

Procedure Title: When DHS, CUA, or Other Provider Agencies Expose Children and Youth in Care or Receiving In-Home Services to COVID-19

Applies To: Department of Human Services (“DHS”) Child Welfare Operations (“CWO”), Community Umbrella Agency (“CUA”), All Placement Providers including Foster Family Care Agencies (“FFCA”), Resource Caregivers, Residential Treatment and Congregate Care Provider Agencies

All Directors, Administrators, and Supervisors must review this policy with their staff within a week of its issuance.

OVERVIEW:

Consistent with protecting children and youth through ensuring their health, safety, and well-being, along with that of child welfare staff at DHS and partner agencies, this additional guidance involves protocols for identifying, notifying, and addressing when DHS, CUA, or other providers agencies discover inadvertent exposure of children and youth (whether in out-of-home placement or receiving in-home services) to COVID-19. These plans continue to evolve and are updated as new issues and information arise.

PROCEDURES and PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

PROCEDURE SUMMARY

DHS, CUA, and other provider agencies must utilize essential infection mitigation strategies when performing their official duties. This includes staff remaining updated on developments in guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), Pennsylvania Department of Health (“DOH”), and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (“PDPH”).

Generally, DHS, CUA, and other provider agencies must ensure that their staff:

- Practice social distancing (staying at home when sick, keeping six feet apart from people and minimizing the number of people interacted with).
- When possible, work from home and substitute telephone or internet-based casework meetings for in-person casework meetings.
- Wear a provided appropriate face covering while onsite at work or while working in the field. Exceptions include eating or drinking while six feet apart and facing away from others as well as when seated alone in a private office or in a cubicle whose sides extend above the staff member’s head.
- Cover coughs or sneezes.
- Maintain hand hygiene with provided liquid soap and water or alcohol sanitizer.
- Clean surface areas that staff regularly touches with disinfectant wipes before and after use.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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For questions about this policy or its related documents, please contact the Policy & Planning Helpline at (215) 683-4108 or DHSPolicy@phila.gov.

Communications and Notification

There are instances where children and youth can become exposed to COVID-19 through interactions with necessary visiting service providers (such as DHS, CUA, or other provider agencies), even where all appropriate infection mitigation strategies have been utilized.

DHS, CUA, and other provider agencies must have a communications plan to ensure:

- PDPH is notified of positive COVID-19 cases or exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case by calling 215-685-5488 so PDPH can identify and inform any children and youth or families served of their exposure. PDPH does not investigate non-confirmed COVID reports or exposures. Additional information is available at www.phila.gov/covid by clicking on “contact tracing.”
- DHS, CUA, and other provider agency’s respective employees who may have been exposed are notified about self-quarantining and/or self-monitoring as appropriate (e.g., any DHS employee who believes they have encountered a positive COVID-19 case must report this information to their direct supervisor and Safety Officer Michelle Vendrell (Michelle.Vendrell@phila.gov).
- Appropriate steps are taken to sanitize the worksite.

In addition, the following steps must be taken:

- DHS and CUA must ensure the assigned DHS or CUA case management team confirms with the caregiver or resource caregiver awareness about the children and youth’s exposure (**without** identifying the staff member) so that exposed children and youth are self-isolating in their home or resource home as appropriate. This is in addition to any contact tracing conducted by PDPH.
- Medical consultation with children and youth’s Primary Care Physician (“PCP”) on next steps must be sought within two hours.
- The responsible DHS or CUA chain of command (Supervisor, Administrator or Director, and, as needed, DHS Nursing) must review all information provided to determine appropriate safety steps to be taken. DHS and CUA must ensure the assigned DHS Social Work Services Manager or CUA Case Manager conducts a virtual safety visit of the home within 24 hours.
- An updated Structured Progress Note (“SPN”) documenting all steps taken to address safety concerns must be completed and uploaded into the electronic case record.
- Where children and youth are exposed to, symptomatic of, awaiting test results for, or tests positive for COVID-19 (with exposure including when any member of the resource household has confirmed COVID-19), the child(ren) and youth’s PCP must be consulted and the DHS nurse should be consulted as needed based on the child(ren) and youth’s condition. Any symptom and management advice given must be followed.

A Supportive Family Team Conference should be scheduled within 5 calendar days to address medical concerns and to ensure that an appropriate revised plan is in place where children and youth in out-of-home placement or receiving in-home services are exposed to COVID-19. Instances where a Supportive Family Team Conference must be scheduled include when COVID-19 exposure creates a safety threat or results in a children and youth’s out-of-home placement being potentially disrupted.

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Placement providers must, within two hours of discovering children and youth in out-of-home placement or receiving in-home services have been exposed to COVID-19, contact (verbally and by email) the responsible DHS or CUA chain of command up to and including the DHS Administrator or CUA Director. Within two hours, placement providers shall further notify:

- Katherine Garzon, Chief of Staff, DHS Commissioner's Office (Katherine.Garzon@phila.gov),
- Samuel B. Harrison III, Deputy Commissioner, Child Welfare Operations (Samuel.B.Harrison.3rd@phila.gov)
- Benita M. King, Chief of Staff, Child Welfare Operations (Benita.M.King@phila.gov)
- Staci Boyd, Operations Director (Staci.Boyd@phila.gov)
- Kathy Torrisi, DHS Nursing Supervisor (Kathy.Torrisi@phila.gov)

Notification shall include children and youth's information (name, date of birth), DHS case number, children and youth's COVID-19 status (e.g., symptomatic, awaiting test results, tested positive), status of resource household member(s), and whether additional guidance or resources are needed.

DHS and CUA must ensure the assigned DHS or CUA case management team informs parents or caregivers (where the children and youth are in out-of-home placement) and the assigned City Solicitor about the children and youth's COVID-19 status within 24 hours.

- Family Court and all counsel will be notified by the Law Department as appropriate.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Updated SPNs on all contacts or notifications made as well as steps taken to address safety concerns arising from children and youth's COVID-19 exposure must be completed consistent with current Safety Assessment Policy and uploaded onto the electronic case record.

During this time, it is especially important to confirm that all contact information for family members of children and youth, resource caregivers, and any identified alternate resource caregivers are up to date. Healthcare entities and their points of contact (e.g., children and youth's PCP, hospital emergency medical services, relevant community organizations) should be kept for any necessary communication during the COVID-19 crisis.

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RELATED DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES:

Attachments:

Forms:

Related Policies or Procedures: DHS COVID-19 Emergency Guidance for Investigations and Casework Contacts
Safety Assessment Policy

Other Resources: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/isolation/appendix/type-duration-precautions.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>
<https://www.phila.gov/personnel/fmlaFAQ.html>

PROTOCOL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

APPROVED BY: Kimberly Ali, Commissioner

REVIEWED BY: Samuel B. Harrison III, Deputy Commissioner, Child Welfare Operations
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APPROVAL SIGNATURE

(Authorizing Leadership Name and title)

Signature: 

Name:

Kimberly Ali

Title:

Commissioner

Date:

11/12/2020

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