



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

ROBERT GORDON  
DIRECTOR

June 2, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope that this letter finds you well and safe. I am writing to update you of our plans to restart regular in-person parenting time and sibling visits. The Children's Services Agency strongly believes that you, as a parent, are the most important person in your child's life. Time spent with your child is critical to their sense of safety, security and healthy development. Up to now, in-person parenting time has been very limited due to the pandemic. In implementing the Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe orders to slow the spread of COVID-19, we requested that most visits occur using technology. We know that limiting your time together to virtual visits has been difficult for both you and your children. However, as Michigan begins to re-open, we are moving towards a return to regular in-person supervised and unsupervised parenting time and sibling visits with safety precautions in place.

On June 1, 2020, the Governor issued [Executive Order 2020-110](#), ending the stay home order. Certain businesses will remain closed; however, retailers and restaurants will be able to open later this week with precautions in place to mitigate the risk of infection.

As the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths from COVID-19 continue to decline, the Governor is expected to lift even more restrictions while encouraging all citizens to implement practices to continue to keep everyone safe.

What does this mean for you and your children in foster care? As conditions improve in Michigan, we have been carefully assessing how and when to safely resume critical activities, like in-person parenting time and caseworker visits and services, drug screens and in-person medical, mental health, and dental appointments. Although this may change depending on public health conditions across the state, here is what we are planning:

- June 1, 2020 – restart random drug screening services.
- June 1, 2020 – begin in-person routine medical/dental appointments.
- By June 11, 2020 – restart in-person parenting time and sibling visits.
- Planning is underway to gradually resume in-person casework this month.

Caseworkers are making plans now to schedule in-person parenting time and sibling visits. These visits will be arranged unless the court has disallowed them, or it is unsafe for participants to attend. All visit participants must be healthy and not have had recent exposure to anyone with COVID-19. Visit arrangements will include your input and consider the health status of everyone involved, including you, your children, foster parents, relative caregivers, and caseworkers. Detailed guidance has been provided to caseworkers for conducting visits as safely as possible.

We ask for your help in following these guidelines:

- Conduct visits outdoors whenever possible.
- If visits occur indoors, open windows if feasible.
- Visits should include as few people as possible.
- If the visit must occur indoors, ensure visiting space is thoroughly cleaned/sanitized prior to and following the visit.
- Visits in local offices are not preferable; however, if this must occur, ensure all community toys/table activities are cleared from the room. Parents, caregivers, foster parents should be invited to bring their own freshly sanitized toys/activities for use during the visit and take with them following the visit with instruction to sanitize upon return home.
- Advise participants that they may bring their own gloves and/or sanitizer to the visit if they have them available. Advise careful hand hygiene for all visits. For all visits, having ready access to hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will provide additional protection if used after touching frequently-used surfaces and before rubbing one's eye or nose.
- Limit exposure to unsanitized surfaces and large groups of people when determining where the visit will take place.
- Individuals from different households who may be present at the visits should maintain social distancing (6 feet). Social distancing between the parents and their children or among siblings is not expected during visits.
- Ensure all individuals involved in the visit have thoroughly washed/sanitized their hands prior to starting the visit and following the visit.
- Advise individuals involved to cover their mouth with a tissue when sneezing/coughing or do so into their elbow.
- Participants should wear a cloth face covering/mask during the visit – please bring a face covering, if you have one. Children 2 years of age or older should be encouraged to wear a cloth face covering when they are within 6 feet of their parents to the extent that it does not lead them to touch their face more frequently or cause them to feel scared.
- All participating individuals should be advised to change and wash clothes upon return home.

You are encouraged to discuss these safety measures with your caseworker to determine how you can assist in ensuring safety for all involved.

Please join us for our next town hall on **Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 6 p.m.** To participate in the meeting, click the following link on June 10 at 6 p.m.: [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#).

Thank you for your continued patience as we work through this challenging time. We will continue to work together to ensure your child is safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

*Joo Chang*

JooYeun Chang, Executive Director  
MDHHS Children's Services Agency