

**Guidance for Foster Parents
COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)
September 29, 2021**

The following guidance is based on the most current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) recommendations for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as information continues to evolve. TDH and CDC recognize that COVID-19 vaccinations are safe and the most effective means of preventing COVID-19. Vaccination and wearing masks are encouraged for the safety of children and adults.

Guidance for DCS employees making face-to-face or video-conferencing visits with foster parents:

- When making home visits, staff will utilize Center for Disease Control and Tennessee Department of Health guidelines, which currently encourages the use of masks.
- **Effective May 1, 2021 all program areas resumed normal practice in accordance with departmental policy on face-to-face (in-home) visits. However, some flexibility in face-to-face requirements was established for case managers through an internal memo effective September 1, 2021.**
- For scheduled face-to-face visits, staff will call the foster parents in advance of the visit to complete a health questionnaire based upon the most recent TDH guidance and CDC COVID-19 symptoms list.
 1. Are you experiencing any of the following? Cough, Shortness of Breath or Sore Throat
 2. Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
 3. Have you had a new loss of taste or smell?
 4. Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
 5. If you are unvaccinated, have you had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- If the answer to any of the questions is “Yes”:
 1. The visit should be postponed.
 2. Instruct the individual to remain at home and contact their health care provider for COVID-19 testing immediately.
 3. In all circumstances above, instruct the client or family member to notify the receiving healthcare provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
- If arrangements other than a face-to-face visit need to be made, foster parents will be notified by the case manager.

Guidance for minimizing risk of exposure for DCS children and youth:

- DCS staff will urge all foster parents to follow CDC guidelines regarding limiting social interactions that could potentially expose custodial children/youth to COVID-19.
- If a foster parent or anyone in their household, including foster children, have tested positive for COVID-19, they should follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, consult their primary medical provider or pediatrician, and **immediately notify the child's case manager or follow the on call-protocol.**

- Any medical questions from foster parents regarding exposure to virus or quarantine periods should be directed to the foster parent's primary medical provider, the child's pediatrician, or the local health department. Guidance on isolation and quarantine from the Tennessee Department of Health can be [found here](#).
- When planning vacations or out-of-state travel, foster parents are encouraged to carefully evaluate travel plans, including attention to infection rates in destination sites and foster children's specific risks of contracting COVID-19. Final approval for out-of-state travel rests with the Regional Administrator/JJ Directors, so financial travel obligations should not be made prior to approval.

Guidance regarding home passes:

- Should circumstances require limiting home passes, foster parents should ensure that children/youth have access to opportunities to communicate by phone/video conference with those with whom visitation was normally scheduled. DCS will have responsibility for advising families of any temporary restriction.

Guidance regarding court appearances:

- From the date of this document and until further notice, if the child/youth has a pending court date, foster parents should check with the case manager to ensure that the court date has not been re-scheduled. Additionally, if the child/youth will be in quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 at the court date, that must be communicated to the case manager immediately.

General guidance for foster parents and foster children from Tennessee Department of Health

- Keep hands clean
 - Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds several times per day OR sanitize hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol
 - Avoid touching the eyes and face with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact
 - Put six feet of distance between yourself and others, when possible
- Cover mouth and nose with a mask or homemade cloth face cover when around others
 - A cloth face covering helps to protect all parties
 - N-95 and surgical face masks are not necessary for public interactions
 - Do NOT place face coverings on children younger than age 2 or unconscious individuals
 - Use of a face mask does NOT replace frequent hand washing
- Cover coughs and sneezes and immediately wash or sanitize hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day
 - Remember doorknobs and handles, light switches, phones, faucets and sinks

Guidance for COVID-19 vaccination

- Foster parents and other care providers are entrusted with authority and responsibility for the daily upbringing and care of children in their care consistent with the child's individualized circumstances and in consultation with the child's medical provider, including routine authority for matters such as well-care treatment, vaccination, vision, and hearing.