



Division of Child Protection & Permanency Fieldwork Staff Guidelines

Effective December 27, 2021

On March 19, 2020, DCF made temporary operational adjustments in DCP&P practice in response to Governor Murphy's Executive Order 103 which declared a public health emergency as a result of COVID 19. The plan was then revised in response to changing conditions and was modified again in response to New Jersey's advance to Phase 2 of the restart and recovery plan.

Remaining attentive to evolving information related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department's return to remote work, this document is again being adjusted to ensure DCP&P practices remain current.

This guidance will be effective from December 27, 2021 to January 31, 2022.

Please find the most recent guidance for DCF staff regarding RTO planning in the following link (https://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/DCF-RTO_August.19.2021.pdf)

LOCAL OFFICES

All Local Offices must remain open statewide and each Local Office is required to have a coverage system in place.

Staffing in the Local Offices

All Local Offices may establish a 'curbside pickup' process to enable staff to obtain car keys and other office supplies to eliminate the need for staff to enter the offices. Curbside pickup is a safe way to pick up items from the offices and it limits the number of employees entering the building. With curbside pickup, employees can wait in their vehicles, the items will be delivered to them and left at curbside for the employee to collect their items. This will allow staff to keep a safe distance from one another.

Skeleton Crew

A skeleton crew is the bare minimum number of employees necessary to keep an office running at a basic level. Because of the work that DCP&P does, it cannot all be done remotely, and as such a **skeleton crew** of key staff must be implemented to perform non-remote duties. The rotating staff will include one staff who is range 26 and up, the PPE coordinator, the car coordinator and one clerical staff. Work schedules are established in consultation with the local office.

CO-LOCATED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Child Health Units (CHU)

Child Health Unit nurses returned to Local Offices the week of December 13, 2021.

Child Protection Substance Abuse Initiative (CPSAI)

CPSAI providers returned to offices full time on December 6, 2021.

Domestic Violence Liaisons (DVL)

The DVL program will continue to operate remotely until January 10, 2022. DVLs will not work from CP&P local offices.

Clinical Consultants CSOC

Clinical Consultants will continue to operate remotely until further notice. Clinical consultants will not work from DCP&P local offices.

DCP&P OPERATIONAL FIELD GUIDANCE

State Central Registry (SCR):

SCR staff will remain in the current hybrid work schedule.

DCP&P Field Work Staff: It is imperative that the families served by DCP&P receive support and appropriate linkages to resources. Safety remains paramount and to that end, all DCP&P staff will continue face to face visits with families and resource parents, per policy, except in limited circumstances detailed below.

Most DCP&P staff will work remotely, based in their homes, and will perform work in the field or in an office as needed to carry out services to children and families as described below.

Newly assigned intakes from SCR:

CWS referrals	Newly assigned CWS referrals can be responded to virtually or via phone. The decision to respond virtually MUST BE conferenced with the supervisor or CWS.
CPS Reports	Reports assigned from SCR as CPS, must continue to be responded to in person.

Minimum Visitation Requirement (Worker Contact with Children and Families):

LOW	Families with an SDM low risk level can be seen virtually.
Moderate	Families with a moderate risk level can be seen remotely but must be conferenced and approved by a supervisor or CWS.
High/Very High & Safety Protection Plans	There will be no change for families with high and very high-risk levels and safety protection plans. These families must be seen in accordance with policy.
Worker visit with parents with goal	Efforts must continue to be made to see parents with a goal of reunification. The twice monthly requirement for these families can be one in person visit,

of reunification	while the other visit can be virtual. Two in person visits may be required in some cases, as deemed appropriate by supervisor and/or casework supervisor.
Parent child visitation	Visitation between parents and their children will remain as defined by policy. Staff should first explore the least restrictive setting to host the visit.
Visits on open cases; Team approach for open cases	As part of normal operations, it is permissible for staff to work together to visit families that may not be assigned to them. Caseworkers who are visiting on behalf of their peer, can do so with the assigned worker buddying virtually.

Assistant Family Service Workers (AFSWs)

There is no change in the work duties of an AFSW. AFSWs will assist in providing services to families, which include transportation services and supplementary supportive visits under the close supervision of a case worker, as well as other related duties.

Resource Care Staff

Resource families can be seen virtually.

Placement Facilitation

Resource staff will facilitate all emergency placement requests when kin/fictive kin placements are not feasible. Resource staff will communicate directly with the resource supervisor to provide placement facilitation results for dissemination to permanency/intake supervisor.

COVID Positive/PUI - Resource Home Facilitation

Area Directors notify DCP&P leadership through the case updates email address (CPP.CentralOfficeLeadership@dcf.nj.gov) when placement of a COVID-19 PUI (Person Under Investigation) or positive child(ren) is required and fictive kin/kin is not available.

Central Office leadership will confirm the information and notify the Office of Resource Families (ORF) Administrator, Dawn Marlow, if there is a need for facilitation support into a resource home identified as being willing to accept children that have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19.

Presumptive Placements

When a DODD removal is completed, and a relative resource placement is found and determined through CHRI and CARI to be a viable option, staff will do the following:

- Permanency staff will notify resource staff and coordinate, through remote technology, a walkthrough of the resource home to allow the resource worker to view the home and determine safety assessment and initial review for OOL standards.
- Once placement is made the resource worker will contact the kinship parent and discuss the

home study process and provide electronic copies of necessary paperwork.

- Form 5-2 Resource Parent Home Study/License Application
- Form 26-15 Authorization for Release of Information
- SAFE Questionnaire 1
- Form 5-25 Local Police Check forms
- IdentGO New Jersey Universal Fingerprint Form(s) for every adult member of the household. This form needs to be pre-filled with the Resource Type and Local Office Cost Code in box #7= Contributor's Case #. This is to ensure that the print results and any subsequent red flags are returned to the correct LO
- Form 4-10 CP&P Kinship Caregiver Standards Agreement
- Financial Form

Resource Family Training (PRIDE and TRADITIONS OF CARE)

- PRIDE and TRADITONS OF CARE Training will be delivered in full, via remote technology.

YOUTH AGING OUT OF CP&P *(no change from previous December 9, 2021 guidance)*

The moratorium for youth aging out of foster care through CP&P ended on September 30, 2021. Guidance was sent to workers and supervisors who had youth open due to the moratorium with instructions on how to extend CP&P services if appropriate.

Please note that the regular process for requesting an extension of services/exceptional funding is to submit a request to CP&P Central Office for approval. The requests should be sent to Niambi London at niambi.london@dcf.nj.gov. These exceptional circumstances are typically requested for youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities or otherwise transitioning to another system support (e.g. substance use program). Staff who believe a young adult's case should remain open must submit a request to CP&P Central office for approval.

It is important to ensure that information about resources and services are given to a young adult prior to their CP&P case closing. This should include the NJ Youth Resource Spot (www.njyrs.org) which has information about DCF contracted services as well as resources in the community, including housing.

DCF- Contracted Services:

- *Life Skills* services that were extended for youth 21+ will end on December 31, 2021. This process will be coordinated through the life skills programs and the DCF Office of Family Preservation and Reunification. There are no actions needed for CP&P staff.
- All *Supervised Transitional Living and Transitional Living Programs (S/TLPs)* that contractually end services at age 21 and were previously extended will end on December 31, 2021. This process will be coordinated through the housing programs and the DCF Office of Housing. There are no actions needed for CP&P staff.

Youth who are 21+ do not need to remain open with CP&P in order to remain in these programs until December 31, 2021. Please note that PACES and LifeSet will continue to provide services as usual, which may include young adults 21+.

Moving Ahead:

The first six months following a young person's transition from care are often the most precarious. Knowing this, child welfare agencies, such as DCF need to develop an ongoing outreach plan for the youth who have recently left care in order to reach out to those youth and provide them with information or help them identify how to access the resources they may be eligible for. We need to be sure that we have multiple avenues for contacting those youth and we are asking that prior to closing any young person's case CP&P workers obtain updated contact information from the young people. We ask that you request and/or confirm the contact information of lifelong connections such as kin, resource parents, providers, advocates, relatives, parents, siblings and peers. In addition, we request that you ask, and record names used on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter). This information should all be stored in New Jersey Spirit in the Collateral Tab prior to the case closing.

We know from best practices in the transition planning process that having access to multiple options for support over a longer period of time is critical for the success of young people exiting care. A young person should never age out of care without a concrete plan for stable housing and access to immediate resources if the housing plans need to change. We are asking that 12 months prior to a young person turning 21 and aging out of care, CP&P continue to have Family Team Meeting , CP&P work with the young person to develop a housing plan that can be in place prior to them aging out. This plan might include things such as: applying for subsidized housing, applying for SSI/SSD, determining DD eligibility, researching apartment costs and a youth's ability to afford such, and discussing roommate possibilities. In addition, we ask that you create a list of lifelong connections such as kin, resource parents, providers, advocates, relatives, parents, siblings and peers with the young person, inclusive of those people's contact information, and provide that list to the youth along with documenting it in New Jersey Spirit in an easily accessible location. These contacts can be crucial if a young person's housing situation changes quickly.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN THE FIELD

The Department's safety efforts continue with the eight DCF Safety Advisors assigned to cover specific areas of the state. These Safety Advisors continue to be available to facilitate virtual safety workshops for staff, consult with local law enforcement and triage issues on the behalf of CP&P staff. They also can participate in virtual staff/unit meetings to provide education on safety tips.

Additional efforts around safety include the statewide deployment of Alert Media, a safe signal application that allows staff the ability to immediately notify the need for law enforcement assistance in life threatening situations. Activation of the SafeSignal application sends an automated alert to an AlertMedia call center operator, that will then contact local law enforcement to relay information such as staff's name, GPS location, physical address, and physical description of staff member. Staff are encouraged to utilize the safe signal application every time they are out in the field.

RESOURCES

- o For IT related issues including phones contact: njspirithelpdesk@dcf.nj.gov
- o Guidance <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/COVID-Notificaton.Protocols.pdf> On the Contact of a Close or Casual Contact of a Confirmed or Suspected Case of COVID-19 (attached)
- o Safe Signals <https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/042967fa-576a-4781-86f4-6a18dc6a27ce>