



**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Bureau for Children and Families
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Division of Children and Adult Services
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Commissioner**

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: May 20, 2020

TO: All Bureau for Children and Families Staff and Socially Necessary Service Providers

FROM: *CH* Carla Harper, Director, Children and Adult Services
Andrea Ramsey-Mitchell, Program Manager I, Community Partnership

SUBJECT: In-Person Visitation, Parental/Guardian Transportation and Socially Necessary Services Clarification

The purpose of this memo is to provide information and clarification regarding in-person visitation for foster children, transportation services for parents/guardians and the use of socially necessary service providers to facilitate visitation.

Children in foster care are beginning to resume in-person visitation with those identified in their permanency plans. Visitations will not return to the previous visitation time and schedule; visits will be of a short duration, of not more than one time a week for 1-2 hours, based on the child's age and development. Virtual visitation should continue as often as possible. The following guidelines will be followed for visits:

- Visits for children placed with a child placing agency will be held in the child placing agency provider's office or an outside space designated at that office, by the child placing provider. Transportation for children will be provided by the foster parent or child placing agency staff. The parent/guardian will obtain their own transportation or will need a socially necessary service referral for transportation. (See more guidance below on transportation.)
- Visits for children placed in a residential facility will be held at a site on the facility's campus. The parent/guardian will obtain their own transportation or will need a socially necessary service referral for transportation. (See more guidance below on transportation.)
- Visits for children placed in West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) kinship/relative or foster homes will be held at the local DHHR office or at a socially necessary service provider's visitation center. Supervision of the visit will be provided by DHHR staff or socially necessary service provider staff.

Transportation for children will be provided by the foster parent, BCF caseworker or through a socially necessary service referral for transportation. The parent/guardian will obtain their own transportation or will need a socially necessary service referral for transportation. (See more guidance below on transportation.)

- Visits should be scheduled at the closest visitation site for the children to avoid long transports.
- Visits will not be held in public parks or other public locations.
- Visitation from non-state residents will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- The parent/guardian should not bring items to the visit, such as food, toys or a purse. When a court order exists requiring the parent/guardian provide certain items during the visit, the BCF caseworker must inform the court and multidisciplinary team of this guidance.
- DHHR guidelines for in-person visitation protocol (attached) and CDC guidelines will be followed during transports and visitation times, including social distancing, wearing a face covering, sanitizing the room and washing hands.

As visitations will be take place at sites convenient for the child as indicated above, the parent/guardian will be expected to travel to those sites. If a parent/guardian is unable to access transportation, then transportation will need to be arranged by the BCF caseworker. The following guidelines must be followed for transportation services:

- Socially necessary service providers will be utilized to transport the parent/guardian to visits at department offices, residential facilities or child placing agencies and will wait for the parent/guardian during the visit. The provider will be compensated for the “wait time.”
- If the socially necessary service provider is supervising the visit at their visitation site, then transportation to those visits will occur as normal.
- Children and the parent/guardian must always be transported in separate cars.
- During transports, the foster or kinship/relative parent will provide the child with necessary items for their care, such as diapers, wipes, formula, snacks, extra clothing, etc.
- DHHR guidelines for in-person visitation protocol (attached) and all relevant CDC guidance will be followed during transports and visitation times: social distancing, wearing a face covering, sanitizing the room and washing hands.

If a child placing agency requests another socially necessary service provider to conduct visitation for a child under their agency, and that does not adhere to these guidelines, the socially necessary service provider will contact Terri Miller, Licensing Program Manager, to resolve the issue prior to scheduling or providing visitation.

For questions related to in-person visitation, contact Terri Miller at Terri.S.Miller@wv.gov.

For questions related to the guidelines for socially necessary service providers, contact Andrea Ramsey-Mitchell at Andrea.N.RamseyMitchell@wv.gov