

June 10, 2021

Dear colleague,

Several questions have been raised about the state's new masking and social distancing policies as they relate to expectations for DCF staff and the families we serve. This email provides guidance on the following areas of interest: masking, social distancing, travel and visitation.

MASKING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE STATE WORKPLACE

While the Governor has announced changes to the statewide masking and social distancing policies, he has also indicated that all state agencies, their workplaces and facilities, must continue to require masking and social distancing, in accordance with the conditions and exceptions outlined in [Executive Order No. 192](#). In addition, all of the remaining protocols related to employee health screenings, facility cleanings, notification regarding workplace exposures, etc. remain in effect for the state workforce. These requirements apply regardless of staff or visitor vaccine status. Therefore:

- Staff must maintain at least six feet of distance from one another to the extent possible. If six feet of distance is not feasible, employees must wear a mask.
- Individuals entering a DCF worksite must wear cloth or disposable face masks while on the premises, except where the individual is under two years of age or when it is impracticable for an individual to wear a face mask (e.g., eating, drinking, or where the service provided cannot be performed by an individual wearing a mask).
 - Staff may remove face masks if they are able to maintain more than six feet from other individuals at the workplace or when the staff person is alone in the office.
 - The PPE Coordinators and the Office of Facilities and Support Services will continue to make face masks available to staff upon request.
- DCF will deny entry to the worksite to any staff member who declines to wear a face mask, except when doing so would violate state or federal law. DCF is permitted to require employees to produce medical documentation supporting claims that they are unable to wear a face mask because of a disability. Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) and/or New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (“NJLAD”), DCF will work to determine if a reasonable accommodation can be provided to the staff member. Please contact the Office of Human Resource ADA office at DCF.ADA@dcf.nj.gov for additional information.
- DCF will deny entry to the worksite to any visitor who declines to wear a face mask, except when doing so would violate state or federal law. DCF may be required to provide a visitor who declines to wear a mask due to a disability a reasonable accommodation pursuant to the ADA and/or

NJLAD, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship to DCF's operations. Please contact the DCF Office of Legal Affairs at (609) 888-7222 for additional information.

- Employees and visitors to DCF facilities will have access to shared cleaning and sanitization materials upon request.
- DCF asks that staff practice regular hand hygiene, particularly when employees are interacting with the public. Employees should wash their hands frequently and make use of hand sanitizer.
- DCF will continue to regularly clean and disinfect all high-touch areas including state vehicles.

FIELD WORK, TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

The following will be applicable to all DCF staff engaged in field work, including but not limited to, Child Protection and Permanency, Office of Licensing and Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit staff. Please keep in mind that we cannot assume that individuals with whom we come into contact are vaccinated. Please take precautions to protect yourself. DCF strongly encourages all staff to continue to wear a mask while engaged in DCF business.

- **Indoor activities including investigations and visitation taking place at DCF offices:** All visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are to be masked, practice social distancing and be subject to screening pursuant to Executive Order 192.
- **Indoor investigations and visitation taking place at locations other than DCF offices:** Staff, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear a mask when visiting clients in their home, providers in out of home settings, and licensed entities. For visits taking place in other locations, vaccinated adults and youth are not required to mask or practice social distancing unless required by the venue.
 - Unvaccinated individuals should be encouraged to wear a mask and practice social distancing at all times.
 - Parent/child visits should not be cancelled or terminated if any participant is unwilling to wear a mask.
- **Outdoor investigations and visitation:** Vaccinated adults and youth are not required to mask or practice social distancing unless required by the venue. Unvaccinated individuals should be encouraged to wear a mask when social distancing is not an option. Parent/child visits should not be cancelled or terminated if any participant is unwilling to wear a mask.
- **Transportation by DCF staff:** All individuals, regardless of vaccination status must be masked at all times when in a state vehicle. If a client being transported refuses to wear a mask, staff must seek further guidance from their supervisor.
- **Travel:** CP&P staff should be mindful of the [Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard Guidance for Child Welfare Professionals](#) and be mindful that children returning from out of state travel may have to quarantine upon their return. Any travel that would impact an in-person child/parent visit must be discussed with the parent prior to the travel occurring. If the parent disagrees with the travel, the office must follow standard operational procedures and conference with the Deputy Attorney General (DAG).