



**David A. Hansell**  
Commissioner

## MEMORANDUM

**Julie Farber, MSW**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Family  
Permanency Services

**To: Foster Care Provider Agencies**  
**From: Julie Farber**  
**Date: March 31, 2020**  
**Re: Foster Care Case Practice During COVID#19**

150 William Street  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10038

Thank you to all for the compassionate and dedicated work that you are continuing to do during this extremely difficult time.

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This memo is intended to highlight key areas of case practice and reinforce and supplement previous guidance where COVID#19 presents particular challenges and where we want to be as creative and sensitive as we can be. Please share this memo with all foster care staff.

### **Communication with Children and Youth**

- Case planners should continue to be in regular and frequent contact with children and youth in care to reassure them, ensure their well-being, address school-related issues, etc.

### **Communication with Parents**

- It is essential to recognize that the COVID#19 pandemic adds another layer of anxiety for parents of children in foster care. Case planners should be accessible to parents and communicate very regularly with parents via phone, text, email, etc., in order to provide frequent updates on the health and well-being of their children, the status of their schooling (e.g., remote learning, etc.).
- Case planners should also be working with foster parents to implement the same type of frequent communication with parents.

### **Family Time**

- Please note that foster care agencies can purchase technology for staff, youth and parents in order to facilitate tele-visits.
- Foster care agencies should also be working closely with foster parents to help facilitate tele-visits with foster parents' mobile devices as necessary.
- Sibling visits should continue and should follow the same guidance for parent visits.
- All visiting plans and adjustment to visiting plans should be communicated with the FCLS attorney and documented in CNNX per standard operating procedure.
- Assessments should continue to be made regarding the necessary level of supervision

for visiting per standard operating procedure.

- Where appropriate, visit hosts should be considered. ACS can provide fast local clearances for visits hosts. Please email Deborah Brooks at [Deborah.Brooks@acs.nyc.gov](mailto:Deborah.Brooks@acs.nyc.gov).
- Agencies should continue to make efforts to provide supports to parents during visits, such as a visit coach or therapeutic visitation services.
- In situations where tele-visiting is the most appropriate option, caseworkers should explore with families whether they might prefer shorter, more frequent tele-visits. Shorter, more frequent phone and video contact may be especially appropriate for infants and toddlers.
- It is important to recognize that increased separation between children and their parents who were previously seeing each other in person and now have only video or phone contact may result in anxiety and separation-based behaviors in some children. Supervisors should review and discuss this issue with caseworkers.
- Some parents may not feel comfortable engaging only with the foster parent during a virtual visit and may request the presence of the caseworker. Caseworkers should consult with parents to assess this.

### **Permanency**

- We hope that as the Courts get up and running virtually, we will be able to proceed with reunifications, adoptions and KinGAPs. Please continue to communicate as appropriate with the FCLS attorney if you have determined that the family is ready to move to trial or final discharge. In addition, continue all planning for adoption and kinship guardianship outcomes and to submit all necessary paperwork.