



Kay Ivey  
Governor

# State of Alabama Department of Human Resources

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Nancy T. Buckner  
Commissioner

March 18, 2020

Dear Foster Parent/Kin Caregiver,

Over the past several days, we have seen our state and federal government take unprecedented measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As soon as Alabama began taking measures to manage the COVID-19 situation such as closing schools, our agency began discussions with our federal partners around any allowable exceptions to federal mandates such as required monthly face to face caseworker visitations. We are providing information to several questions being asked frequently.

### **How will workers be complying with federal requirements that monthly face to face visits be completed with children in out of home care?**

On March 18, 2020, we received federal guidelines that allow for a reconsideration of policy so that these visits can be made via video conferencing during the current circumstances. Video conferencing may now be utilized where possible. If not possible, face to face visits are still required. Any face to face visits should be completed in a manner that allows for appropriate social distancing, a distance of six feet is recommended. Caseworkers will continue to make other efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of children in care as needed.

### **How will routine visits between children and their families be managed during this time?**

If visits are court ordered, any change to that visitation plan would need to be made by the filing of a motion to change the court order. For other, non court ordered visitation, visits should be set through input from the child's ISP team. We encourage the use of creative planning to ensure that children are able to remain connected to their families during this time. For example, visiting in open areas such as parks may allow for better social distancing and limit the number of persons having contact. If through court order or ISP team planning it is determined that visitation needs to be suspended temporarily, other efforts should be made to keep children connected with their families. This could include very frequent phone calls between children and parents or other relatives, video conferencing or other activities. Any in person visits should include use of hand sanitizer before and immediately following contact if possible.

### **Are there restrictions on travel for foster children due to current circumstances?**

Local, state, federal and worldwide travel restrictions are changing daily as a result of COVID-19. Out of country travel for children in out of home care is currently suspended. Out of state travel for children in the Department's legal custody is only being approved if deemed essential. There may also be local restrictions in place. Again, travel guidelines will continue to be adjusted as needed.

### **What should I do if I think my foster child or someone in my household is sick and I am worried it may be COVID-19?**

If you or anyone in your home exhibit symptoms to include a fever or newly developed respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath or sore throat, please contact your healthcare provider immediately to discuss symptoms and next steps. They will provide you with further guidance including getting tested. Please also immediately notify your foster child's worker. If you are unable to reach the worker please contact a supervisor or director.

In general, when someone in your household is sick, you can take these precautionary measures in addition to talking with your healthcare provider: • Keeping the sick person in a separate, well-ventilated room and apart from other people and

pets as much as possible. • If a separate space is not available, keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are well. The bathroom and other common areas should be cleaned every day using a household disinfectant according to the directions on the label. Wear gloves while cleaning. • Providing the sick person with a separate bathroom if available • Limiting activities outside the home until the sick person is feeling well for at least one day. • Limiting outside visitors.

All DHR County offices remain open at this time.



Jan Casteel, Director  
Family and Children Services

CC: Nancy T. Buckner, Commissioner  
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