of their job (a gas station for instance) and a coworker or customer who is in quarantine? Short of a direct connection, are we to just rely on a prudent parenting standard?

A. If there are specifically identified coronavirus risks associated with a youth's employment, this should be discussed with the youth's referring worker (FCM or PO) to determine if the youth should continue to work assigned shifts. If there are no clearly identified risks, the youth should be educated on proper coronavirus precautions that have been previously detailed (see the [Indiana State Department of Health website](#) for additional details on these precautions), but should be allowed to continue to work.

Q. What if someone in the household has a fever? If they have no known connection to the coronavirus, is a fever alone enough to stop visits?

A. You should notify Adult and Child and DCS immediately. Any individual with a fever should be treated as if they are potentially positive for COVID, and quarantined until fever free for 48 hours. Continuously monitor the person's condition. If symptoms worsen, seek medical assistance as previously outlined.

Q. How do I effectively care for a sick person while keeping the rest of the house safe?

A. If you are caring for someone with COVID-19 in non-healthcare settings, follow the guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that is attached to this document.

Q. My foster child refuses to follow social distancing. Instead they are constantly hanging out with friends and other youth at the park and other places. What can I do?

A. Most adolescents believe they are invincible. They may see bad things happen to other people, but they never think that those bad things could happen to them. So, no matter how many people get sick, it's difficult for them to comprehend that they could get sick too. And, even if they did, why would it matter?

When were teens our friendships defined and shaped us; they give us a sense of belonging; they make us feel significant and accepted. Realize that being isolated from friends is far harder for teens than it is for the rest of us.

Finally, teens are not about to accept a vague explanation or do something just because we told them to. They need a reason that makes sense, especially if we expect them to give up so many things that matter to them like hanging out with friends, seeing their boyfriend/girlfriend, going shopping, grabbing coffee, playing sports, even going to school. Otherwise they are going to push back and do the exact opposite of what they're told just because they can.

So, how do we convey the urgency of social distancing to our teens in a way that motivates them to be responsible but does not scare them? Each child is different, so only you know how much information your teen can handle and what will help get the point across, but here are a few things that are important to relay:

1. This is not about you. You might not think you are going to get sick, or care if you do, but social distancing is not about protecting you and me. It is about protecting everyone else. It is about protecting older people like your grandparents. It is about keeping little babies safe. It is about making sure kids that are already sick do not get sicker.

Every time you come into contact with someone outside your immediate family, you are increasing the chance that someone else's loved one will get sick.

2. You are not in this alone. It may feel like you are the only one isolated from your friends, but kids across the entire world are having to stay at home. That means there are about 2 billion other kids are also feeling frustrated and stuck too.

3. It is not forever. Yes, chances are we are going to have to live like this for a few months, which may feel like an eternity. But eventually life will go back to normal. Possibly even by this summer. How soon this ends depends a lot upon how many of us are responsible about keeping our distance right now. The sooner we all take action, the sooner this will be over.

4. This virus is spread from person to person. The virus rides on tiny mucus droplets that fly out when we sneeze, cough, even spit when we are talking. There are two ways we can get the virus from someone else: breathe it in when we talk to them or touch something they have contaminated like a doorknob or handrail then touch our face with our “contaminated” hand.

Because it is highly contagious, the more people you are around, the greater your chance of getting the virus. It is like tossing a stone into the water. If one person gets it, it creates a ripple effect that spreads it far and wide.

5. The goal is to slow down how fast the virus spreads. If we throw one stone into the water at a time, the ripples quickly die out and very little is impacted. But if we throw a bunch of stones in at once we stir up the entire lake. It is the same way with the virus. If too many people get sick at the same time, it causes a bigger impact. And we do not have enough hospitals, staff, nurses, doctors, medicine, and equipment to take care of everyone at once. That means a lot of people would have to go without care and many of them will die.

The only way to make sure as few people suffer as possible is slow the spread of the virus down as much as possible. The sooner we all distance ourselves, the less of an impact the virus will make.

6. You cannot tell who has the virus. People can have the virus for three or more days before they know it or show it. So, someone we think is safe may be extremely contagious. This is why the virus is spreading so fast and another reason we have to keep our distance from everyone.

7. You have two choices. You must decide if you are going to help slow the virus down and save as many lives as we can or if you are going to help spread the virus and put more lives at risk. Those are the only two choices you have. Do you want to help slow it down or spread it faster?

Even when they understand why the need to stay at home, it is still not going to be easy. Here are some ways you can help your teen adapt to this new “normal”:

1.Be empathetic. It’s important to recognize and acknowledge how difficult this is for your teen. Sure, other people have it worse, but that doesn’t make it any easier for your teen. Listen to your teen. Give them space to express their anger, sadness, and fear. They have a right to feel that way. Resist the urge to lecture, moralize, or repress their negative emotions. Just listen and nod. You can also share with them how you deal with your stress so they can learn how to cope from you.

2. Provide structure. Maintain a sense of normalcy and combat overwhelming boredom by creating a daily schedule. Create it with your teen and use it to help them find a balance between being productive (schoolwork, skill development, chores) and having down time (socializing with friends,

watching TV, sleeping, playing games.) Also encourage them to fit in some exercise every day and to get a good night's sleep.

3. Understand their need to be online. Many teens crave social interaction. If we want to keep them inside, it's important to enable other ways for them to talk with their friends. If you're concerned about what they're doing, talk about what is appropriate and not appropriate to share online. Become familiar with the apps they're using.

Many teens are adapting by having FaceTime sleepovers, long video chats, watching movies as a group through [Netflix Party](#), and gathering virtually on social networks like [House Party](#). Help them set the necessary safety parameters and let them know you'll be asking them to show you what they've been doing online from time to time. Always be transparent about what you do so they learn from it rather than rebel and circumvent your restrictions.

4. Let them go outside. My daughter and I take a long walk every day to get fresh air and some exercise. I love seeing all the other families out walking and enjoying time together outside.

5. Make time for offline family time. It may not feel like it, but this unexpected time with your teen is a true gift. [I encourage you to enjoy this downtime together](#) and use it to strengthen your connection (rather than being at each other's throats).

6. Encourage them to give back. Just like the virus, kindness has a rippling effect too. The more nice things we do for others, the faster and wider kindness spreads. Not only will volunteering help conquer your teen's boredom and sense of helplessness, it also will help hardwire their brain with skills and behaviors essential for life success and happiness: compassion, generosity, empathy, and commitment. They will also learn that even they can make a real difference in the world—and have fun doing it!

For the most up to date information please visit these site often as they are constantly updated.

The CDC website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

The ISDH website

<https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>

The DCS Corona Page

<https://www.in.gov/dcs/4089.htm>

