



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

Guidance for NYS Office of Children and Family Services Programs (funded, operated, licensed, regulated, or designated providers)

Department of Health 24/7 Hotline: 1-888-364-3065

Dear Staff/Providers:

The following guidance is based on the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NYS Department of Health (DOH) recommendations for prevention of the spread the novel coronavirus of 2019 disease (COVID-19) and the management of Persons Under Investigation (PUI). Specific additional guidance for residential programs is documented below. Please review this information, including the links below, with your program’s leadership and staff and make any necessary adjustments to your program policies and protocols. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as this event evolves. OCFS encourages you to also monitor your Local Health Department guidance and keep in close contact with your OCFS regional office staff who have been instructed to immediately elevate priority issues of concern.

A. Guidance for programs funded, licensed or regulated by OCFS when making home visits (including foster boarding homes oversight):

When preparing or scheduling appointments for home-based visits, be sure to ask all clients or applicable family members the following 3 questions:

1. Have you traveled to a country for which the CDC has issued a [Level 2 or 3 travel designation](#) within the last 14 days?;
 2. Have you had contact with any [Persons Under Investigation \(PUIs\) for COVID-19](#) within the last 14 days, OR with anyone with known COVID-19?; and
 3. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?
- If the client or family members respond “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, but “No” to question 3 (i.e., reports no symptoms of a respiratory infection) immediately consult the provider supervisor/ treatment team to assess whether there are any potentially urgent safety risks or behavioral health needs (e.g., medications, suicide or violence risk, etc.).

- If there are urgent needs, the provider supervisor/treatment team should assess whether those needs can be safely met remotely (e.g., e-prescribing, telephone assessment, telehealth visit, etc.). If the client must be seen to meet urgent needs, including behavioral health needs, the provider supervisor/treatment team should instruct the client to remain at home and contact their medical professional immediately. Instruct the impacted client or family member to use a mask, if available, place themselves in a separate room with the door closed if possible, and get assessed by a medical professional immediately before any visitation arrangements are made. Please contact your Regional Office to discuss urgent scenarios so they can provide guidance on a case by case basis.
- If the client does not have urgent needs or those needs can be met remotely, please instruct the family/client to stay home and to contact the NYS DOH for further guidance, which may include a recommendation for a self-imposed quarantine for 14 days. The provider supervisor/caseworker supervisor/treatment team should also contact NYS DOH directly to relay the information from question 1 and 2.
- If the client or family members responds “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, AND 3, (i.e., reports having symptoms):
 - Instruct the client to remain at home and contact their medical professional immediately.
 - Alternatively, the client may be referred to the nearest emergency room for immediate attention.
 - In all circumstances above, please instruct the client or family member to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
 - Please contact your Regional Office to discuss any urgent service needs so they can provide guidance on a case by case basis.

B. Guidance for screening visitors/members of the public to OCFS facilities, residential and non-residential programs funded, licensed or regulated by OCFS:

The below protocol is applicable to any facility or program that receives visitors or members of the public as a part of its daily operations. This includes members of the public who attend in-person administrative hearings in OCFS regional offices.

- All facilities, programs and offices receiving regular in-person contact with members of the public should immediately develop policies to schedule and pre-screen over the telephone all visits by non-client/residents-or-staff entities, including families, attorneys, case managers and social workers, using the three questions above.
 - Upon screening, if a potential visitor answers “Yes” to any of the three questions above, please politely instruct them not to visit the facility, program or office until the specific scenario can be further assessed. If a member of the public is scheduled to appear before an administrative law judge for an administrative hearing, the hearing will be adjourned until further notice.

- For those potential visitors who answer “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, but “No” to question 3 (i.e., reports no symptoms of a respiratory infection), please also instruct them to contact the NYS DOH for further direction.
 - For those potential visitors who answer “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, AND also “Yes” to question 3, (i.e., reports having symptoms) please also instruct them to immediately contact their medical provider and Local Health Department, and to call 911 if they are experiencing serious symptoms (e.g., shortness of breath).
 - Please also instruct the screened individual to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.
- If facilities/program providers receive unscheduled visitors, either politely instruct them to leave and call to schedule a visit, or screen them appropriately before allowing entrance into the facility/program.
 - If upon screening, the unscheduled visitor answers “Yes” to any of the questions above, provide them a mask, if available, place them in a separate room with the door closed if possible, and have them assessed by a program medical provider using appropriate [Personal Protective Equipment](#) (PPE) if possible. If no qualified program medical provider is available, ask that they contact their own medical professional immediately.
 - Alternatively, they may be referred to the nearest emergency room for immediate attention.
 - In all circumstances above, please also instruct the screened individual to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.

*** PLEASE NOTE – Screening for current residents at OCFS facilities or residential programs funded, licensed or regulated by OCFS (include Runaway and Homeless Youth, Domestic Violence shelters, and Residential Vision Rehabilitation Centers):**

All OCFS facilities and residential facilities funded, licensed or regulated by OCFS should be certain to also screen any incoming residents using the guidance above, and should respond accordingly if a resident is experiencing symptoms and responds “Yes” to questions 1 AND 2 above. If a current or incoming resident can answer “Yes” to questions 1, 2, AND 3:

- Provide a mask for the recipient of services/resident;
- Isolate the recipient of services/resident in a private room with the door closed if possible and ensure that they are kept separate from other tenants.
- A program medical provider should then immediately assess the individual using appropriate PPE if possible, or if no qualified program medical provider is available, the person should be asked to contact their own medical professional immediately. The programs should also contact the NYS DOH (**1-888-364-3065**) for further recommendations including transport to their recommended medical facility if

necessary. Please also instruct the program to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19.

All OCFS facilities and residential facilities funded, licensed or regulated by OCFS should continue to review their own emergency preparedness plans and assess for continued operation in case of an emergency.

- All facilities and programs should assess both their facility and workforce capacity to accommodate the potential need for an increased number of isolations rooms and the potential decrease in staffing availability.
- As a result of the above assessment, programs may need to prioritize service provision and planning.
- If the needs or the facility/program exceed current capacity or ability, please contact the relevant OCFS program lead/Regional Office for further assistance.

C. Guidance for visitors to any childcare setting, including licensors/registrars:

- When preparing to visit or inspect a childcare setting, all childcare licensors/registrars should immediately implement policies to schedule and pre-screen over the telephone all visits using the three questions above.
 - If licensors/registrars receive “Yes” answer to any of the questions, they should not visit the program until the specific scenario can be further assessed. If a health and safety issue necessitated the need to visit the provider, please contact your Regional Office to discuss so they can provide guidance on a case by case basis.
 - If licensors/registrars receive “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, but “No” to question 3 (i.e., reports no symptoms of a respiratory infection), they should additionally instruct the provider to contact the NYS DOH for further direction.
 - If licensors/registrars receive “Yes” answers to questions 1 or 2, AND also “Yes” to question 3, (i.e., reports having symptoms), the licensors/registrars should instruct the provider to immediately contact their medical provider and Local Health Department, and to call 911 if they are experiencing serious symptoms (e.g., shortness of breath). Please instruct the provider to notify the medical provider and transporter in advance and inform them of potential concern for COVID-19
- In the event there is a serious health and safety need that requires an unannounced visit, licensors/registrars should screen the provider before entering the program and instruct the provider as above if answering “Yes” to any questions.
- The above protocol should be used when parents or family members request to visit a childcare program, and childcare providers should review with program leadership and staff to make any necessary adjustments to program policies and protocols.

Additionally, all the above facilities/programs/providers should contact any entities that have staff regularly visiting their programs (e.g., contracted/per diem staffing agencies, pharmacy delivery organizations, itinerant provider staff, cleaning agencies, etc.) to review and approve their screening protocols. If the protocols of outside entities do not meet these standards, providers should take responsibility for screening these visitors.

Finally, as a reminder, all Staff/Providers should follow the CDC's guidelines for infection control basics including hand hygiene:

- [Infection Control Basics](#)
- [Hand Hygiene in Health Care Settings](#)
- [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#)